

**POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN MANIPUR
1919-1949**

ABSTRACT OF
THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
Political Science

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN MANIPUR, 1919-1949

The study deals with the political and constitutional developments in the erstwhile princely State of Manipur from 1919 till its merger with India in 1949. Bordered with Burma, she occupies one of the strategically situated states in the north-eastern region. In the wake of the political upheaval of 1891, Manipur lost her identity and became a protectorate of the British Government of India.

Since the Manipuri uprising of 1891 against the British Government, the Kuki insurgency during 1917-19 was the most significant political occurring during the entire period of the British rule in Manipur. The Kukis, one of the most powerful tribes of Manipur, revolted against foreign domination. The administration was very much upset by the disturbances in the hills. The Government felt considerably annoyed with frequent troubles which often resulted in losses of life and property. The Government could, however, bring the situation under control only in 1919. The experience of the Kuki rebellion made the British Government realise the inadequacy of the rules which were framed for the administration of Manipur State in 1916.

The unrest among the Kacha Nagas and the Kabui Nagas of the north-west of Manipur during the early 1930s was a turning point in the political history of tribal Manipur. This pseudo-religious movement soon assumed political overtones and had its adherents even long after it had been suppressed. The political aims of the movement were the subjugation of the Kukis, the suppression of the Meiteis, the overthrow of the British Government, and, lastly, the establishment of the 'Naga Raj'.

Thirdly, the question of Manipur's accession to the proposed all-India federation under the Government of India Act, 1935, became a major political controversy and was hotly debated in the State. The ruler of the State was of the view that the Government of India should leave intact some of the absolute princely rights, which demand made the British apprehend that the ruler was setting forth conditions of all sorts and using delaying tactics to keep away from the envisioned federation. The Government of India did not see any reason in meeting all the demands and the reservations put forth by the ruler. However, with the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 the question of the

federation was relegated to the background. Manipur's accession to India was not taken up before India became independent.

Fourthly, the food agitation of 1939, caused by exorbitant rise in the price of rice which made the lives of the poor especially the womenfolk almost impossible had an important role to play in the political awakening of the people. A local party, Nihil Manipuri Mahasabha, had aroused and stirred up the feelings and sentiments of the women agitators, who also received encouragement from the Indian National Congress. Had not the price of paddy come down as a result of the women's mass agitation, a sort of a general revolt would have taken place. The British authorities were forced to concede certain social and economic reforms.

Fifthly, the idea of establishing an integrated north-eastern India Frontier province consisting of parts of Manipur, Assam, was a brain-child of the frustrated Bengali elites, who were allegedly discriminated against and suppressed by the local Assamese majority in the heterogeneous province of Assam. The Bengalis questioned the majority of the

Assamese in Assam in view of the fact that they were only about two and half millions, whereas the other groups had a population of about six million of the whole Assamese population. The 'Purbachal' movement failed to catch public attention and died in infancy because of its colonialist antecedents. The government too did not pay any heed to it as it was simply out of tune with the fastly changing political environment.

Sixthly, 1946 would be recorded in the political history of Manipur as the year of full political awakening among the people. The people felt tired of the authoritarian dynastic rule and openly demanded the end of autocracy and introduction of responsible government. The issue of the constitutional reform split the local Congress into two groups. The institution of an Interim Council and the 'Rules for the administration of Manipur' did not meet the demand of the dissident Congressmen for full democracy and eventually led to the launching of the first satyagraha in the State against the Maharaja. The satyagraha succeeded in clinching from the ruler a promise to establish a responsible government.

Finally, the question of the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union became the principal political issue and the public opinion was sharply divided over it. When the British announced their intention to transfer power to the Indians, some selfish and ambitious leaders saw an opportunity to reap a rich harvest by creating political upheaval in the State. A section of people preferred rather the creation of a composite north-east India frontier province comprised of Manipur, Tripura, Cachar and Lushai Hills; the another section desired the integration of Manipur with Assam; some leaders advocated the idea of creation an independent Manipur. In the meantime, the Communist Party of Manipur was carrying out subversive activities along the Manipur-Burma border. Besides, the Nagas demanded the amalgamation of all the Naga inhabited hill areas in the eastern region with a view to form a separate Naga state. They claimed that the Nagas were never Indians and the Naga Hills had never been a part of the Indian territory and independence was an inalienable right of the Naga people. On the other hand, the Maharaja of

Manipur was not in favour of Manipur's merger with the Indian Union, he rather wished to be grouped with Sikkim and Khasi states.

Being aware of the political problems of the north-eastern region, the Indian leaders were afraid that the Assam province might possibly develop fissiparous tendencies. Therefore, the need for an immediate Central take-over of Manipur's administration was emphasized. Thus, with the merger of Manipur into the Indian Union, a new chapter was opened ending the age-long dynastic rule in Manipur. Today, Manipur is one of the full-fledged states of the Indian Union having an equal status with the other states. Since then the process of democratisation of administration has been going on; and people are very much involved in politics.



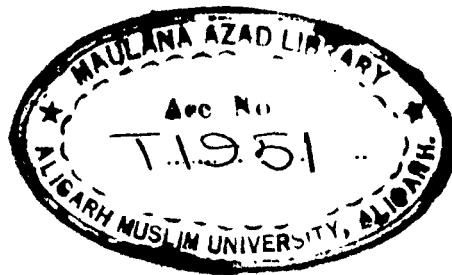
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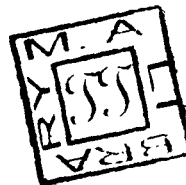
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S.M.A.U. CHISHTI

PREFACE

The thesis deals with the political and constitutional developments in the erstwhile princely State of Manipur from 1919 till its merger with India in 1949. Based on an intensive analysis of the available source-materials and interviews with the surviving members of the power-elite of the era under study, it constitutes, perhaps, the first systematic, objective and critical analysis of the political history of Manipur as well as the genesis, growth and rise of the democratic movement in the region.

Apart from unpublished documents, such as the files of the Foreign and Political Department, I have considerably relied on some of the available published material such as various pamphlets and reports published by the Manipur State Congress. But I have been handicapped in my research by lack of access to certain important Government of India files on deposit with the National Archives of India, and certain files of the All-India Congress Committee on deposit with the Nehru Memorial Library and Museum at New Delhi. The concerned authorities did not allow me to consult such documents which related to post-1945 events.

The method of analysis is the 'old-fashioned' historical descriptive, as there was no other way for me to present my material and analysis in a coherent manner. I hope this study of Manipur's rise to political democracy coinciding with her merger with the Indian Union constitutes not only an original contribution to the existing knowledge about the politics of the erstwhile princely States but also ipso facto constitutional history of the Indian Union.

The first chapter introduces the Manipuri society and politics in a historical setting and depicts how Manipur underwent changes under several dynasties through ages.

The second chapter analyses the genesis and growth of political consciousness among the Kuki tribesmen. The Kuki rebellion broke out during 1917-1919 when they were compelled by the local Government to provide labourers to be sent to Mesopotamia. The rebellion put the State in turmoil throughout a whole year, then, gradually, normalcy was restored.

The third chapter studies the development of the semi-religious, semi-political movement led by

Jadonang in 1930s, which aimed at the eventual overthrow of the British Government and annihilation of the Kukis and the Meiteis and, therefore, the establishment of a 'Kabui Naga Raj'. The political cult of Jadonang spread to the far-flung areas of Manipur and the Naga Hills. The movement died away as the leader was killed by the Government before it could get out of control.

The fourth chapter is the continuation of the Kacha-Naga movement led by Jadonang. After him the movement was spear-headed and intensified by Gaidinliu. She popularized the non-cooperation movement among the highlanders. In no time it spread over to the areas inhabited by the Nagas. The movement was soon suppressed by the Government of India. On the whole, it played its role in the politicization of the Naga tribals.

The fifth chapter discusses the problem of Manipur's accession to the erstwhile proposed Indian federation. The Maharaja of Manipur came out with certain reservations and desired to introduce some of his own reforms in the State, which were not in conformity with the Government of India Act, 1935. He was unwilling to join the proposed federation as it entailed the limitation of his own administrative authority.

The sixth chapter focuses on the Women's Bazar Agitation of 1939, caused by the scarcity of foodgrains. As the price of rice rapidly rose, the poor people faced starvation. The consequent agitation soon assumed political overtones. The movement subsided as soon as the price of rice went down and economic condition improved.

The seventh chapter deals with the political activities of the Bengali elites for the creation of a north-east Indian frontier province composed of Manipur, Cachar, Cooch-Behar, Tripura, etc., who were apprehensive of the possible Assamization of the Bengalis in Assam. The movement fizzled out as it could not mobilize the support of the general public; moreover, the Central Government turned down the demand for the creation of the so-called 'Purbachal Pradesh'.

The eighth chapter deals with the political factors which led to the constitutional movement in Manipur during the late 1940s. This was the period when the people of Manipur aspired to replace the present autocracy by a limited constitutional monarchy. This resulted in a movement for the establishment of a representative government. Ultimately the Maharaja had to introduce a constitution and establish a nominal Assembly.

The ninth chapter describes the further intensification of the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union. Undoubtedly the Maharaja was not in favour of Manipur's merger with the Indian Union, rather, he preferred to be grouped with Sikkim and Khasi States. Since the political leadership of the Congress Party was in favour of the merger, the Maharaja was obliged to sign the instrument of Manipur's accession to the Indian Union in 1949.

The conclusion provides an overview of the political developments in Manipur during the years 1919-1949, and makes one feel that the process of democratization in British Indian territories had an impact on the people and politics of Manipur, particularly during the thirties and the forties. The accession of Manipur to the Indian Union was a landmark in the political development of the Manipuris and, later on, the granting of full statehood to Manipur gave it a status of equality with other constituents of the Indian Union.



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Chapter I

THE MANIPURI POLITY IN HISTORICAL SETTING

Manipur, with an area of 22,3~~56~~ sq. kms. and a population of about 1.1 million, occupies a strategic position in east India. Surrounded by Nagaland in the north, Mizoram in the south and Assam in the west, Manipur has an international boundary with Burma in the east. The territory has had a variety of names in the past. In the memoirs of Rennel it is called 'Meckley'.¹ The Burmese and Shan tribes, knew it as 'Kase' or 'Kathe'.² Lord Irwin once compared Manipur to 'Switzerland' because of her scenic beauty and richness in natural resources.³ Manipur is also referred to as the 'jewel of India'.⁴

Manipur was a princely State of India before 1947. On October 15, 1949, she became a Chief Commissioner's Province. Under the Indian constitution, Manipur was initially placed in category 'C' of states. An Advisory Council was formed in 1950 to advise on its administration.

1. James Rennel, Memoir of a Map of Hindustan; or the Mogul Empire (London: W. Bulmer & Co., 1793), p. 295.

2. R.B. Pemberton, Report on the Eastern Frontier India (Gauhati: The Government of Assam, 1966), p. 21.

3. Manipur; A Decade of Progress, August 15, 1962, p. 46.

Sir William Birdwood found Manipur to be a place of beauty - 'a Kashmir in miniature'. The Times (London), December 24, 1926, p. 9.

It is also described as a 'little paradise on earth' Sir Geoffrey Evans, Antony Brett-James, Imphal (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 6.

4. Ibid., p. 46.

It was replaced in 1957 by a Territorial Council composed of thirty elected and two nominated members. Manipur was made a Union Territory on November 1, 1956. Later, under the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, a Legislative Assembly of thirty elected and three nominated members was established. On December 19, 1969, the chief executive was designated Lieutenant Governor. Manipur became a full-fledged State of the Indian Union on January 21, 1972.

The Ethnic Structure, Culture and Religion

The population of Manipur mainly consists of hill and plain tribes. Some of these tribes namely Meitei, Khoomal, Looang and Moirang came from different directions and settled in Manipur. The Khoomal tribe was initially most powerful. After its decline the Meitei tribe dominated all other tribes to such an extent that they came to be known as sub-tribes of the Meitei.⁵ About the origin of tribal structure of Manipur, T.C. Hudson remarks that "... there is far more ground to conclude them to be descendants of the surrounding hill tribes."⁶ He highlights

5. MacCulloch, Munnipore and the Hill Tribes (Calcutta: 1859), p. 4.

6. T.C. Hudson, The Meitheis (London: David Nutt, 1908), p. 5, Supporting the theories of T.C. Hudson and R. Brown, B.C. Allen shows the close relationship between Nagas and Meiteis, as in the coronation ceremony the kings were dressed in Naga fashion 'zimchaw'.

similarity in language to prove his contention. R. Boileu Pemberton contends Manipuris "... to be the descendants of a Tartar Colony, which probably migrated from the northwest borders of China during the sanguinary conflicts for supremacy which took place between the different members of the Chinese and Tartar dynasties in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."⁷

There is yet another theory about the origin of the Manipur tribes. William Shaw traces the relationship between Manipuris and Thais to the times when Manipur was ruled by Thais for about ten years in 707-717.⁸ It may also be of interest to note that the Thais or Twangs of southern part of China had penetrated into Manipur and Burma in 1250 A.D. They were more Chinese than Thais. In the frequent skirmishes with the ruler of Manipur, some of them were taken as captives. Gradually they became part of Manipuri society by marrying local women. This introduced elements of Chinese-Thai culture in Manipur. The Chinese influence is evident in the royal insignia of the Manipuris which is winged lion which was the insignia of the Chinese T'sang dynasty.

7. R.B. Pemberton, Report on the Eastern Frontier India (Gauhati: The Government of Assam, 1966), p. 37.

8. W. Shaw, "The Manipuris", Eastern Sentinental, June 17, 1959, p. 4.

The complexion of population in the islands on the Eastern Archipelago with adjoining portions of the mainland depicts fusion of cultures and races of the east, the west and the north. Apart from this, there has been vivid manifestation of the fusion of the Austric, the Bodo, the Dravidians, and the Aryans. Due to the situation of Manipur as a route for the migration of various races and cultures, the Manipuris appear to be Mongolians by features, Chinese by culture, Aryans by tradition, Naga by observance and Mithraic by faith.⁹

Among the hill tribes, the Kukis and Nagas are the only important ones. The Kukis largely live in the south hill portion of Manipur. The Nagas are found in the north and north-east hill areas. There are a number of sub-tribes about twenty-nine among the Nagas and Kukis.

Hinduism is claimed to be the oldest religion in Manipur.¹⁰ It was at its highest during the reign of Gopal Singh or Garib Newaz (1714-49) as he was popularly

9. R.M. Nath, The Background of Assamese Culture (Assam: A.K. Nath, 1948), p. 86.

10. According to Manipuri pundits and authorities, Hinduism can be traced back to the ancient time. They claimed that it existed even before the reign of Garib Newaz. But for some time its popularity seems to have been eclipsed. It was revived only during the reign of Garib Newaz. The proof of the revival is so meagre, and the statements in support of the idea that the Hindu religion existed in the country at a very ancient period are so contradictory and unsatisfactory, that there is no hesitation in stating that in all probability, although a spurious and imperfect form of Hinduism may have existed in individual cases previous to the reign of the Garib Newaz, about 1750, it was during his reign that the Hindu religion became general, and was adopted by him and by the majority of people.

known. When he got converted to Hinduism under the influence of some 'wandering fakir',¹¹ his subjects were made to follow willingly or unwillingly the same faith. Hinduism was declared as official religion and any religious dissent was severely punished. The advent of Hinduism and some of the traditions which were established under its influence resulted in a cleavage in Manipur society. The entire tribal structure of the plains was recast into Kshatriyas, Brahmins and other Hindu varnas. The Brahmins dominated all other castes and intermarriage was strictly prohibited. Untouchability was practised. The distinction between the hill tribes and the people living in plains also became more apparent. The Marwaris and the Punjabis who were mainly engaged in business, were dubbed by the Manipuris as Mayang (foreigners). There is a minority of native Muslims forming about 6.62 percent of the population. Various views have been expressed regarding the arrival of Muslims in Manipur. The origin of Manipuri Muslims could be traced to the reign of Meitei King Khagee-gama (1579-

11. Santidas Goswami, an enterprising Vaishnava of the Chaitanya Mahaprabhu school of Narsingha Akhara of Sylhet (Bangladesh), crossed the hills of Jirighat and reached Manipur and within a short time bewitched as it were, the King including the whole population, with his melodious Kirtana bearing on the life story of Lord Krishna and Radha. Thus the Meiteis gradually converted to Hinduism.

1651), whose brother Shelungba, tired of unjust treatment by his brother fled to Sylhet. With the help of Muslim soldiers, he invaded Manipur. The raid was not successful and many of the Muslim soldiers were taken as captives. These Muslim captives got married to Manipuri women and this was the beginning of a new race, Manipuri Muslims. It was in 1622 that the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, sent three ambassadors to Manipur. This was reciprocated by the Maharaja of Manipur. This indirectly encouraged immigrants from outside.¹² Majority of Muslims came from Bengal and Assam.¹³ Some of them also came from the western areas of the sub-continent with the sole purpose of preaching Islam. In the early days, as we have already seen, intermarriages between Meiteis and Muslims were very common. The population of Manipur was affected by the Burmese raids on

12. R.M. Nath, The Background of Assamese Culture (Assam: A.K. Nath, 1948), p. 90.

13. E.W. Dunn says, 'The Mussalman are the descendants of Bengali immigrants, retain a knowledge of Hindustani and Bengali, and are hardly distinguishable in appearance from the Bengali, who have never left Cachar'. Similarly T.C. Hudson writes at one place, 'The Panggans (Muslims-mine) were believed to have originated from Cachar...' R. Brown also infers that Manipuri Muslims are 'chiefly from the districts of Sylhet and Kachar'. E.W. Dunn (comp), Gazetteer of Manipur (Calcutta: Government of India, 1886), p. 14.

Manipur. Many of them were taken as captives.¹⁴ At present the Muslim population of Manipur has adopted itself to Manipur culture and they are known as 'Panggans', the corrupt form of 'Bengal'.

Political Evolution

To trace the political history of Manipur is very difficult since ancient records are not fully available. Since the advent of the Christian Era about forty-seven native kings have reigned till 1714. Only one important happening worth mentioning during all these years is the conquest of Khumbat by the united forces of Pong and Manipur in 1475. This followed the annexation of the Kabaw Valley in the territory of Manipur.¹⁵ It is said that a king named Pakhangba reigned some 300 years before 1714. Edward Gait terms the account of this period as 'merely legendary'.¹⁶ The present political history of Manipur started from 1714 with the rule of Garib Newaz (patron of

14. From great antiquity Muhammadans have formed part of the population of the Manipur Valley. Naturally, during Burmese invasion, Muslim population was affected considerably, as they chiefly reside to the east of the capital of Manipur.

15. E. Gait, A History of Assam (Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1933), p. 321.

16. Ibid., p. 263.

the poor). He has been considered one of the most powerful kings of Manipur. During the years 1725 and 1749, he was able to capture many important towns of Burma. It would not be any exaggeration to say that Manipur owes her present shape to him. His influence in the west extended up to Cachar; to the south, as far as the water-shed flowing seawards; and to the north for about nine days journey from the capital.¹⁷ As has already been mentioned - the remarkable event of his reign was the introduction of Hinduism. He was a peace-loving Raja. He was murdered by his second son, Jit Shai, on the bank of Ningthee river, while returning from the Burmese campaign with his eldest son, Sham Shai who also shared the fate of the father. Jit Shai immediately ascended the throne.

Jit Shai succeeded his father but after a short reign of five years, he was expelled from Manipur by his own brother Barut Shai. Barut Shai was on the throne of Manipur for about two years. After his death, Goura Sham, the eldest son of Sham Shai took over the administration. He being crippled was unable to perform his functions properly and so he took the help of his brother Jai Singh

17. Before the arrival of Britishers in Manipur the roads connected with the neighbouring states were not motorable, rather they were only way faring by bullock-cart, or on foot or horse, and so the journey could be measured by the time.

or Chingthungkhamba in ruling the country. Jai Singh took the throne after the death of Goura Sham in 1764. He held this

During these years an active hostility developed between Burma and Manipur. The Burmese were unhappy with the murder of Garib Newaz by his son. In 1755 the Burmese king Alaungpaya attacked Manipur, and took away many captives. It was the 'first devastation' inflicted by the Burmese on the Manipuris. The Burmese could occupy Manipur for not more than nine days, as they were pushed back by the Manipuris. The second invasion, one of the 'worst disasters' in the history of Manipur,¹⁸ resulted in the occupation of Imphal by Alompra in 1758.¹⁹ This could have serious consequences but for the timely intervention by the British. An agreement was signed between the Governor of the Bengal Presidency and Manipur. The former agreed to help the latter in expelling the Burmese from Manipur. This agreement, however, was never put into practice. During the reign of Shembegwen, the Burmese crossed the Hiroke Range and there was a ferocious battle at Tamu. Jai Singh escaped to Cachar. The Burmese put Kalemba, a descendant

18. D.G.E. Hall, Burma (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1950), p. 85.

19. G.E. Harvey, Outline of Burmese History (Calcutta: Bose Press, 1925), p. 133.

of the former Moirang Rajas, on the throne of Manipur as a nominal king. He reigned under the protection of Burma for three years. With the help of the Cachar king, Jai Singh expelled Kalembe from Manipur. Kalembe immediately fled to Burma.

Between 1770-71, Kalembe's brothers tried to recapture the throne of Manipur. This time Jai Singh could not resist their attack, and fled to Cachar. Between 1775 and 1782 Jai Singh repeatedly attempted to regain his throne. But he was always unsuccessful. Following this, there was an interval of political anarchy, during which period many princes, Burmese and Manipuri, would appear to have alternately held Manipur. Meanwhile, the year after 1782, a Manipur prince Erembe could bring a peaceful atmosphere for a period of three years. But this state of affairs was not permanent. Once again when Burmese attacked Manipur, but suffered heavy loss. Erembe handed over the administration to Jai after his return from Cachar.

Jai could rule only for one year when suddenly he was forced by the Burmese invasion to leave the country. He was compelled to flee from the country as he was unable to face the powerful Burmese army. There was complete disorder in the country and many important changes took

place.²⁰

Jai, shortly after he returned in 1798, apparently tired out by his constant wars against Burma, stepped down from the throne in favour of his eldest son Rabino Chandra. After the death of Jai in 1799, Manipur was once again plunged in a state of chaos and confusion. Rivalry among the princes was one of the main sources of political disorder in the country. This continued till 1819. During the regime of Marjit Singh, one of the brothers of the former king Rabino Chandra, a strained relationship developed between his country (Manipur) and Burma. Marjit appeared to have meditated throwing off the yoke of Burmese supremacy at the first opportunity. With change of kings occurring in Burma, the new ruler Bagyidaw (1819-37) sent a message to Marjit, demanding his presence as a feudatory. Marjit refused to obey the order of the Burmese king. This led to another invasion by the Burmese in 1819. The Manipuris strongly resisted for seven days, but were at last overpowered, and Marjit fled to Cachar. During this invasion the Burmese army

20. After 1786 there was a rapid succession of rajas in Manipur. There was instability in the country. It led to a state of chaos and confusion. Moreover, during this period, in the reign of one Wankai, a great flood in the valley of Manipur, caused great loss to life and property.

almost completely devastated the country. The houses of the villagers were extensively demolished, and the walls of the king's enclosures levelled with the ground. G.E. Harvey writes, "... it is now impossible to tell what their social and political conditions were like."²¹ The great disaster of 1819, was followed by a period of anarchy and political instability. 'From this period the history of Munnepore (sic) presents an unvarying scene of disgusting treachery, between the numerous sons of Jaee Singh, who in their contests for supremacy, arrayed the unhappy people of the country in hostile warfare against each other and inflicted miseries upon them ..."²²

During the ascendancy of Chourajit Singh, one of his brothers, Marjit conspired against him. But it was an unsuccessful attempt and he had to flee to Ava. With the help of Burma, Marjit once again attempted to overthrow his brother Chourajit, but he failed to do so.

21. G.E. Harvey, Outline of Burmese History (Calcutta: Bose Press, 1925), p. 133.

22. R. Boileau Pemberton, Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India (Calcutta: Bagchi & Co., 1966), p. 45.

In 1801 Rabino Chandra was fatally murdered by his step brother, when he was watching a Hockey match. The killer faced the same fate when he was killed by his brother Chourajit Singh in a battle in 1806.

He fled to Cachar. Then he reached Burma. This time the king of Ava helped him with a large and strong force, which could defeat Chourajit who escaped to Cachar. Finally, Marjit was placed on the throne of Manipur in 1813. As a token of friendship, Marjit gave the Kabaw Valley to the Burmese.²³

Marjit reigned for a period of five years and the Manipuri had a peaceful state of affairs. A problem started when he refused to pay tribute to the Burmese king, a promise he had made during the Burmese help in overthrowing Chourajit. Hpagyidoo, the King of Burma, determined to punish Marjit, sent an army under the command of General Maha Bandula to depose Marjit. The Burmese raided Manipur during the rainy season, and defeated Marjit in 1819. The Burmese this time destroyed a number of Manipuri villages. Marjit escaped to Cachar. He was received by his brother there. The Burmese placed Manipur under the rule of Jagu Singh, a son-in-law of Garib Newaz. He was succeeded by a brother of Nar Singh. Both these rulers were never really accepted by Manipuris and were regarded as stooges of Burma.

23. Arthur P. Phayre, History of Burma (London: 7 A High Street, Wanstead, 1967), p. 229.

Before the outbreak of the Anglo-Burmese War in 1822, repeated attempts were made unsuccessfully to free Manipur from the control of Burma. In the meanwhile Gambhir Singh, a prince of Manipur, implored British help for his country. The British were ready to help him as they were opposed to the Burmese policy of expansionism. This resulted in the Anglo-Burmese War. On March 5, 1824, the Burmese invaded Manipur and Cachar simultaneously. After a number of engagements at different places, the Manipur forces repulsed the Burmese from the territory of Manipur. The war was brought to close by the treaty of Yandaboo, in 1826.²⁴ Manipur was declared as an independent State. Gambhir was installed as the Mañaraja. By the treaty of January 25, 1834, between the (British) Government of India and Manipur, Kabaw valley was transferred by the former to Burma. As a compensation a monthly subsidy of five hundred rupees was granted to Manipur.²⁵ This continued till the death of Gambhir. Later it was withdrawn, and a Political Agent was appointed for preserving friendly relationship with the State of Manipur.

24. C.U. Aitchison (comp.), A Collection of Treaties. Vol. XII (Calcutta: Government of India, 1931), p. 230.

25. Ibid., p. 187.

After the death of Gambhir, the administration passed on to his son, Chandra Kirti. As Chandra Kirti was minor the whole burden of administration was conducted by his Senapati, Nar. Chandra Kirti's mother was sceptical about the loyalty of Nar and conspired against him. As she failed to get Nar murdered, she with her son fled from the country. She took shelter in a British camp. In spite of her best endeavours, the Chief Commissioner of Assam refused to give her help in overthrowing the Manipur Regent, Nar.

After the death of Nar in 1850, his brother Debendra Singh ascended the throne. When Chandra Kirti became major, he successfully revolted against Debendra, who fled to Cachar. During the reign of Chandra Kirti several attempts were made to overthrow him by Debendra's brother and three sons of Nar. But always they were pushed back by the army of Chandra Kirti. And they had to take refuge in Cachar.

Chandra Kirti, the young Raja, assumed the title of Maharaja by virtue of his strength and popularity. He established a strong government. The British also seemed to be satisfied with his rule. Slowly, however, some misunderstanding developed over the Maharaja's demand for the resumption of the payment of Kabaw Valley compensation, which had been suspended after the death of Gambhir. He threatened to forcibly take back the Kabaw Valley if they

did not fulfil his demand. This was not liked by the British Government. The Political Agent characterized this demand as '... unbecoming from the court of the son of the man who owed his throne to the British Government.'²⁶ Analysing the situation, the Political Agent wrote to the British Government of India, 'I have met with some petty acts of annoyance indicating a bad spirit in the authorities, who (at least many of them) seem to think the presence of the representative of the British Government ought to be no check on them; that by their prowess they gained the throne for the young Raja in spite of the British Government, and now they have got it, they may do exactly as they choose. I trust, however, as they cool down they may understand their positions. The young Raja, I believe, does'.²⁷ The British Government in India in reply warned the Raja of serious consequences if he did not stop the campaign against the British. This calmed down the Maharaja. The British Government promised to extend all help to him on demand.²⁸ Thus silenced, as a gesture of goodwill

26. R. Brown, Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, 1874), p. 68.

27. Ibid.

28. In 1851, 1859, 1862 and between 1864 and 1866 several attempts were made by rival princes to overthrow the Government of Chandra Kirti, but all of them were made unsuccessful with the British help.

Chandra Kirti helped the British during the outbreak of Indian Mutiny in 1857 by putting his troops at their disposal.²⁹ For this act the Maharaja was highly honoured by the British Government of India.

Chandra Kirti was succeeded by his son Sur Chandra in May 1886. But his ascendancy was challenged by Bara Chauba Singh, the eldest son of Nar. He was not successful and Bara Chauba was taken into custody by Sur Chandra. Sur Chandra was a weak ruler. This encouraged rivalries among his eight brothers, which later on resulted in the emergence of two groups³⁰ - the Maharaja (i.e. Sur Chandra Singh), Pucka Sana, Samoo Hangaba, and the Dolairoi Hangaba formed one side; whilst the Jubraj (i.e. Kula Chandra Singh), Senapati (i.e. Tikendrajit Singh), Angau Sana, and Zilla Singh all combined together. It reached a climax when the group of Tikendrajit attacked the palace in September 1890. The Senapati Tikendrajit and two of his other brothers (i.e. Zilla Singh and Angau Sana) took possession of the palace. Panicked, Sur Chandra abdicated the throne and sought asylum at the residence of the Political Agent whose advice to the contrary he disregarded.

29. Ibid., p. 69.

30. Ethel St. Clair Grimwood, My Three Years in Manipur and Escape from the Recent Mutiny (London: Richard Bentley and son, 1891), p. 133-34.

In the meanwhile Jubraj Kula Chandra Dhaja was installed on the throne as the king of Manipur, with the help of the Senapati, Tikendrajit, who was the chief architect of the uprising. The British Government recognised the new king. But they developed bitterness against Senapati for his illegal acts against the former king. A small military force was sent to Manipur by the Assam Government, to carry out the decision of the Government of India, including the arrest of Senapati.³¹ The party which included Chief Commissioner, Quiton, reached Imphal on March 22, 1891. The Senapati had sensed the British designs and so he avoided attending the Durbar held in the honour of the British. When the Chief Commissioner decided to arrest the Senapati at his residence, it resulted in serious hostilities in which the Chief Commissioner and his four officers were brutally murdered by the Manipuris. The remaining British officers fled to Silchar (Assam) as they found the situation beyond their control. On 27 April, 1891, a big military force arrived at Imphal to control the Manipuri uprising. The Manipuris were completely overpowered. The Jubraj, Senapati and other brothers who had taken part in the

31. Sir Robert Reid, History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1914 (Shillong: Assam Government Press, 1942), p. 56.

rebellion were arrested. Tikendrajit was convicted of waging war against the Queen Empress, and abetment of the murder of the British officers. He was sentenced to death. Kula Chandra and his brother with thirteen others were transported for life.

After the sudden political upheaval of 1891, Manipur lost her identity for the time being. In September 1891, plans for future administration were finalized, and Chura Chand Singh, a great grandson of Nar Singh was nominated to be the future king of Manipur. By Sanad No. LXXII, the State of Manipur was brought under the complete control of the British Government. Manipur was made to pay a subsidy of Rs50,000 to the British Government with effect from 21 August, 1891.³²

Since Chura Chandra Singh was a minor, the administration in fact was in the hands of the Political Agent. In May 1907, the State Administration was handed over to Chura Chand Singh. The Lieutenant Governor formally installed him as Raja. A council of six persons was nominated to help him run the affairs of the country. Beside this he was assisted by an officer of

32. C.U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties
Vol. XII (Calcutta: Government of India Central
Publication Branch, 1931), p. 106.

Indian Civil Service in his day to day administration. The hereditary title of Maharaja was bestowed on him on 1 January, 1918. The Maharaja, with the help of the British, efficiently ruled the State and abolished the system of slavery and Pothang.³³

33. Under this old custom of Pothang every village was compelled to repair roads and school buildings and carry the luggage of touring officials within its boundary.

Chapter II

MANIPUR AT THE END OF THE KUKI INSURGENCY:
1917-19

Since the Manipuri Uprising of 1891 against the British Government, the Kuki Insurgency during 1917-19 was the first of its kind during the entire period of British rule in Manipur. The Kukis who constitute one of the most powerful tribes of Manipur, revolted against foreign domination. Disturbances in the hills upset the State administration. The British Government felt considerably annoyed with frequent troubles which often resulted in losses of life and property. A number of disobedient villages were burnt down to ashes. Some of the Kuki chiefs were arrested in connection with the uprising and punished after a fair trial.

The British Government could, however, bring the situation under control only in 1919. The experience of the Kuki rebellion made the British Government realise the inadequacy of the rules which were framed for the administration of Manipur State in 1916.

Before we go into the details of the British actions, it would be worthwhile if we briefly probe into the causes of the Kuki Insurgency.

Immediate Causes

The year 1917 marks a landmark in the political history of Manipuri tribals. It was in the year of

Bolshevik Revolution of Russia, that the Kukis of Manipur revolted against the British Government of India.

The immediate cause of the Kuki Rebellion was the partial recruitment of forced labour from the Kuki tribe for the service of Labour Company in Mesopotamia during the First World War.¹ In the beginning of 1917, the Assam Government was asked to provide labourers for employment with Army in Mesopotamia. The Assam Government requested the Maharaja of Manipur through the Political Agent. The Maharaja immediately started recruiting labourers with an aim to secure about 4000 labourers.

The British Officers never realised the likely difficulties in the recruiting process. The Kuki tribe had strongly opposed the British system of recruitment. The Kuki chiefs or Pibas adopted an obstructive attitude.²

Regarding the delicacy of the situation the Political Agent of Manipur wisely proposed a dialogue

1. Home Department, Political File No. 34, July 1917, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

2. Chengjapao of Aishan village, head of the Thado Kukis, opposed the recruitment of labourers. He informed all the village chiefs not to obey British Orders, and to resist enrolment of labours, if necessary by force. Foreign Department, Political File No. 4-12, NAI, New Delhi.

between the Government and village chiefs. But the Kuki leaders flatly refused the proposal, and did not turn up for talk with the Political Agent. As the situation became somewhat serious, the Political Agent requested the higher authorities to send force to control the unruly tribals. A small force was sent from Aijal in the month of March 1917, for the purpose of preventing village heads from interfering with recruitment process.³ This force was able to bring under control the Tangkhuls - one of the sub-Naga tribes of Manipur - and south-western Kuki sections.⁴ Thereafter, it was reported that Colonel Cole was able to enrol about 736 labourers in the beginning of April. The number increased further and thus a labour corps could proceed to Mesopotamia.⁵

The Maharaja expressed regret for his inability in raising up the wanted number of labourers. When the Chief Commissioner of Assam was asked a second time for

3. Ibid.

4. J.C. Higgins, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1916-17 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1917), p. 2.

5. Foreign Department, Political File No. 4-12, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

raising a Second Labour Corps, the local officers including the Maharaja were confident about doing so.⁶ The Chief Commissioner was of the opinion that the Maharaja's proposal of leading a Second Corps to France should be accepted so that the Maharaja himself could have an opportunity to see the outside world. At the same time the Chief Commissioner was doubtful whether the conservative Hindu Brahmins would allow the Maharaja to leave his home State during the war time.⁷

The offer was, however, declined by Chelmsford, the Governor General of India, who wrote to the Maharaja of Manipur, thanking him for his keen interest in raising the Second Labour Corps. He further added that the Maharaja might be asked if any such corps were needed for service (in France) in the near future.⁸

6. To Viceroy of India, as Maharaja wrote, 'In view of the size and frequency of the drafts required for the first Corps of hillmen, I regret that I shall be unable to raise a Second Corps of hillmen. But I hope to raise a second Corps, when required, from any valley Manipuri subjects (i.e. Meiteis-mine), and it is my desire to accompany it on active service.' Foreign Department, Political File No. 54, 1917, NAI, New Delhi.

7. Foreign Department, Political File No. 40, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

8. Foreign Department, Political File No. 54, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

The Army Department of the Government of India, also was of the same opinion because already there were four Manipuri Labour Companies serving in France. Foreign Department, Political File No. 40, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

After sometime, however, the British Government changed her policy, and the Assam Government was asked for raising a Second Labour Corps. A political conference was held in Shillong in August to discuss the matter.⁹ The Political Agent of Manipur was confident about raising up a Second Labour Corps from Manipur. With a view to understand the prevailing situation, and to convince the tribals, he arranged some meetings between the Government and the tribals. The tribal chiefs at this conference declined to supply labourers but they offered money.¹⁰ The Political Agent, not fully conscious of the tribal feelings, threatened those defiant Kuki chiefs with punishment if labourers were not supplied within a fixed time. The Political Agent thought that he would be able to get a large number of coolies from the north-east of the Manvum village of Mombi. It was in view of the fact that Ngulkhup, Mombi chief had promised to him to supply the required labourers whenever needed. Subsequently, however, his attitude changed and it was learnt that Ngulkhup had asked

9. Foreign Department, Political File No. 320, 1922, NAI, New Delhi.

10. Foreign Department, Political File No. 4-12, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

11. Office of the Political Agent, Special File No. 388, 1919, Secretariat Library & Record Branch, Manipur.

the villagers to burn their villages and to kill their women and children, if they were asked to send labourers to the Government.¹² The Political Agent was surprised to find the change in the attitude of Ngulkhup. He decided to teach a lesson to the defiant Kuki chiefs by taking up punitive measure against them.

Before we discuss details about the punitive steps taken by the Government, it would be worthwhile to know why the Kuki chiefs were unwilling to supply labourers on demands from the Government, and how far their objections were justified.

First, the Kukis were afraid of going to an unknown place far off their villages.¹³ Besides, it was rumoured that following the outbreak of the Great War the Maharaja and Political Agent had been killed in the field. And the British force was also defeated in the war. The garrison which was stationed in Manipur was also withdrawn. As Higgins said, 'A garbled version of the retreat from Mons and the substitution of the

12. Foreign Department, Political File No. 7-131, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

13. J.C. Higgins, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1916-17 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1917), p. 2.

Darrang Military Police battalion for the regular regiment in Manipur were probably responsible for the stories of disaster and the withdrawal of the garrison.¹⁴ Probably the ignorant tribals might have been afraid of going to France, and facing dangerous consequences. It was also felt that Kamhaos of the north Chin Hills were planning to attack suddenly the Manipur State. The Kamhao tribe had always been a source of trouble on the border areas of Manipur. This was undoubtedly one of the important reasons for the opposition by tribal chiefs to the proposal for second recruitment. At the same time the Kukis also apprehended that if they left their homes for France at such a critical juncture, the Angamis taking the advantage of their long absence would surely kill their women-folk and children.¹⁵

Another reason for opposition to the recruitment was its resemblance to the old system of forced labour.¹⁶

14. J.C. Higgins, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1914-15 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1915), p.2.

15. As to how these rumours spread the Political Agent in Manipur said, 'The sources of the rumours could not be traced. They were probably attributable to the ignorance of the people'

16. Under the system of forced labour every male citizen above sixteen years of age had to perform the assigned work for ten days in every forty days. They would be given wages for their service. In certain case if any one failed to pay taxes, one had to give labour instead of taxes. E.W. Dunn (Com.), Abridged Gazetteer of Manipur (Simla: Government Central Printing Office, 1891), p. 33.

C.C. Watson, a British Officer, Home Department, expressed similar views when he wrote: 'The requisition to the tribal chiefs to supply coolies looks rather like a revival of the system (force labour).'¹⁷

Finally, the riotous and superstitious Kuki chiefs became a victim of Chingakhamba Sana Chaoba Singh. He claimed himself to have supernatural power.¹⁸ He openly incited the Kukis of Manipur to revolt against the regime of Maharaja, Sir Chura Chand Singh. The Charlatan, Chinga Khamba Sana Chaoba Singh, propagated that rule of British Government was going to end very soon, and so, their loyal subjects should be annihilated.¹⁹ He went from village to village for this. He was at least to some extent successful in creating a stir among the Kukis.²⁰

17. Foreign Department, Political File No. 7-131, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

18. Robert H. Henderson, Administration Report, Manipur State 1917-18 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1918), p. 1.

19. Foreign Department, Political File No. 4-12, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

20. Most of the Kuki Chiefs admitted that they were instigated by Chinga Khamba Sana Chaoba Singh to rise against the British Government and Maharaja. A Government report also stated that Chinga Khamba Sana Chaoba Singh claimed himself as the elder brother of the present Maharaja. The report charged him with the responsibility of incitement of the Kukis and others to make war on the local government with a selfish motive of establishing himself as the Raja of Manipur. Office of the Political Agent, Special File No. 388, 1919, SLRS, Manipur.

Chinga Khamba Sana Chaoba Singh was arrested in Burma.²¹ The Advisory Committee was of the opinion that he should not be allowed to return to Manipur. The Maharaja held the same view. He was tried by a special tribunal like other Kuki chiefs, and deported under Regulation 111 of 1818 and sentenced to life imprisonment.²²

Punitive Measures

As the Kuki movement took a serious turn, the local Government felt the need for punitive measures. The disturbances among the Kukis also had an impact on the adjacent areas. In Burma, Chin Hills north of Haka and all other parts except Upper Chindwin, and including unadministered Somra Tract, were affected by the influence of the Kuki unrest in Manipur.²³ The Kukis of Tuzu river or Nantaleik situated east of the

21. Robert H. Henderson, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1917-18 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1918), p. 1.

22. C. Gimson, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1919-20 (Imphal: State Press, 1920), p. 1.

23. Foreign Department, Political File No. 7-131, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

Naga Hills, were also agitated.²⁴ In January 1918, it was quite apparent that Kukis of Burma were ready to help their brotheren Kukis of Manipur in their fighting to overthrow the Government. The Kukis of Naga Hills were also prepared to help them. Pachei, an old Kuki leader of Chassad, in the unadministered area of Somra Tract, also pledged to support with men and arms the Kuki insurgents of Manipur.²⁵

Encouraged by this in most of the villages, the Kuki rebels in Manipur posed a serious threat to the Government. The Government was alarmed. On October 14, 1917, the Political Agent with an escort of Fifty Rifles of the Darrang Battalion set out for Mombi village with the intention to arrest its leader, Ngulkhup who was the first Kuki chief to commit an offence against the Government. He asked Ngulkhup to meet him. But he failed to come. The Political Agent in anger burnt the Mombi village on October 17, 1917.

The news of the burning of Mombi village alarmed the Kukis. Now onwards they became more aggressive.

24. Ibid.

In the Upper Chindwin, the trouble was '... due to no local grievance but solely caused by rebellion in Manipur since Kukis on Burma side are off-shoots of Chassads in Manipur'. Home Department, Police File No. 181-184, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

25. Ibid.

Finding the situation tense once again, Higgins arranged a meeting with some leaders of Uktal village, situated in the west of Manipur Hills, some twenty-six miles away from Imphal. The discussions did not produce any results. Meanwhile, the Political Agent learnt that twenty-two Kuki chiefs were meeting in order to mobilize opposition against the Government.

The Government of Assam had never contemplated the use of force for the purpose of enlisting labour for the establishment of a Second Labour Corps.²⁶ The Political Agent, however, argued that in view of the changing attitude of the Kuki chiefs it had become necessary to take a few punitive measures which could teach them a lesson. When the matter came to the notice of the Government of India, it was decided to abandon further recruitment. But at the same time it also passed an order to punish the recalcitrant Kuki chiefs.²⁷

Arrangements were made to send out a column in order to arrest the unruly Kuki chiefs, as they did not turn up in compliance with the summons.²⁸ By this time

26. Ibid.

27. Foreign Department, Political File No. 4-12, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

28. Ibid.

the Kukis had already prepared to attack the valley of Manipur. Before any action was taken by the Government, the Kukis from Hinglep, Ukha and neighbouring villages, raided and looted the Manipur State Forest Toll Station at Ithai in December 1917.²⁹ It was learnt that this incident took place at the instigation of Chinga Khamba Sana Chaoba Singh who had also planned with the help of the Kukis an attack on Imphal.³⁰ This however did not take place since the Assam Rifles had been employed to defend Imphal.

As a precautionary measure several outposts were opened at different hill areas of Manipur, when disturbance was expected.³¹ The Government was under the impression that the Kuki trouble would subside as soon as a few of the recalcitrant chiefs were brought to book. But it did not happen. The Kukis became more violent after the military operation.³² But they had

29. Office of the Political Agent, Special File No. 388, 1919, SLRB, Manipur.

30. Robert H. Henderson, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1917-18 (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & C., 1918), p. 1.

31. Since December 22, 1917, the column of Assam Rifles and Burma Military Police were on duty. Foreign Department, Political File No. 4-12, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

32. After the military operation, they had expanded their area of raids. First, they launched raids on friendly and neighbouring Naga villages. Secondly, the plain people became a target to be attacked. Lastly, they did not spare the Government force.

never anticipated the consequences of their armed revolt against a mighty British Empire. The news of the Kuki raids and infiltrations had been very often coming to the Headquarters. The Kukis treated Nagas and Manipuris (Meiteis) as their formidable enemies, because they had remained loyal to the British Government.

The Government intensified the military operation. During the month of January, Cosgrave, Political Agent, Manipur, with an escort of the Assam Rifles proceeded to Tammu to burn nine hostile villages and destroy their properties.³³ Higgins also destroyed fourteen rebel Kuki villages after fairly continuous fighting. Hutton with the help of the Column of the Naga Hills Rifles conducted an operation in the western hillside of Manipur. There he occupied a Kuki village, Chongjan on February 12, 1918. As a result of this operation, Laipi, chief of the Senting Kuki village, surrendered to Hutton. It was proposed to send further force, from Silchar to Imphal to suppress the Kuki rebellion.

On February 20, 1918, Colonel Cloete led a force from Silchar for Imphal. During the same time Cosgrave with another force had marched on to the south-west of

33. Home Department, Political File No. 40, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

Manipur. Cloete's operation in Maphitel Hills resulted in success.³⁴ With the exception of one Kuki chief, all surrendered before the British forces. The forces which were operating in the southern hills faced a strong opposition but the party at last emerged victorious. Next they launched attack on Manchangs in the south-hills. On March 14, 1918, Higgins and Coote left Imphal to join Burmese Column in fighting against Chassad which was supposed to be the strongest, and most disobedient Kuki village. Reaching Kongal Thana they compelled nine villages to surrender to them. Sixteen Ayuparel villages situated between the areas of Jammu and Chassad were also ready to surrender.³⁵ On the Upper Chindwin, Captain Patrick's column had commenced its advance on Chassad in Manipur from the south. The military operations were expected to stop in April, i.e. before the start of rainy season, to be resumed if necessary in the next winter.

In the meanwhile, the British Government was keen to find out why the force was comparatively weak in

34. Home Department, File No. 181-184, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

35. Ibid.

dealing with the Kuki rebels.³⁶ One of the factors was to be the lack of modern equipment. Military was also not well organised.³⁷ There was also lack of efficient trainees in Manipur.³⁸

For the next military operation, the Chief Commissioner of Assam felt the need of complete re-armament of the Assam Rifles because in his opinion the integrity and security of the North-East Frontier of India depended on its success. A Home Department communication dated the 28th May 1918 approved the proposal made by the Assam Chief Commissioner.

As soon as the rainy season ended in Manipur, the military operation again started. There were reports of fresh attacks by the Kukis in several villages. One Kuki leader Khuthinthang of Jampi claimed himself as Maharaja. According to his instructions some of his followers started collecting revenues and guns from weaker villages. In the meantime, it was reported that out of dissatisfaction with the Maharaja of Manipur,

36. Bealson-Bell, Chief Commissioner of Assam, said, '...Our casualties have been heavier than those of the enemy. Of we have inflicted 'Punishment' and a good many chiefs and their villages have 'come in'. Foreign Department, Political File No. 7-131, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

37. Home Department, Police File No. 134-135, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

38. Home Department, Police File No. 190-191, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

Moirang had established some unauthorised courts.³⁹ The Political Agent said that they were in touch with the Charlatan Chinga Khamba Sana Chaoba Singh.⁴⁰

In June, the Kuki rebels renewed their attack on Khwata, Khongde and Iringbam villages. Immediately an outpost was established to deal with these rebels. The Kuki insurgents even threatened to attack neighbouring areas beyond Manipur boundary. It was reported that seventy-five Kukis had entered the North Cachar Hills from Manipur side.

The Political situation in Manipur became very serious as the Kuki movement could not be fully crushed. The Government decided to stop active military operation since it realized that the military operation in the hills were not as successful as expected. Describing the development in Manipur, in a letter to Secretary of State for India, the Viceroy commented, 'Operations against Kukis in Manipur and Burma and Chins have already been a failure and we are considering advisability

39. Home Department, Political File No. 29, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

40. Foreign Department, Political File No. 7-131, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

of putting operations next cold weather under one military control, ...⁴¹

The administration confined itself to protected valley, Imphal. Eight police outposts were established at different places for the security of the valley.

On May 10, 1918, Beatson-Bell, Chief Commissioner of Assam, arrived at Imphal in order to have consultations with the local officers in connection with the suppression of Kuki rebellion and further continuation of military operation in the next winter. Later in July 1918, he visited Simla where he discussed the problem of Kuki rebels in Manipur with the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief.⁴² Thereafter, the Political Agent and Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, were summoned to a conference in Shillong to decide further measures pending the renewal of operations next winter under the command of General Keary.⁴³

At the close of August General Keary who had to command the military operation in Assam (and Burma), came

41. Home Department, Police File No. 251, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

42. Home Department, Political File No. 31, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

43. Home Department, Police File No. 185, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

to Shillong in order to discuss the situation with the Chief Commissioner of Assam, and plan military campaign. It was decided that in accordance with the usual procedure the General Officer Commanding would assume complete political as well as military control of area of operation.⁴⁴ He would inform the local Government regarding any development having political implications, so that the Government of India could be posted with the latest developments.

Before the planned military operation in the winter could materialise the Assam Rifles were badly affected by influenza which spread in Assam.⁴⁵ As a result of this, the Government of India even thought of suspension of active military expedition.⁴⁶ Yet the military operation took place on the scheduled day. The operations started in January and continued up to February 13, 1919. These were undoubtedly among the most active military expeditions against the defiant

44. Home Department, Political File No. 221, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

45. Home Department, Political File No. 42, 1919, NAI, New Delhi.

46. Home Department, Police File No. 47, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

Kuki rebels of Manipur.⁴⁷ During the operation, Longya, the village of the Kuki chief, Ngulbul, was occupied. His brother and fifty-five persons were arrested. His son died during the operation. The Chief of Ukha was also captured. Two hundred persons including women and children of Umdum had also surrendered. Among the captured were Ngulkhup, Chief of Mombi, and Tinthong, Chief of Longya, with his henchman Enjakhup.⁴⁸ Lt. Goldsmith, in his operations in the Chassad area, captured Bongmul and his twenty-six men. All the Mombi area chiefs had surrendered with the exception of Loothang of Gobok. In a combined expedition of Broome and Goldsmith led to the capture of five Kuki rebels. South-west and North-west areas became the victim of harassment by the military police.⁴⁹ Further surrender of Chiefs of Makan, Phunjong, Asang, Khulen and Molhang was also reported. In the south-east area Loothang of Gobok surrendered at last on February 22, 1919. Semkhupao of Simol followed him.

47. On January 15, 1919, General Officer Commanding in Manipur summarising the progress report of the operations, informed the Assam Government that forty-four persons were killed and burnt forty-eight villages and destroyed forty mithuns and large quantities of foodgrain. Fifty-four Kuki rebels also surrendered to the Government.

48. Home Department, Police File No. 8, 1919, NAI, New Delhi.

49. Foreign Department, Political File No. 94-161, NAI, New Delhi.

General Officer Commanding, Kuki punitive measure, Imphal, telegraphed to the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi, on March 1919, that Pachei had submitted to the military force this morning.⁵⁰

Following that, Pachei's lieutenant Nokhao also surrendered on the next day. The last of the special list was completed with the submission of Ngukhuka to Montifiore. During the operation in the Chassad area Montifiore burnt and destroyed several villages. The submission of Pachei together with the capture of Tinthong and Enjakhup in Jampi area, marked the end of active rebellion.⁵¹ His followers were left without a leader to guide them during the rebellion.

By the middle of 1919, the active military punitive operation was over, as almost all the recalcitrant Kuki chiefs had been either captured or surrendered. They were tried by Special Tribunal, and awarded punishments under Regulation 111 of 1818.

Gradually, the troops were withdrawn from north-west, south-west, south-east and western areas. The

50. Home Department, Police File No. 135, 1919, NAI, New Delhi.

51. Col. L.W. Shakespear, History of the Assam Rifles (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1929), p. 235.

rebels were completely disarmed. Some seventeen permanent posts were established at different places of Manipur (including Assam area). Important roads which were closed during the Kuki insurgency were opened. Demobilization was nearly completed, and civil power was handed over to the local administration.⁵²

The old system of administration to which we would now refer, was found inefficient to deal with the situation and many changes were made in it.

The Nemesis of Local Maladministration

Of the factors responsible for the Kuki rebellion the most important was their accumulated dissatisfaction with the local maladministration. The British officers were mainly responsible for the outbreak of the rebellion. Had they realised the strong feelings of the Kukis on labour enrolment, there would have been possibly no such revolt. Here we would highlight the drawbacks in the administrative machinery which failed to check the rebellion.

First, the method of recruitment was not justified from the point of view of 'fair selection'. The Home

52. Home Department, Political File No. 47, 1919, NAI, New Delhi.

Department, Government of India, had already advised the local Government not to use force against the persons who were unwilling to become labourers. It had further warned that action should be taken only if peace and tranquility within the State were threatened. The Political Agent made a mistake by giving warning to the Kukis that they would be punished if they did not enlist themselves in the Labour Corps to be sent to Mesopotamia. With regard to the raising of the Second Labour Corps both the Political Agent and the Maharaja committed a mistake by whole-heartedly enclosing the proposal, even-though they had the previous experience of the Kukis (and Nagas) offering resistance at the time of the first such recruitment. The use of force by the Political Agent ultimately led to the Kuki rebellion. Similar feelings were expressed by S.R. Hignell, Army Department, Government of India, who felt that the recruitment procedure adopted by the local administration officers seemed to have been extra-ordinarily ill-advised.⁵³

53. Foreign Department, Political File No. 7-131, 1918, NAI, New Delhi. W.S. Mevar, President of the Central Recruiting Board, held the same view of Hignall. As the method of labour enrolment was 'injudicious', the Kukis of 'Unadministered Area' - Somra Tract - rebelled out of brotherly fellow-feeling. Foreign Department, Political File No. 350, 1922, NAI, New Delhi.

When the hostilities actually opened the administration further proved itself incompetent for dealing with the situation. It was highly unimaginative to leave the entire administration covering about 7000 sq. miles of tribal area in the hands of one British officer designated as 'president' of the Manipur State Durbar. It was more serious particularly, in view of the fact, that the President was busy with the valley administration, and could not devote full time to the affairs of the hills. He was understandably not able to frequent visit the hill areas for administrative purposes. Such visits were highly essential for good administration. Naturally the people of hill areas felt neglected. The Political Agent, who shared the responsibility for the administration of the hills, abstained from action which might have weakened the President's authority.⁵⁴ Thus lack of 'direct contact' aggravated the situation further and made a compromise difficult. The British Administration later admitted the lacunae in the administration before and during the Kuki rebellion.

Lastly, the lambus or interpreters employed as intermediaries during the first recruitment of labourers

54. Foreign Department, Political File No. 4-12, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

were largely responsible for creating a misunderstanding between the British officers and the Kukis. These lambus played a sinister role in inciting the Kukis to revolt against the British Rule.⁵⁵ At the same time they took money from those Kukis who did not like to enlist themselves as members of the Labour Corps.⁵⁶ It was a crime committed by the lambus against the Government. Thus the role of lambus 'as most unsatisfactory intermediary',⁵⁷ was one of the factors in the Kuki insurgency.

Ensuring Political and Administrative Reforms

The Maharaja and British Officers, thus, were made fully aware of the drawbacks in the State administration which had led to the Kuki uprising of 1917. It was realised that one officer was not sufficient to look after the hilly areas as well as the valley of Manipur.

55. Cole, wife of the late Political Agent in Manipur, having an opportunity to know well about the Kuki uprising, once said, '... the interpreters used when the first endeavours were made to recruit in the Kuki country were to a large extent responsible for the trouble that they themselves did not want to be sent overseas as interpreters.' Foreign Department, Political File No. 7-131, 1918, NAI, New Delhi.

56. It was a fact that when the Kuki chiefs were against the enrolment of labourers the lambus used it unscrupulously as an opportunity to make money for themselves. Robert Reid, History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam. Shillong: Assam Government Press, 1942, p. 5.

57. Robert Reid, op.cit., p. 4.

Even before the completion of the Kuki punitive action, the British Government in India felt the necessity of reform in the administrative machinery of the Manipur State. The Chief Commissioner of Assam himself went to Manipur, to discuss with the Maharaja and local British officers the arrangements regarding the future administration of the hill tribes.⁵⁸ The Maharaja and the Chief Commissioner agreed to establish three sub-divisions in three separate areas of the hills. It was further agreed that each of the sub-divisions would be administered by one European officer designated as 'Sub-divisional Officer'. The three sub-divisions were as follows:

1. The South-West Area with headquarters at Chura Chandpur.
2. The North-West Area with headquarters at Tamenglong.
3. The North-East Area with headquarters at Ukhrul.⁵⁹

The hill areas in the north of Manipur including the Mao and Maram Naga groups, the whole of the Mombi

58. Foreign Department, Political File No. 135, 1919, NAI, New Delhi.

59. C. Gimson, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1919-20. (Imphal: State Press, 1920), p. 2.

area in the south-east, and the various tribes bordering the valley were to be administered directly by the Durbar President.⁶⁰

The new scheme was likely to be a burden on the State economy as it would involve an amount of Rs1,25,000 on the hill administration. This was facilitated by the declaration of the President in an open Durbar that the Government of India had offered certain 'financial concessions'.⁶¹ The annual subsidy of Rs50,000 payable by the state was reduced to Rs5,000 for a period of ten years. The Government also announced to forego the annual contribution of Rs30,000, which had been paid hitherto towards the upkeep of the Kohima - Imphal road, and deferred the payment of annual instalments towards the repayment of annual instalments of the loan taken by the Durbar from Rs60,000 to 30,000.⁶²

The question of jurisdiction of the Maharaja on collection of revenue was also taken up and after

60. Ibid.

61. Foreign Department, Political File No. 190, 1919, NAI, New Delhi.

62. Foreign Department, Political File No. 105-107, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

prolonged discussions the Governor-in-Council agreed to the Maharaja being given the power of revision in the revenue matter, as it was given in the civil and criminal cases under the sub-heading 'Administration of Justice' of the 'Rules for the Management of the State of Manipur.'⁶³ This was approved by the Government of India.

One more revision was brought in the rules which governed the administration of the Manipur State. The Rule 10 initially described the Maharaja as only a forwarding agent. Regarding this point the Governor-in-Council proposed with the approval of the Maharaja to abrogate this clause as it some-times had resulted in causing unnecessary delay. With regard to the interpretation of the rule 9 which allowed the Maharaja to record his own opinion only with reference to any suggestions made by the Durbar for the modification in the President's draft budget; and took away the Maharaja's right to extend his own suggestions, the Maharaja protested because he considered this as curtailment of his authority. The Governor-in-Council agreed to give to the Maharaja the right to place

63. Foreign Department, Political File No.1011, 1923, NAI, New Delhi.

before the Durbar any observations or criticisms on the budget which he thought fit.⁶⁴

The Governor-in-Council also agreed to the proposal of the Maharaja to restore the power of magistrate to him whereby he could punish any one violating the discipline in the police.⁶⁵ Recommendations were made to this effect to the Government of India in the following words:

'The Commandant of the State Military Police shall exercise powers corresponding to the powers of a 1st Class Magistrate, and an officer temporarily officiating as Commandant shall exercise powers corresponding to the powers of a 2nd-class Magistrate, for the purpose of inquiring into or trying any offence committed by a member of the Military Police Act, 1861 (V of 1861), or under the Assam Rifles Act (Assam

64. The revised draft Rule 10 was given approval by the Government of India in its letter No. 1089/1011-P., dated, July 5, 1923.

65. Foreign Department, Political File No. 419, 1924, NAI, New Delhi.

Act 1 of 1920), and any offence committed by a member of the Military Police against the person or property of another member and punishable under any law in force in Manipur.⁶⁶

The effects of revisions in the 'Rules for the Management of the State of Manipur' could be felt immediately. It helped in bringing to an end the after effects of the Kuki rebellion. The travelling British officers were greeted in a friendly manner and extended due hospitality. In May 1920, Sir Nicholas Beatson-Bell made a long trip, unaccompanied by any escort, through the hill areas which had been in rebellion. He visited also the sub-divisions, and was thoroughly satisfied with the manner in which the new system of administration had been introduced in the hill areas.⁶⁷

66. Rules for the Management of the State of Manipur, p. 4.

67. Foreign Department, Political File No. 105-107, 1920, NAI, New Delhi.

Chapter III

NAGA UNREST: I. JADONANG'S MOVEMENT

Unrest among the Kacha Nagas and the Kabui Nagas of the north-west of Manipur during the early 1930's was a turning point in the political history of tribal Manipur. Initially, the movement had a religious colouring. Subsequently, it partially assumed political overtones. The progenitor of this movement was one Jadonang, a Rongmai Naga of Puilon, (Kambiron) village in Tamenglong sub-division of Manipur. He was an ordinary soldier enlisted during the First World War, who had served in Mesopotamia (Iraq). On his return to his village, he started preaching a new cult from early 1925 onwards. He was arrested in 1928 on orders of the then Sub-Divisional Officer, S.J. Duncan, for prophesying the imminent replacement of the British Raj by a "Kabui Naga Raj"¹ and was imprisoned in Tamenglong.²

Jadonang's cult was based on animistic beliefs. It was a form of 'debased Hinduism'.³ Like Hindus he

1. Foreign Department, Political File No. 144, 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

2. Office of the Political Agent in Manipur, File No. 12, 1931, SLRB, Imphal.

3. R.C. Johnson to the Editor of The Living Age (New York).

constructed a temple and installed beside others an image of the Hindu god, Vishnu. The new cult was contrary to the ancient beliefs and customs of the Nagas. He justified it on the ground that he had been ordained in a dream by the god of Bhubon Hills (in Lakhipur) to build a temple for the prosperity and good health for every one.⁴ By posing as a medicine-man he got a chance to meet the villagers at large, whenever he went he preached his religion and political cult. His popularity went on increasing day by day and soon people were to regard him as a god.

The movement of Jadonang had two motives - annihilation of the Kukis and overthrow of the British Rule. The Jadonang movement aimed at the suppression of the Kukis who had made the Nagas their staunch enemies from the time of their rebellion in 1917-1919. The

4. First, Jadonang came forward as a maiba (medicine-man). He also claimed to be a divinely 'healer'. He went from door to door and from village to village treating the ill. Often people came to him for treatment. He took three rupees for treatment, a bottle of zu (wine) for interpreting dreams and four rupees for praying to god for the welfare of the dead. It is noteworthy that he was very considerate towards the patients whom he could not cure and refunded their money. He told the Nagas to sacrifice more mithuns (sacrificial animals) to the gods to gain prosperity. Jadonang displayed mystical qualities by performing magical tricks such as water came out whenever he drew his sword from its case, and whosoever drank that water was to receive the blessings of god. He had two pet pythons also under the plinth of his house. He said that these pythons could talk to him. Thus he impressed the Naga villagers that he had supernatural power.

origin of the enmity between the Nagas and the Kukis lay in the fact that the Nagas did not join the rebellion, and at the same time they were loyal to the British Government. Jadonang thought that time had come to take the revenge on the Kukis for their wiping out of a considerable number of Kabui Naga villages during the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919. He reminded the Nagas of the tragic story of two young Naga girls, who had been murdered during the Kuki Rebellion. He knew that this would pinch the hearts of the Nagas. By this story he deliberately incited them for vendetta.

Secondly, Jadonang predicted the end of the British Rule and advent of the Kabui Naga Raj. This was purely political. He whispered to the Nagas that it should be kept very secret from the Kukis, the Government and the Manipuris (Meiteis). He threatened that his miraculous powers were such that he could hear from his house everything that was said, and would kill anyone, who gave the secret away to the Government or to the Kukis.⁶

5. Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills to Commissioner of Surma Valley, 24 March 1931, Foreign Department File No. 144-P/31-Poll, 1931.

6. Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills to Commissioner of Surma Valley, 16 March 1931, Ibid.

He would not allow the Kukis to walk about the earth.⁷ He further advised them not to hit the Kukis first unless they committed any hostile act against them, otherwise it would be better to keep peace. A Naga revolt against the Kukis would mean the suppression of the Kukis by force. He wanted the Angami Nagas also to join the Kacha Nagas in their war against the Kukis. He talked of the common origin of the Kacha Nagas and the Angamis even though they lived in different countries and spoke different dialects, and were brothers of the same stock, who drank pita modhu or rice beer. It was only a political approach to the Angamis to get cooperation and help from them. He sent word to the Angamis that he would visit them in the form of a bird or snake. There would be war against those persons who were unwilling to join him. The war might begin in 1930-31 or next generation when the rice plant reached a foot in height. All the Kukis would be wiped out within three years.⁸ To prove himself possessing supernatural powers Jadonang said that he would reign for three years, and then would

7. Office of the Political Agent in Manipur, File No. 12, 1931, SLRB, Imphal.

8. Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills to Commissioner of Surma Valley, 16 March 1931, Foreign Department File No. 144-P/31-Poll, 1931.

become a bird and fly about, and see exactly what all the Kacha Nagas were doing. If Kacha Nagas wanted to speak to him, they must come forward without delay.

Jadonang ordered all the Nagas not to cooperate with the British Government in any way. He gave out word that the revenue for that year could be paid to the Government but it should be paid to him in the following year, 1931-32.⁹ He further said no cotton should be sold, as he wanted all the cotton available to make an airship with. It was an open challenge to the powerful and mighty British Empire and was soon to bring its nemesis. Referring to an English translation from an Assamese Report (June 5, 1931), J.P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills (now Nagaland), reported the further development of the political situation to J.C. Higgins, Political Agent in Manipur. Jadonang expressed the intention of all the Nagas who had been desirous of independence from British Rule.¹⁰ It was learnt that all the Kacha Naga villages of the Naga Hills were going to welcome him with many mithuns as presents. The report said that Jadonang has secretly

9. Chief Secretary to the Governor of Assam, to Political Secretary of Government of India, 25 February 1931.

10. J.P. Mills to Political Agent, 5 June 1931, Office of the Political Agent, File No. 12, 1931, SLRB, Imphal.

told the Nagas that on hearing a sound in the air following a white cloud they should know that the war was on and they should prepare themselves for it. Only then they should be ready for defence. Another Report from the Sub-Divisional Officer said that about four hundred Nagas had gathered at Lunkao village and Jinam river (in North Cachar Hills) where they decided that, before attacking the Government, they should first of all raid Saipimol, one of the richest villages of the Kukis. This news had alarmed the Kukis. The State Kuki servants of Tamenglong were not in a position to move out for their census work, road works, vaccination and serving of parwanas and summons. The Kukis of Saipimol complained that Jadonang had collected guns with the intention to go to war against the Kukis, and the British Government.¹² They confirmed the contemplated plan of Jadonang of a mass massacre of the Kukis. The Angamis were coming in three batches to fight against the Kukis in the south. This corroborated

11. Ibid.

12. Office of the Political Agent in Manipur, File No. 12, 1931, SLR8, Imphal.

the information gathered by Higgins and Mills.¹³ The Political Agent, received information from a Naga Christian of Taningjam (a Kacha Naga village) reporting that the Nagas planned to murder the Kuki road Mohurrier who had been working there.¹⁴ In the meanwhile, Jadonang intentionally spread a rumour of victory of the Kabui Nagas in their war against the Kukis. The Deputy Commissioner had also received as many as fifty letters conveying that Jadonang had threatened to launch a war.

Remifications of the Jadonang Cult

Jadonang's movement did not remain confined to the north-west of Manipur but soon spread out to the neighbouring Cachar Hills and Naga Hills.¹⁵

The Government realized the necessity of despatching a force to control the Naga disturbances

13. Chief Secretary to the Governor of Assam, to Political Secretary of Government of India, 31 March, 1931, Foreign Department File No. 144-P/31-Poll, 1931.

14. The Political Agent was of the opinion that there would have been mass killings of the Kukis and Nagas if the road Mohurrier would have been fatally victimized. Ibid.

15. Henima, Sarema, Injoma, Intema, Jawna, Laloi, Dupema, Insung, etc. were some of the affected villages of the Naga Hills.

and to bring confidence among the Kukis. The Deputy Commissioner sent a small force of three sections of the Assam Rifles to Henima to forestall the possible disorder. He requested the Political Agent of Manipur to arrest Jadonang, who had just left for Bhubon. The Political Agent, J.C. Higgins, employed some Lam Subadars and interpreters as he saw no need of despatching an expedition for the time being. Duncan was to follow the Lam Subedars but Higgins thought an European Officer would not be so much helpful. But the Deputy Commissioner wanted to deal with the Naga unrest with a strong hand. As requested by the Deputy Commissioner, the Political Agent agreed to the sending of a military expedition to the Naga Hills,¹⁶ under the command of one Dallas Smith.

The Political Agent informed the Deputy Commissioner that Jadonang had left for Binnakandi, a Naga village, some days ago with thirty men taking the presents and offerings with him. He was well guarded by his followers. Higgins advised the Deputy Commissioner to send an armed force to arrest him immediately.¹⁷ It

16. Foreign Department, Political File No. 144, 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

17. Telegram from Political Agent of Manipur to the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, 14 February 1931, Political Agent File No. 12, 1931 (Tel. No. is not mentioned).

was reported that Jadonang had been a frequent visitor to Lakhipur. The Political Agent also informed the Mauzadar of Jiribam that the Nagas should be warned that their villages would be burnt if any of them created trouble.¹⁸ Higgins was not in favour of the withdrawal of the armed force from the trouble-spots until the Naga unrest was controlled.¹⁹

Mills reported that all the Kacha Naga villages were affected by the movement of Jadonang with one exception. Dallas Smith reported from Henima that Jadonang's movement had been increasing rapidly. He suspected that his movement had spread over Khonoma or portions of Khonoma. But he could not collect definite information that how they had been affected. The Political Agent was doubtful whether Mao and Maram areas might have been affected. The interpreters seemed to be ignorant of the development. Probably the Kabuis kept everything secret. The Manipuris were also supposed to be blind about the Naga unrest. He wrote to W.A. Cosgrave, Chief Secretary, Government of Assam: 'I shall

18. Ibid.

19. Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills to Political Agent of Manipur, 14 February 1931, Ibid.

also send a detachment up to Tamenglong, to occupy the fort there, to reassure the Kukis and Kacha Nagas. It is possible that the trouble may fizzle out if Jadonang (Sic) is arrested, ...²⁰ The Kukis were nervous whether they would be attacked by the Nagas. The Nagas had threatened that they would continue the movement even if Jadonang was arrested.²¹

The news of Kabui Naga unrest was brought by Harvey from Kohima relating that with exception to Lakema all the villages of Kacha Nagas in the Naga Hills were also affected. Jadonang had taken a large number of mithun from the villagers as a fee of his treatment of the sick and ill persons, and for the improvement of crops and keeping off rats. When some of the Khonoma men tried to see him who flatly refused to meet them on the ground that they were innately suspicious being as they were petty traders. However, there was no restriction, when they saw his sisters. The Sub-divisional Officer of North Cachar wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills informing the Nagas of this area particularly from the villages of Thinge, Hejaichak, Laisong, Lonkai and

20. Political Agent of Manipur to Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, 18 February 1931, Ibid.

21. Ibid.

Asalu were sending deputations to Rangkombe, a Manipuri Naga.²²

All of a sudden Higgins received a telegram (dated 20.2.31) from J.P. Mills informing him that Jadonang had been captured.²³

The Deputy Commissioner asked to send a police escort and extradition warrant.²⁴ Jadonang was captured on February 19, 1931, and kept under the custody of the Cachar authorities until taken over by the Political Agent on March 8. In reply to the telegram (dated 20.2.31), the Political Agent informed that the warrant had already been posted. And a column might reach Jirighat, probably on March 6, to take over Jadonang.²⁵

22. Sub-Divisional Officer of North Cachar Hills, to Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, 17 February 1931, Ibid.

23. A Manipuri described the story of Jadonang's arrest, as he narrated to the Sub-divisional Officer. A large and long procession of the Kabui Nagas and 'Haos' including persons of both sexes went to the temple of Bhubneshwar in Cachar. The party was headed by an 'old Kuki', who was regarded as their god. He rode on a pony. On their return way, they were stopped by Cachar sepoys to find out whether Jadonang was among them. Jadonang was arrested on the spot.

24. Telegram from Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills to Political Agent of Manipur, 20 February 1931, Political Agent File No. 12 (Tel. No. is not mentioned).

25. Telegram from Political Agent of Manipur to the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, 20 February 1931, Ibid (Tel. No. is not mentioned).

On February 24, 1931, Higgins left Imphal with a column consisting of one platoon of the 4th Assam Rifles and one British and one Gurkha officers with a view to bring Jadonang to Imphal.²⁶ At last, Higgins reached Jirighat and he brought Jadonang to Imphal via Tamenglong on March 29, 1931.²⁷

The Kacha Naga unrest did not subside even after the arrest of Jadonang. Several maibas (medicine-men) had sprung up in different villages. They poised themselves as village leaders in their respective villages. One Naga girl named Gaidinliu became the chief follower of Jadonang cult. She continued the Jadonang cult.²⁸ About this lady we will have to say something in the next chapter. In Cachar after Jadonang's arrest there was considerable alarm for some days as it was believed

26. They marched down hundred miles on the bridle path from Imphal to Cachar visiting on their way several Naga villages. On reaching Kambiron village the Political Agent found a decorated temple erected by Jadonang. He destroyed the temple and shot the pet python of Jadonang. Village elders did not raise objection to the Political Agent, because it was not a tradition among the Nagas to have a temple. It was his own style to build a temple. Rather they appreciated the Political Agent. A.G. McCall, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1930-31 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1931), p. 2.

27. Foreign Department, Political File No. 144, 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

28. C.W.L. Harvey, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1931-32 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1932) pp. 3-4.

that the Nagas were coming down to the plains to raid villages and tea gardens. A detachment of the Assam Rifles under the command of Manipur and Cachar so as to watch the Kacha Naga villages close to the Manipur border.²⁹ The Political Agent received a report from Haflong that the Kacha and Kabui Nagas were collecting arms to attack the Kukis.³⁰ As a security measure, the Political Agent sent out a contingent to Tamenglong, and going out with the Cachar Road column of one platoon. He was already well apprised of the rumour that the Kacha Nagas and Angamis were intending to attack the Kukis of Saipimol. As a matter of fact not a single Angami was issued pass for an entrance into the Manipur territory since February 6. The Political Agent, in the meantime, kept in contact with the Maharaja of Manipur about the developments of the Naga movement. The Sub-divisional Officer reported that the Nagas and the Kukis of Hungrum Mauzas and Changsen were in a state of

29. Foreign Department, Political File No. 144, 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

30. Political Agent of Manipur to the Maharaja of Manipur, 23 February 1931, Political Agent File No. 12, 1931.

unrest or tension.³¹ The Nagas had started moving in a large group. And in the night all the Naga villages were barricaded and the whole night they kept vigil. They seemed to apprehend danger from across the State of Manipur. There were chances of clash between the Nagas and the Kukis. The Sub-divisional Officer took timely action to prevent the two tribes from going in a group with spears and daos or daggers. He ordered them to go to their jhums. In order to restore confidence in the Government, he informed the Nagas about the arrest of Jadonang.

By the end of March 1931, the movement of Jadonang seemed to have died down barring some occasional reports of unrest or tension in some affected areas of Manipur and neighbouring hill region of North Cachar and Naga Hills. The Officer Commanding

31. It was also reported that there was tension between the Nagas and Kukis in the north-west hill areas of Manipur. The Officer Commanding, Captain W.K. Phillips, Fourth Assam Rifles, communicated with the Political Agent that there was sign of hostilities between the two rival tribes in some areas of Tamenglong and beyond the boundary of Manipur, i.e. Kohima, Haflong, Silchar boundary and to the south as far as Aegui and Alauba. But the village heads denied such fictitious report. However, it was a fact that the Nagas refused to talk with the Kukis. And they never visited the Kuki villages. Letter from the Political Agent of Manipur to the Maharaja of Manipur, dated 23.2.31, Ibid.

found the Nagas of Mogulong, Impa and Katon villages of Tamenglong area, showing friendly attitude towards the Kukis.³² The prolonged tour of the Political Agent in Manipur and Deputy Commissioner's in Naga Hills, with escorts of the Assam Rifles through the affected villages immediately resolved tension between the rival tribes.³³

The Trial and Execution of Jadonang

The Manipur State Government awarded a sum of hundred rupees to the Cachar Police as a reward for the arrest of Jadonang. Some charges of serious nature then were framed against Jadonang for the murder of four Manipuri pan or betelnut dealers some time in March

32. In some areas of North Cachar Hills the Naga unrest was subsided just after the arrest of their leader, Jadonang. In Manipur, the last meeting of the Nagas, which held at Laishang or Laijang (Tamenglong) was broken up at once because of the information of Jadonang's arrest and demolition of his two temples at Kambiron. Moreover, the Kukis had started jhuming as before the trouble begun. Personal Tour Notes of C. Gimson, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills, dated 21.3.31, Ibid.

33. A.G. McCall, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1930-31, (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1931), p. 2.

1930.³⁴ The murder took place in the servant quarters of the rest-house in the village of Kambiron, at the instigation of Jadonang. First, the news of murder was brought to the road Mohori by Muktiikhulen village on March 30, 1931. And later on it was reported to the Sub-Divisional Officer.³⁵

Immediately after the arrest of Jadonang, the criminal investigation was begun. In the Court of Political Agent of Manipur, he and his five associates were convicted for the murder of four Manipuri pan dealers. All in all there were twenty-four accused persons directly or indirectly involved in the murder case.³⁶

Jadonang was ultimately sentenced to death in the Court of Political Agent, Manipur, in the Criminal

34. The names of the deceased pan dealers were namely, (1) Thounaojam Mera Singh, (2) Waikhom Thamban Singh, (3) Waikhom Pheijao Singh, and (4) Waikhom Sajau Singh.

35. Foreign Department, Political File No. 18(7), 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

36. Some of the accused were charged with murder under v/s 302 I.P.C. and a few of them were convicted for the abetment of murder under v/s 109/302 I.P.C. and certain person under v/s 201, I.P.C. for causing evidence of the murderer to disappear. C.W.L. Harvey, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1931-32 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1932), pp. 3-4.

Case No. 10 of 1931.³⁷ And his four associates were treated under sections 302, 109, 201, and 202 of the Indian Penal Code. However, Jadonang was allowed to appeal to the Governor-General. He pleaded his innocence and ignorance. He said that he had no personal benefit or motive in killing those four Manipuri pan dealers. He said that he was at Nungkao village when the murder took place. He asserted that he had never advised the villagers to murder the four Manipuris. He pleaded that the other accused when they could find no person, who could be held guilty for the offence (as they lost their leader Gaidinliu) they just tried to pass on the guilt to him. He requested the Governor-General to examine the case, apportion the blame to those really guilty and waive the sentence of death awarded to him.³⁸

37. The petition of Jadonang was rejected by the Political Agent on the ground that it did not disclose any new fact which was not before the session and the Governor of Assam when the sentence was confirmed. Moreover, the offence was deliberate and brutal. The petitioner took the main part in the murder and in arranging it. The Political Agent was under the impression that a lesson should be given to put off the tribal traditional head-hunting by giving them punishment. A counsel defended the petitioner in the proceedings before the Governor. In the prosecution, nineteen persons were produced in the court. All of them threw blame upon Jadonang. The Governor commented that this seemed to be a clear case for the death penalty or there were no extenuating circumstances. Foreign Department, Political File No. 18(7), 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

38. Jadonang to Governor-General-in-Council, 30 July 1931, Ibid.

After a detailed study of the petition of Jadonang, the Governor-in-Council did not find any reason to reconsider his case and upheld Jadonang's death sentence. His Order read: '... His Excellency the Governor-in-Council has heard Srijut Rohini Kumar Choudhury, Advocate, on behalf of ~~the~~ six accused sentenced to death and has examined the evidence carefully.

'It is open to the obvious objection that almost entirely the evidence is that of accomplices in the murder, most of the witnesses trying to exculpate themselves. Under the circumstances however no other kind of evidence was available and His Excellency in Council is disposed to accept the Session Judge's findings as to the facts.'³⁹

Concluding, the Governor-General-in-Council said: 'The Session Judge, who had the advantage of seeing this witness and hearing him depose regarded his evidence as unreliable and His Excellency sees no reason to differ from this view. But at the same time on the evidence as a whole, His Excellency-in-Council is not prepared to say that various detailed acts of certain individuals can be proved to the extent of justifying such discrimination

³⁹. Foreign Department, Political File No. 18(7), 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

as would make it right to impose the death sentence, even when they pleaded guilty. All took part in the riot. It was a dark night and there must have been confusion. It is true these men have confessed though only admit actual killing'.⁴⁰ The Governor, therefore, converted the death sentence of other five convicts namely, Luntong, Machungnong, Dulungpau, Mupuongpau and Siphai, to transportation for life, whereas in the case of Jadonang the former decision was not altered. Moreover, the Governor-General did not like to interfere with the case of condemned prisoner Jadonang. He said that the 'law must take its course.'⁴¹ Eventually, Jadonang was executed by hanging on August 29, 1931.

40. Telegram No. 862-1 from Political Secretary to the Governor-General-in-Council, 18 August 1931, Ibid.

41. C.W.L. Harvey, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1931-32 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1932), pp. 3-4.

Chapter IV

NAGA UNREST: II. GAIDINLIU'S MOVEMENT
1932-33

-After the execution of Jadonang, the Government of India thought peace would reign in the tribal areas of Manipur and adjacent areas. But contrary to their expectations, a Naga Joan of Arch by the name of Gaidinliu emerged to revive the Jadonang cult adding to it elements of her own cult.¹ This Jadonang-Gaidinliu cult was confined to the Kacha and the Kabui Nagas. Her pseudo-religion soon assumed political overtones and was to breed unrest again.

The Government, unaware of the implications of the new cult, did not immediately try to arrest the Sorceress who kept alive and continued to nurture the movement of Jadonang even after his death. Had the Government closely followed the activities of Gaidinliu, the 'witch-doctor', and suppressed her in time, the

1. Gaidinliu had come into contact with Jadonang at an early age of thirteen. He found her a promising disciple. Around 1930, first, she met him when she went to him for an interpretation of her dreams. At that time she was ill. She once again met him for the same after two or three months. Then she came under the complete influence of her master Jadonang. She then became a maibi (medicine-woman). Gradually, she stepped into the shoes of the master.

commotion in the hill areas of Manipur (and the Naga Hills) would have gradually subsided. As a matter of fact, the Government of India did not take any notice of the laisabi (unmarried girl) before Jadonang's arrest. A British administrator comments, 'Gaidilieu (sic), ... here is comparatively small fry: she is a girl, and I am not taking her along. We can get her later, if we want her, without sending an army for her.'² She became prominent and popular only after the arrest of her master Jadonang.

She started her pseudo-religious and semi-martial political movement after the death of Jadonang. The political aims of her movement were (1) the subjugation of the Kukis, (ii) the suppression of the Meities, (iii) the overthrow of the British Government, and (iv) the establishment of the 'Naga Raj'.

She aimed at the subjugation of the Kukis whom the Nagas envied for the last many years. During the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919, the Kukis plundered and looted several houses of the Nagas. They also took many heads of the Nagas. Naturally, it developed in the form of hatred and enmity between the Nagas and

2. Political Agent to Captain of the Fourth Assam Rifles, 13 March 1931, Political Agent File No. 12, 1931.

the Kukis, even though they lived side by side in many villages of the north-west hill region of Manipur. She thought that the right time had come to take revenge from the Kukis when her movement was in zenith. On the other hand, the Kukis opposed the Jadonang-Gaidinliu cult.

Secondly, it aimed at the suppression of the Meities. From the time immemorial the Meities bitterly looked down the Nagas and other tribes of Manipur. The plain people treated them as inferior human beings. The Meities employed them as their porters. Only menial jobs were given to them. The Maharaja was never interested in their development. Naturally, this psychological inferiority complex brought a bad blood between the Meities and the Nagas. The killings of the Meities were the first sign of revenge.

Thirdly, Gaidinliu aimed at the elimination of British administration. The Government was supposed to be a hindrance against achieving her objectives. Her no-tax campaign was the first kind of political disobedience to the British rule. This made it difficult for the British Officials to collect house-taxes from the tribal villages.

Lastly, Gaidinliu's aim was to establish a 'Naga Raj' in Manipur. She calculated that this could be fulfilled only when the first three were materialized.

The fulfilment of Gaidinliu's will was not so easy; she had to establish herself as a champion of the Naga cause. And she had to face the might of the British Raj. In order to achieve her plan she practised the same policy once adopted by her lord, Jadonang. Superstition was the main political weapon which she used to bring the Kacha and the Kabui Nagas under her loyalty. In every village, she took jointly an oath of secrecy and allegiance from the Nagas that they should not reveal her plan to the Kukis and the Government.³ She threatened the villagers that if anyone disclosed the matter to anyone, she would bring death to them. And those who disobeyed her would meet devastation and ruin in their life-time. But, on the other hand, with her triumph everybody would be blessed and glorified. She claimed herself not only as a goddess but also a magician. This was nothing but a political manouvre to establish herself as a spiritual leader. Her propaganda of Jadonang's

3. Foreign Department, Political File No. 189, 1932, NAI, New Delhi.

coming back to life was only a device to keep her hold on the movement. It was even rumoured that Jadonang had been travelling among them in spirit, and seeing them what they had been doing. She talked on the impersonation of Jadonang in some person who had been working with her.⁴

At her order, Jadonang's death anniversary was celebrated in the early spring of every year.⁵ During the ceremonies, all the Kukis were barred from entering into the villages where the death anniversary of Jadonang was performed. The Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills reported that there was 'a fanatical determination to honour and obey Jadonang at all costs, fanaticism is always dangerous, and in this case it is particularly so owing to its definitely anti-Kuki

4. Ibid.

5. On the occasion of Jadonang's death anniversary there would be drumming and singing in a state of dilirium. In honour of their god (Jadonang) the Nagas would dig a tank in spite of the warnings of the Deputy Commissioner, at an incident of Bopungwemi village (Naga Hills), that they should be punished. Rangkilang was the chief leader of the Bopungwemi incident. He was a ring leader and sooth-sayer who claimed to be the mouthpiece of Jadonang. He was already arrested by the Naga Hills police force.

tone'.⁶

Gaidinliu continued the practice of human sacrifices to the god. She told her people to sacrifice more human heads so that they could get happiness. Like Jadonang she constructed some temples at Nungkao and other places, where sacrifices of human heads and mithuns were performed. She advised the Nagas to offer more presents to the god for a better rice harvest.

A study of the inner core of the movement of Guidinliu reveals her political ambitions. Her movement coincided with the Indian civil disobedience movement during the 1930s. Her no-tax campaign was a political manifestation of her disobedience of the British Government in India.⁷ She advised the villagers not to pay taxes to the government. At the zenith of her movement, she often used to remember the

6. Foreign Department, Political File No.189, 1932, NAI, New Delhi. The Deputy Commissioner was afraid of such death anniversary of Jadonang as there had been chances of clash between the Nagas and the Kukis. He further said that ceremonies meant excitement, and, in this case, excitement meant anti-Kuki feelings.

7. Political Prisoners File No.G.46. 1930, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

name of Mahatma Gandhi. She asked the villagers to believe in one 'god Gandhi'. She regarded Gandhi as the son of Jadonang.⁸ W.A. Cosgrave, Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam says; 'Apparently the common people had been told that the day of the Kacha Nagas was coming, further they were to believe in a god Gandhi, about whom some vague information had filtered through from the outer Hills, to retain their faith in Gaidinliu and to be ready for war in the autumn'.⁹ If it were not so, the Nagas would not be coming to pay homage to the Congress President (Name is not mentioned).

In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, '... I heard a story which India ought to know and to cherish. It was the story of a young woman ... she was about nineteen about six years ago when civil disobedience blazed over the length and breadth of India. News of Gandhi and the Congress reached her in her hill abode and found echo in her heart. She

8. Foreign Department, Political File No. 459, 1933, NAI, New Delhi.

9. Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, to Political Secretary to the Government of India, 14 July 1933, Ibid.

dreamed of freedom for her people and an ending of the galling restrictions they suffered from, and she raised the banner of independence and called her people to rally round it. Perhaps she thought, rather prematurely, that the British was fading out. But that Empire still functioned effectively and aggressively and it took vengeance on her and her people. Many villages were burnt and destroyed and this heroic girl was captured and sentenced to transportation for life ... And India does not even know of this brave child of her hills, with the free spirit of the mountains in her. But her own people remember their Gindallo Rani (sic) and think of her with love and pride. And a day will come when India also will remember her and cherish her, and bring out of her prison cell.¹⁰

Whether Gaidinliu's movement was really political, and for that she was in favour of the Indian National Congress. The answer to the questions is to be found from her interview by Sarabala Devi, Secretary of the Sylhet Mahila Sangha,

¹⁰. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), June 2, 1939, p. 16,

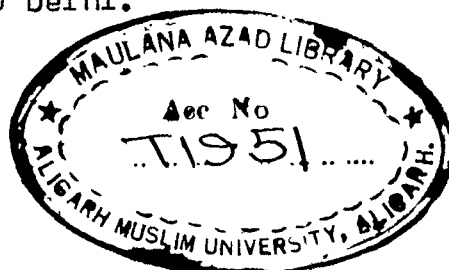
when Gaidinliu was in the jail. The Secretary wrote: '... At first she declined to talk to me but when I gave her my credentials as a congress worker her face beamed with delight ...'¹¹ It was learnt that she had indicated her desire to see Gandhi as soon as she was set free. When Sarabala further enquired Gaidinliu whether she would remain under the custody of the Mahila Sangha if she be released conditionally, she very happily agreed on Sarabala Devi's proposal.¹²

Containment of Gaidinliu's Movement;

As soon as Gaidinliu established herself as a Naga leader, her movement spread far and wide in the tribal areas of Manipur and Naga Hills. The tribal areas of the north-west of Manipur were the main centre of her movement. Particularly, the village of

11. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), October 12, 1946, p. 5, ...

12. But the British authorities never considered Gaidinliu as a political leader. She was regarded as a head-huntress. When she was in the jail she was never considered as a political prisoner and was given a 'C' class. A. MacDonald, President of the Manipur State Durbar said; 'The cult was suppressed because its chief and most essential rite was human sacrifice ...' Political Prisoners File No. G. 46, 1939, NMML, New Delhi.



Leng was the most disturbed spot, where, generally, religious ceremonies were performed. Gradually, it expanded up to other areas neighbouring Manipur.¹³ In Manipur all the Kacha Naga villages in the Barak Valley, west of Barak river and a few localities in the east were affected. The Renglomai and the Khungpung villages were not touched as these were closed to some bigger Kuki villages.

As the movement of Gaidinliu spread, it created a problem for the administrative machineries of the two Governments of Manipur and Naga Hills. The Government decided to take punitive measures to put down the movement. The Government ordered all the army headquarters that 'Every effort should be made to arrest the accused Gaidilieu (sic) who is absconding.'¹⁴ Once she was arrested by the Iambus who left her under the custody of her village elders

13. In the Naga Hills, with exception to a few villages, all the Kacha Naga villages were not free from the influence of the Gaidinliu cult. Bopungwemi village was the place where her movement was quite active. In the North Cachar Hills almost all the Kacha Naga villages were affected. Foreign Department, Political File No. 189, 1932, NAI, New Delhi.

14. Foreign Department, Political File No. 18(7), 1931, NAI, New Delhi.

who helped her to escape easily on the same day.¹⁵ The village elders were severely punished but she could be never traced out. As a result, Gaidinliu's movement spread like anything.

One of the rather disheartening consequences of her reappearance as a leader was that the estrangement between the Nagas and the Kukis became more wide spread. On January 19, 1932, it was reported that Nohanrami and Bopungwemi villages just north to Henima were in a very excited state. The Sub-divisional Officer of Haflong informed the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills that the Kukis were about to be massacred by the Nagas.¹⁶ The Deputy Commissioner rushed to the spot and warned the Nagas about serious consequence that would follow such an eventuality.

15. Last year (1931) Gaidinliu came into contact with the Government column which set out in search of Jadonang, the leader of the politico-religious movement, but she was freed after a thorough interrogation as she was not a person to be counted as a trouble suitor. Political Agent to Officer Commanding, 13 March, 1931, Political Agent File No. 12, 1931.

16. Foreign Department, Political File No. 189, 1932, NAI, New Delhi.

The Deputy Commissioner once again tried to capture Gaidinliu at Henima but she escaped hurriedly to the North Cachar Hills district. On February 16, 1932, a section of the Assam Rifles met with stiff opposition from Gaidinliu's party who took to their heels after opening fire on them.¹⁷ A report received from the North Cachar Hills described the presence of Gaidinliu at Guilong, a Naga village. The Sub-Inspector with two constables and two interpreters hurried up to the spot. The party met with stiff opposition from the villagers. The Nagas attacked them with daggers and spears and wounded three policemen. On receipt of the news, the Sub-divisional Officer (North Cachar Hills) accompanied by two sections of Assam Rifles marched on to Guilong on February 18, 1932, and seized all the spears and the daggers from the villagers. But they failed to arrest Gaidinliu. The movement of Gaidinliu seemed to be getting out of control. By an order of the Government of India, all authority was centralised in one person designated as Deputy Commissioner who established military outposts in the affected areas of Manipur, Cachar Hills and Naga

17. Ibid.

Hills.¹⁸ As a result, the disturbed Naga villages of Manipur, Cachar Hills and Naga Hills were brought under control very soon. The Nagas were heavily fined and their arms were confiscated. The villages where the Gaidinliu movement was active were burnt down by the Government columns with a view to suppress the movement.¹⁹ The Deputy Commissioner also threatened to punish and burn down all the Naga villages if they failed to produce Gaidinliu.²⁰

The Manipur Government offered a reward of Rs.500 and guns, and any villager, either in the State or in British India, which gave reliable information leading to her capture, would be granted ten years full remission of house tax. But no village turned up as an informer. The Deputy Commissioner was of the opinion that the movement of Gaidinliu could be easily suppressed if she was

18. C.W.L. Harvey, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1931-32 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1932), pp. 3-4.

19. The burnt villages were Yang-Khulen, Hungrum, Guilong, Makui, etc.

20. C.W.L. Harvey, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1931-32 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1932), pp. 3-4.

captured.²¹

The End of the Gaidinliu Myth

On October 17, 1932, Gaidinliu was arrested at Pulomi village in the Naga Hills. J.P. Mills, Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, described Gaidinliu's last action in this way, 'Gaidilieu (sic) was at Pulomi for about ten days before she was captured. She was clearly desperate, for she was at the end of the Kacha Naga country and had nowhere to go. She said openly that in the next two months either she or Government would win. All she could do was to stage a theatrical stand. Apparently she hoped that an 'army' would collect round her. Meanwhile she made Pulomi build an amazing Palisade, ... It ran all the way round the village except the ground is precipitous, and to make it Pulomi worked like slaves and destroyed a great deal of their valuable firewood reserve to provide the thousands of tree trunks required.

21. Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, to Chief Secretary to the Government of India, 21 June, 1932, Foreign Department File No. 189-Poll 1932.

Four thousand men with rifles behind it would have been formidable, but a few hundred Nagas inside it could either have thrown a spear over it nor wielded a dao. It had not been quite completed when she was captured. Her Orders on what was to be done when an attacking force were remarkable. She would strike the Shahibs dead with her magic and her supporters were then to use daos only, for they would be enough. When Captain Macdonald made his attack at dawn on information brought to Kohima by a Pulomi gaonbura her 'army' melted away and there was no magic. Pulomi shouted and brandished daos according to her orders, but were careful not to go beyond then. No blow was struck and the village was clearly relieved when sepoys ignominiously hauled out of a house the biting, scratching girl whom they had uselessly worked so hard and killed so many cattle though any mistake on the part of the commandant would probably have led to an attack in desperation by her supporters ...²²

22. Sir Robert Reid, History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam, 1883-1941 (Shillong: Assam Government Press, 1942), p. 171.

In the court of the Political Agent of Manipur, she was convicted for abetment of murder, and sentenced for transportation for life. Her petition of appeal was also rejected by the Governor-in-Council. The suggestion of transferring her outside British India was brushed aside.

As a first reaction to the capture of Gaidinliu, some of her followers from the Leng and the Bopungwemi villages conspired to murder the Kuki Chowkidar of the Lakema Inspection Bungalow in the Naga Hills. The Chowkidar was suspected by the Nagas to be the informer of Gaidinliu's presence at Pulomi which led to her arrest. On December, 1932, the Chowkidar along with his wife and children were murdered by the followers of Gaidinliu. It was reported that even on the eve of her arrest her followers were so much agitated that they had stopped their daily work.²³

It was definitely thought that the movement of Gaidinliu might subside soon, but the unrest continued even after her arrest. Numerous fanatic and self-styled maibas sprang up as her successors. J.P. Mills

23. Gopinath Bordoloi to Jawaharlal Nehru, 22 May, 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, N.M.M.L.

once rightly said: 'The capture of Gaidilieu (sic) will not end the agitation ... She will be succeeded by one or more 'mediums'. To be 'mediums' is not an offence under any law. Yet they will continue to keep the people in a state of constant excitement, and Nagas will continue to be set over against Government and Kukis. The result from the administrative point of view will be serious'.²⁴

During 1933, the movement of Gaidinliu gradually subsided when the Naga ring leaders Dikeo and Ramjo were arrested. Besides, some of the minor maibas were also captured. Subsequently, the tension between the Nagas and the Kukis also subsided and disappeared.

Release of Gaidinliu under Political Pressure

There could be no question of releasing Gaidinliu so long as the country was ruled by the British. She was strictly guarded during her detention. For some time even an interview with her was not allowed. A Mac-Donald, President of the

24. Foreign Department, Political File No. 189, 1932, NAI, New Delhi.

Manipur State Durbar, thought that 'The immediate release of Guidallo (sic) is both undesired and undesirable, whether the Mahasabha (The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha) agrees or not, no amount of agitation will procure the release of Guidallo...'²⁵ The Political Agent of Manipur was also of the same opinion. Further, the State authorities were apprehensive of another movement breaking and if she were immediately released, and that she was a potential threat to the peace of Manipur and Assam.²⁶

The man who was most considerate towards Gaidinliu was Jawaharlal Nehru. He never failed to understand the underlying political core of her. Nehru was apprised of her movement during his tour in Silchar in 1935. He was greatly shocked by the story of her detention. He discussed the matter with Congress leaders. At the Congress Session held at Haripur in 1936, a resolution was adopted for the

25. The National Harold (New Delhi), 13 June 1939, enclosed in Political Prisoners File No. G. 46, 1939.

26. Gopinath Bordoloi to Jawaharlal Nehru, 4 June, 1939, Political Prisoners File No. G. 46, 1939.

immediate release of Gaidinliu.²⁷ The Assam Mahila Samity at the eleventh session of their conference held in Gauhati in January, 1939, also adopted a resolution of the early release of Gaidinliu.²⁸

The long silence of the Government of India regarding the release of Gaidinliu made some of the political minded persons more impatient. They started exposing the wretched health condition of her in the Shillong jail so that it might draw the sympathy of people. But the Indian Government seemed to be indifferent to the request of different political organisations for the release of Gaidinliu. In pursuance of the resolution adopted at the Surma Valley Women's Conference, Saralabala Devi, Secretary

27. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), August 28, 1949, p. 11. Since Nehru learnt about Gaidinliu, he was giving advice to Copinath Bordoilo, Premier of Assam, in connection with Gaidinliu's release. As suggested by Jawaharlal Nehru, he took interest in finding out records about Gaidinliu. Eventhough he got the chance to go through the Government files, he was not allowed to publish it without further knowledge of the Governor of Assam. Nehru was well apprised of it. But he never failed to publicize about the tragic story of Gaidinliu.

28. A Shillong report dated October 22, 1938, said that a memorandum had been sent by the Shillong District Youth League to the Secretary of State for India through Ellen Wilkinson, the Labour representative of House of Commons, urging the early release of Gaidinliu. Further in another meeting held in Shillong on October 21, 1938, decided that an intensive India-wide agitation would be launched until Gaidinliu was released. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), October 23, 1938, p. 4.

of the Sylhet Mahila Sangha, appealed to the Government of Assam to release Gaidinliu unconditionally pending the decision of the Government of India.²⁹ She further insisted the Assam Government to place Gaidinliu under the custody of the Sylhet Mahila Sangha.

Referring back to the movement of Gaidinliu, Biresh Chandra Misra, Secretary of the Sylhet District Congress Committee and a member of the All India Congress Committee, criticized the repressive military measures adopted by the Provincial Government of Assam to suppress the no-tax campaign of Gaidinliu in the Naga Hills and the North Cachar Hills. Disapproving the policy of the British Government of India towards Gaidinliu, R.C. Johnson, a scholar of the University of Melbourne, wrote: '... This rather sentimental story (of Gaidinliu) implies that British rule in India is not only tyrannical but also unjust ...'³⁰

29. Ibid, June 2, 1939, p. 16.

30. R.C. Johnson to Editor of The Living Age (New York), Political Prisoners File No. C. 46, 1939, (Date is not mentioned).

Sometime in 1944, the case of Gaidinliu was reviewed. Thereafter, she was interned in a village in Naga Hills under strict vigilance.³¹ Later, leniency was shown to her as she belonged to the weaker sex. Otherwise she would have met the same fate as Jadonang. In 1946, the question of withdrawal of ban on Gaidinliu received active consideration of the Central and Provincial Government.³² Gaidinliu was released in 1945 after having undergone fourteen years' imprisonment and was then interned in her native village. All in all, she spent fourteen years' imprisonment in the British Government jails: one year at Gauhati, Assam; six years at Shillong, Meghalaya; three years at Aijal, Mizoram; and four years at Tura, Garo Hills. With the independence of India she was given her full liberty at the behest of Nehru.³³ All restrictions on her residence and movement were also removed.

31. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), October 18, 1946, p. 5.

32. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), July 19, 1949, p. 10.

33. After Gaidinliu's release on July 18, 1949 after rigorous imprisonment, Nehru presented her a sum of Rs500 to enable her to build a home for herself. The Assam Government also sanctioned her a pension for life of Rs75/- per month. July 19, 1949, p. 10.

The author met Gaidinliu in Kohima, on August 30, 1979. - She lives in a Nagaland Government quarters. She is about sixty-five years old and gets, at present, a pension of Rs800/- excluding allowances and contingent grants.

Chapter V

THE PROBLEM OF ACCESSION TO THE PROPOSED INDIAN FEDERATION
1935-39

During 1934-35, the Government of Lord Willingdon was going ahead with its reactionary policies to suppress completely the civil disobedience movement and revolutionary terrorism in India. Subsequently the Government seemed to have realized that the sheer force of military strength would not low down the patriotic impulse of the people of India, and that no useful purpose would be served by the repressive measures. The British authorities taking advantage of the new situation, but giving the impression that they were interested in the advancement of India towards constitutional and liberal institutions, began to move cautiously in the direction of urgent political reforms, and the result was the Government of India Act, 1935. This Act, for the first time in the constitutional history of India, opened the way for the princely States to be brought into the all India federation.

The Government of India Act of 1935 contemplated a federation of British Indian provinces and Indian states. The Act provided for provincial autonomy and a federal government at the Centre, which in its outer form presented all the normal characteristics of a federal set up.

The accession to the federation, in the case of the provinces, would be automatic, but it would be voluntary in the case of the Indian states.¹ An Indian State ruler would accede to the federation by executing an Instrument of Accession which have to be accepted by His Majesty and the federation would be brought into existence by the issue of Royal Proclamation.²

Under the Government of India Act 1935, the special powers were reserved to the governors to declare a state of emergency, and once a governor proclaimed so, he could suspend the constitution and assume all the powers to himself. Actually, in real sense, the provinces whose governments were to derive their powers directly from the Crown; on the other hand, the Crown Representative exercised his functions over the states through the agency of the Political Department, local Residents and Political Agents. The powers of the Crown with respect to the Indian states

1. V.P. Menon, The Transfer of Power in India (Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1957), p. 51.

2. The Government of India Act 1935 (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1936) Section 6(3).

were divided between two functionaries, the Governor-General and the Crown Representative. While functions of the Crown in relation to the British India and the federation were to be exercised by the Governor-General, its functions relating to the states, including that of Paramountcy, were to be exercised by the Crown.³ In the field of the legislative, executive, fiscal and judicial authority, the power of the federal government was very wide, uniform and direct with regard to the provinces; however, it was relatively limited and variable in the case of the states, and Paramountcy was the ultimate sanction for the enforcement of the federal authority in the federated states. The existence of federal units with unequal status and power in the federal field as well as the emergence of Paramountcy as the super power so far as the states were concerned was bound to create many discrepancies in a federal form of constitution. This led Lord Meston to think that the scheme was like 'mixing of oil with water'.⁴

3. Ibid, Section 3.

4. White Paper on Indian States (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1950), p. 25.

The Government of India Act 1935 was conceived in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, repression and reaction. It did not obtain the sanction of any section of the Indian people or the princes or even of the conservative element in England. Rejecting the Government of India Act, 1935, Jawaharlal Nehru said that it would only strengthen the hands of the imperialist domination and intensify the exploitation of the masses. In the opinion of Sitaramayya the main objection to the Act '... was that it was the product of neither self-determination nor even of joint determination, but of 'other determination'. In addition, the scheme of government labour under the clear disability - want only and deliberately planned - of the body politic being so shaped as to have trunk without a head and therefore of its activities remaining uncontrolled or uncoordinated'.⁵ The square reactions against the Government of India Act, 1935, had come from the sides of the princes; eventhough, the federal scheme provided for provincial self-government or autonomy. The Government of India Act 1935, also failed to win the hearts of the princes;

5. Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, 1885-1935, Vol. II, (Bombay: 1948), p. 12.

in fact, it limited the legislative, executive, judicial and fiscal powers of the rulers in their relationship with the Central Authority. Some of the princes were afraid that their extra-territorial rights and privileges would be restricted; on the other hand, the main object of the rulers was to increase the sphere of their own sovereignty and at the same time compel the Crown to guarantee protection of their rights. In 1932-33, the Chamber of Princes came out with certain conditions and safeguards on which the federal scheme would be acceptable to the states.⁶ But the safeguards demanded by the Chamber of Princes were turned down by the Government of India.⁷

Lord Linlithgow's mission to convince the rulers failed. His Special Emissaries reported to him that the rulers appeared to envisage a federation less organic than that embodied in the Government of India Act.⁸

6. Report of the Constitutional Committee of the Chamber of Princes (Delhi: Hindustan Times Press, n.d.), pp. 1-2.

7. Foreign Department, Political File No. 91, 1934, NAI, New Delhi.

8. V.P. Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1956), p. 36.

Studying the attitude of the princes towards the all-India federation, the Political Department revised the Draft Instrument of Accession; however, the Committee of the Chamber of Princess headed by Akbar Hydari rejected the same. Ultimately, it was resolved in a meeting of the rulers and ministers held in Bombay on April 13-14, 1939, that the terms on the basis of which accession was offered to them were unacceptable. As the princes came to realize that Britain would not bargain away Paramountcy in return for their cooperation with the federal scheme, and that any all-India federation involved diminution of their sovereignty and the revision of their treaty rights, their reluctance to accede became increasingly manifest. Thus on the eve of the Second World War, their substantial rejection of the federal offer was apparent; consequently, the outbreak of the War in September 1939 made the British Government abandon the idea of issuing such a White-Paper, and on September 11, 1939, Lord Linlithgow announced in his address that, while the federation remained, as before, the objective of His Majesty's Government, 'The compulsion of the present internal situation, and the fact that, given the necessity for concentrating on the emergency that confronts us, we have no choice but to hold in

suspense the work in connection with preparation for federation while retaining federation as our objective.⁹

The question of Manipur's accession to the proposed federation under the Government of India Act, 1935, became highly controversial and was hotly debated in the State. The Central Government was anxious to persuade all the 'native states' to join the proposed federation. It was assumed that Manipur would be joining it if the Chamber of Princes hinted to a definite instrument of accession acceptable to the rulers of the states.

The Chamber of Princes had, even after the publication of the White Paper on the federation, in 1932, resolved that unless and until some important guarantees were made, the question of accepting the federation would be out of consideration. In April 1932, at a plenary session the Chamber expressed their views on the federal idea. In the following session, next year, after the publication of the white paper on the federation, it stipulated that the entry of the princes into the federation was fundamentally

9. Linlithgow, Marquess of, Speeches and Statements (Delhi: Bureau of Public Information, 1945), p. 23.

dependent upon the inclusion in the scheme of the constitutional reforms of the essential safeguards for which the states had consistently pressed.¹⁰ The Chamber was of the firm view that some of the indispensable rights of the princely rulers should not be restricted. After the publication of the white paper, it was obvious that their proposed terms and conditions of joining the federation were not acceptable to the paramount power and would not be incorporated in the federal statute. The Chamber of Princes thereupon resolved that the native states were free to decide individually whether to join the federation or not.

In the case of Manipur, the Maharaja was of the view that the Government of India should preserve some of the most essential rights of the ruler. In 1932, the Maharaja visited Shillong to exchange views with Laurie Hammond, the Governor of Assam, on the question of the federation.¹¹ Like other princes of different states, Sir Chura Chand Singh, the Maharaja

10. Foreign Department, Political File No.91, 1934, NAI, New Delhi.

11. Foreign Department, Political File No.235, 1932, NAI, New Delhi.

of Manipur, was naturally apprehensive that his rights would be curtailed if he joined the federation. The Viceroy wanted a local Political Officer should be employed to convince the Maharaja that the federation scheme would incorporate, as far as practicable, the reservations put forwarded by his Government.¹² The Maharaja complained to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes that he would be unwilling to attend the Council of State unless one seat allotted for Manipur. Although he understood that this would not be considered. According to the administrative rules of 1919, Manipur was not qualified, in strict sense, to become a member of the Chamber of Princes, even if her Ruler was a possessor of the dynastic salute of eleven guns, as the Maharaja and the Durban had no full measure of authority and control within the State itself. For instance, the funds of the State were remained in the Government Treasury and the State accounts audited by the Assam Comptroller. Nevertheless, the Deputy Secretary, Political Department, suggested that the Maharaja, if he

12. Home Department, Political File No.359, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

wished, might exercise his right to attend the inaugural meeting of the Chamber of Princes.¹³ This indicated the attitude of Maharaja towards the federal scheme even though he was supposed to be well aware of the impending re-increase of Manipur's tribute to the Central Government from Rs5,000 to a huge amount of Rs50,000. This was the amount fixed against the Manipuris as a penalty for their rebellion in 1890-1891, against the British. However, it was reduced to Rs5,000 taking into consideration the poor economic condition of Manipur.¹⁴ The Assam Government was asked to give its opinion whether the Central Government should increase the tribute to Rs50,000, when the period of reduction lapsed, if the Maharaja did not accept the proposed federation. The Foreign Department very wisely answered that this was not a threat to force the Maharaja to join the federation. The fact was that the period of reduction

13. Home Department, Political File No. 221, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

14. Foreign Department, Political File No. 62, 1930, NAI, New Delhi. The question of reduction was taken after the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-19, on the condition that the remaining Rs45,000 out of the total amount of Rs50,000 would be fully utilized by the state government for the development of hill administration. Foreign Department, Political File No. 191-196, 1919, NAI, New Delhi.

was likely to lapse and, therefore, the re-imposition of the full amount would take effect from April 1, 1937. The Foreign Department felt that it would not be able to justify further continuance of reduction as the financial condition of Manipur had improved during the course of the years.¹⁵

The Maharaja was disinclined to join the proposed federation as he felt, probably rightly, that his powers and privileges would be undermined by the extension of the Government of India Act, 1935, to the Manipur State. But after a thorough consideration, he decided to discuss and negotiate the issues involved with the representatives of the Government of India.

Manipur's Conditions for Accession

At a meeting held in Calcutta, on January 2, 1937, the question of the federation was thoroughly discussed between the State delegation led by the Maharaja and his second son Maharaj Kumar Priyabarta Singh, and the (British) Indian delegation including

15. Home Department, Political File No. 359, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

A.C. Lothian, Additional Secretary, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, and C. Gimson, Political Agent in Manipur. C. Gimson attended the conference at the request of the Maharaja on behalf of the State as well as at the instance of the Assam Government. In the meeting the ruler of Manipur agreed that the State would join the federation provided that the Government of India accepted and/or the following:

1. As regards the administrative matters:

- (i) the administration of the hill tribes of Manipur should be handed over to the State authority;
- (ii) the appointment of the Durbar President should be placed in the hands of the Ruler;
- (iii) the British Reserve, with the possible exception of the Residency grounds and an area required for the Assam Rifles (if they remain), should be returned to the state;
- (iv) the keeping of the Assam Rifles should be according to the wishes of the Ruler;

- (v) the Political Agent's power of control over the hill administration and the financial matters of the State should be restricted. Further, his magisterial jurisdiction should be restricted;
- (vi) the federal excise staff should not be necessarily maintained;
- (vii) the past treaties and sanads should not be superceded.

2. In regard to financial matters, the Maharaja posed a few problems:

- (i) whether the ruler of the State would be liable to income-tax and the duties in respect of succession to property, and whether a reservation against the income-tax would be accepted by the Government of India;
- (ii) whether the State would be legally unrestricted in the introduction of the import and the export duties. If the Mao-Imphal section of the road is maintained by money, other than the State money, would this in any way restrict the power of the State with regard to the imposition of taxes on

goods carried to and from Imphal by road. Further, the State would like to be clarified, if she joined the federation, would the Mao-Imphal road be maintained by the federal government;

- (iii) the State authority should not be restricted to the imposition of the forest duties;
- (iv) the State authority had been getting Rs2,000 per annum by leasing the salt-wells. This product was particularly used for the religious purpose. The State Government wanted to know a clear cut about the salt revenue if it came under the federal supervision;
- (v) there should be complete remission of the tribute payable by the State, if the State joined the federation;
- (vi) with reference to Section 147 of the Government of India Act, 1935, whether His Majesty would consider a complete remission of the tribute payable by the State. If the remission was

conditional, the thing should be explained clearly.¹⁶

Besides concluding the questionnaires and the demands the State Government referred also to the issue of Kabaw Valley which was ceded from Manipur and transferred to Burma under the treaty of 1834. However, the matter was dropped as it might be discussed later. In the opinion of A.C. Lothian, Additional Secretary and Special Representative, Foreign Department, the foregoing conditions applied partly for information about the legal position of the State under the federation, and partly for information with regard to the Government of India's intentions. When the matter came to the knowledge of the Assam Governor who, analysing the ins and out of the stated conditions of the Manipur government expressed his opinion mostly in negative.

The plea for the transfer of the hill administration to the State Government was rejected on historical reasons. From the time immemorial the hillsmen were dependent on the administration of the

16. Ibid.

Valley where the Hindu Meiteis were the majority. The British administrators never believed that the Manipuris would do good for the tribals. The boundaries were not fixed at all. There was no cultural unity between the hillsmen and the Manipuris (the plains). Whenever the ruler wanted to extract a tribute from the hillsmen, he did it. The Manipuris what they thought of the tribals as in their eyes 'a hillman is on altogether a lower plane of human life.'¹⁷ If anyone failed to pay the taxes to the State authority, the ruler used to arm some other village to suppress the defaulters. Sometimes, the ruler's advised the villagers to kill the non-tax payers.

The British Government saw no reason to give up the administration of the hill areas in favour of the Maharaja. That would be tantamount to the betrayal of the tribals. It was learnt that the Maharaja had collected a huge amount of money from the hill people till 1891. The hill administration had to be taken over by the Englishmen after the Kuki rebellion of 1917-19, and put under

17. Ibid.

the charge of a British Officer.¹⁸ It was a fact that even after the uprising of 1891, there had been no proper provision for the hills in the State budget. Only one-fourth of the full amount extracted from them was spent on them. The British Government blamed the native State authorities for neglecting them, which, according to the British viewpoint, was the principal cause of the rebellion. As a result of the Kuki rebellion, the Government of India had to cost nearly twenty lakhs of rupees.¹⁹

Analysing the past history of Manipur's relationship with the tribals, the Governor of Assam decided that the British control of the hills should not in any way be loosened. 'It is fact, if a regrettable one, that neither His Highness nor his Darbar is interested in the good government of the hill tribes, while they grudge the expenditure of money on them'.²⁰ On the other hand, the warlike hill people would not tolerate the re-imposition of

18. Ibid.

19. Foreign Department, Political File No. 535-556, NAI, New Delhi.

20. Home Department, Political File No. 359, NAI, New Delhi.

the old system of the Manipuri domination by a method of periodical massacre. Therefore, the question of relaxation on the administration should be dropped at present.

Once, when the hill sub-divisions were abolished a problem of open clash between the Nagas and the Kukis arose. Afterwards it led to the turmoil of 1930s in the hill areas of Manipur (and the Naga Hills). However, the timely tackling of the situation by the State Governments saved Manipur from a disastrous fate. As a matter of fact, 'History shows that the Manipuri cannot and will not give the hills an administration of the standard to which they are both entitled and now accustomed and that it can only be maintained by the control now exercised. We (Englishmen) are under an obligation to the hills tribes to maintain to them a decent administration'.²¹

Secondly, the Governor took the question of the authority of the appointment of the Durbar President. It was in the hands of the Governor of Assam on behalf of the Governor-General. The Durbar President was always a British Officer from the Indian Civil Service

21. Ibid.

cadre. The Maharaja desired that he should be a Manipuri from Manipur, Prima facie, the Governor of Assam pointed out that this might be practicable provided that the valley administration was confined to the Durbar, and the hill administration to the Political Agent appointed by the Government of Assam and approved by the Government of India.

Thirdly, it concerned with the British Reserved Area in Imphal. The Government of India's opinion was to maintain the status quo, as recommended by Sir Michael Keane.²² The withdrawal of the Assam Rifles stationed in Imphal in the near future would be too risky. The tribals were wild by nature, so, in anytime they might revolt against the government. The British officers doubted that any considerable relaxation of their control would inevitably lead to the head-hunting. Above all the past history of Manipur was turbulent and the treacherous murder of the Assam Chief Commissioner in 1891 was still afresh in the memory of the British administrators.²³ Besides, according to

22. Foreign Department, Political File No. 198, 1934, NAI, New Delhi.

23. Foreign Department, Political File No. 13, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

the sanad the Maharaja and his heirs were really supposed to be safeguarded by the British Government. And the Assam Rifles' first duty was to represent the Government in order to ensure the safety of the Political Agent, which was important, and secondly to help the Government in case of trouble in the hill areas.²⁴ The removal of the force would be justifiable only when the new lines were provided elsewhere after the abandonment of the old ones. Moreover, it would not be advisable on the geographical grounds. The Governor thought over the matter and decided that '... in the event of His Highness joining the Federation, mention of the British Reserve should be made in the Instrument of Accession as an area to which it is expedient that the provisions of Sub-section (1) of Section 294 of the Act should apply.'²⁵

The Governor of Assam recognised that the desire of the Maharaja and his Durbar for the return of the site of the old palace and fort was a genuine and natural one, and he would readily accede to it

24. Foreign Department, Political File No. 7, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

25. Home Department, Political File No. 359, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

but for the consequences entailed.

Fourthly, the financial control of the State was in the hands of the British Officers since the advent of the British rule in Manipur. When the Maharaja was a minor, the whole administration was in charge of a Superintendent. The Governor considered that a right time had come to relax the financial control over the Manipur Administration. But he was of the opinion that all the financial authority be taken over if there was a threat of financial disorder. This policy could ensure a sound monetary condition in relation to the hill administration, salaries of the officers lent to the State, etc.

Previously, considerable financial control was exercised by the British Authority. The budget of the State was prepared by the President of the Durbar and the Maharaja. Then it was forwarded to the Political Agent for submission to the Governor of Assam, who would approve the budget after minute scrutiny and with some slight modifications, if desirable. After his approval, the Durbar would make reappropriations only with the sanction of the

Political Agent.²⁶ Any appointment to a post which carried an amount of one hundred rupees per month as salary would necessarily require the previous sanction of the Governor of Assam, as in the case of reappropriations. And for major changes, the sanction of the Governor was essential.

Fifthly, the Maharaja was in favour of strict control on the entry of the non-State subjects in his State. The power of issuing entry pass was exercised by the Political Agent with the approval of the Maharaja. He never favoured the relaxation in the prevailing system. From the side of the Governor also, nothing short of the relaxation was recommended.

Sixthly, the Governor advocated that the control of the arms and amunition in the State should not be relaxed as there was a potential possibility of a sudden political uprising which would disturb the peaceful atmosphere of the State. The Manipuris were disarmed after the rebellion of 1891. The arms licences were not even issued to the relatives of the Maharaja and the members of the Durbar. The

²⁶. Rules for the Management of the State of Manipur (Imphal), pp. 2-3.

Political Agent granted licences whereas the Durbar President controlled the issuing of licences to the hill people. The British Officers were doubtful if licences were issued freely to the Manipuris, the arms might be passed on to the hill people or Assamese, or Burmese for business sake, as the high price of a muzzle might tempt the Manipuri licence holders. The British administrators were well aware of the Angamis' attitude towards them and inter-tribal conflicts that used to take place till pax Britannica was extended to the region. The Angamis ravaged many times their weaker neighbours, and on several occasions they stiffly opposed them with arms which they obtained from the Manipuris.²⁷

It also remined that the Manipuris had passed on many guns to the hill people, when they were disarmed after 1891. The same arms were used against the British during the Kuki rebellion. Understandably, it was held that there should be

27. In one incident of 1879, Khonoma men admitted that those were the guns received from the Manipuris, with which they shot the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills and almost plundered his force.

no relaxation of the control of the arms, otherwise the State might be faced with similar problems of law and order, even anarchy.²⁸

It was thus unmistakably clear that the Assam Government was not in favour of further relaxing control over the administration of the State except in minor matters. However, the Assam Government favourably considered the suggestion for relaxation of financial control, and the appointment of the Durbar President by the Maharaja. The Governor assured the Maharaja that these two suggestions might be given effect to without further delay. But to the Maharaja, the two concessions were nothing but too inconsequential to satisfy his ambition to be a real ruler of the State.

In a separate letter, in reply of the Political Agent's letter, the Maharaja further communicated with him explaining the final terms and the conditions on which he wished to join the federal scheme. But he asserted: '... I write to say that before finally deciding whether I shall accede to the Federation, I shall prefer to wait

²⁸ Home Department, Political File No.359, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

until the results of the present deliberations conducted by the Chamber of Princes are known;²⁹ To increase his importance and safeguard his status he put forth the following conditions (including the previous ones):

With regard to the Federal Legislative List:

- (a) item 12 (Federal agencies and institutions, etc.): The establishment of such agencies and institutions should be left to the Maharaja's discretion;
- (b) item 29 (Arms): The power now exercised by the Political Agent over the arms and ~~the~~ amunitions should be entrusted to a State officer;
- (c) item 42 (Offences against laws under the federal legislative list): The items to the extent to which such were accepted in the instrument of accession should come under the federal laws through the courts of the Manipur State;

29. Ibid.

- (d) item 47 (Salt): The Local salt-wells should be reserved. If the Government of India accepted such reservation it would mean that an immunity to be set off against the proposed remission of the tribute, would be calculated on the figure of the production with regard to the federal rate of tax;
- (e) item 48 (State lotteries): The Maharaja wanted a complete reservation in the local lotteries;
- (f) item 50 (Migration): In the matter of migration, there should be sole reservation. However, it might affect the entry rules for the non-State subjects;
- (g) item 54 (Income-Tax): This item should be wholly reserved;
- (h) item 55 (Taxes on the Capital value, etc.): This item should be reserved completely.
- (i) item 56 (Succession duties): It should be reserved wholly.³⁰

³⁰. Home Department, Political File No.226, 1937, NAI, New Delhi.

Negotiations Cut Short by World War II

The British apprehended that the Maharaja by setting forth conditions of all sort, was using delaying tactics to evade joining the federation. His attitude was incompatible with the aims of the Government of India. The Government of India did not see any reason in meeting all the demands and the reservations put forth by the Maharaja. The question of immediate concern was whether to ask Manipur formally to join the federation. The higher officials, after considering the Maharaja's demands and reservations, were of the view that he should be invited to join the federation.

Most importantly, the Maharaja demanded complete reservation on arms and amunition. The British Administration was not disposed to accede to this demand which conformed to Entries 29-30 of the Federal List I, which provided that no federal law could prohibit or restrict the possession of swords, spears, axes, bows and arrows, or muzzle-loading shot guns, and black gun powder, percussion caps and shot.³¹ Unrestricted possession and move-

31. Foreign Department, Political File No. 218, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

ment of arms in the State would be potentially dangerous and might lead to troubles in the border areas. Therefore, strict control over the issue of arms and amunition both to the Manipuris of plain and to the hill tribes in the State was essential.

The Political Department suggested that Entries 29 and 30 of the Federal Legislative List 1 should not be shown to the Manipur Government at the first stage of the first schedule of the Draft Instrument of Accession.³² And it suggested that before taking up a definite step, the Governor should be consulted. This was accepted by the Governor-General of India.

In the meantime, a controversy arose as to whether the Manipur State would only be confined to the valley under section 311(1) of the Government of India Act, 1935, as an Indian State.³³ The Political Agent did not consider the hill areas as

32. Home Department, Political File No. 143, 1938, NAI, New Delhi.

33. According to section 311(1) of the Government of India Act, 1935, the Indian State meant any territory not being part of British India and whether described as a State, an Estate, a Jagir or otherwise which His Majesty recognised as being such a state. Home Department, Political File No. 24, 1938, NAI, New Delhi.

an integral part of the Manipur State although this was never declared view of the Raj.

The separation of the hill areas from the valley was not at all acceptable to the Maharaja of Manipur, who did not see any compelling reason for separating the surrounding hilly area of 7000 square miles from the total area of 8000 square miles, although he conceded that this might lead to better administration in the hills.³⁴ Whether the case of Manipur represented in different ways the result of the goal should not be a division of the hill areas from the valley itself. But the Secretary of State was not of the opinion that a line of division should be drawn between the valley and the hills. The control of the Political Agent and the Durbar President over the hill administration would in any case be affected by the federal scheme. The Governor of Assam pointed out that the maintenance of law and order both in the valley and the hills was necessary owing to the peculiar circumstances of the state as the bulk of which consisted of the hill areas sparsely inhabited by the uncivilised

34. Home Department, Political File No. 359, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

tribes.³⁵ Therefore, the administration of Manipur which was in practice controlled by the British local officers should not in any case be lessened at the cost of Entries 29 and 30 of the Government of India Act, 1935. The Governor-General was also afraid that the peace and tranquility of the State might be threatened at any time, and states neighbouring Manipur might also be affected. This may also once again result in the domination of the plains over the hill people and lead to conflicts. He added that 'Past history and existing conditions convince me that any considerable degree of surrender of control to Ruler and his own officers would mean neglecting hill tribes punctuated with occasional assertion of Darbar's authority over them by violent methods with result that peace which at present exists in this wild frontier area would be endangered with further possibilities of serious repercussions in Assam and Burma'³⁶ Further, with

35. Home Department, Political File No. 24, 1938, NAI, New Delhi.

36. Telegram No. 1654 from Secretary to the Governor of Assam, to Secretary of State, 15 December 1938, Home Department File No. 143/38-Poll and Fed. 1938.

reference to Entries 29-30 of the Federal Legislative List, a strict control over the plains and the tribals in the matter of arms would be highly essential.

On the other hand, according to section 125 of the administrative agreement the question of using arm, licences would fall in the hands of the Ruler, or officers designated by the Ruler, so, the Paramount power however would naturally be debarred by section 294(2) from interference with the State administration. However, the Governor-General felt that Manipur's accession to the proposed federation should not be foreclosed on the ground that the Ruler was adamant in claiming control over arms and ammunition in accordance with the Entries of the Federal List.

The Governor of Assam and the British officers in Manipur could not arrive at a conclusion on the Manipur question. The matter was eventually referred to the Secretary of State. Here, the Government of India again raised the issue whether the case of Manipur was not similar to that of other Indian states under British Suzerainty, for instance, the Eastern States Agency in which a large proportion of the primitive people would make the control of the

Paramount Power over the supply of the fire-arms and the explosives essential in the public interest.³⁷ Ultimately, the Secretary of States dismissing the argument of the British Indian officers approved that Manipur should be invited to accede to the federation without full freedom in accordance with Entries 29 and 30 of the Federal Legislative List.³⁸

The dream of the Government of India to bring the Manipur State within the Federal Union under the Act, 1935, was, however, not realized. But the hopes of the Viceroy that federation would be established by 1938, i.e., as year after the inauguration of the Provincial Autonomy were never fulfilled because of the stiff opposition from all the quarters. The Government of India Act, 1935 failed to attract the people of India. The Indian National Congress, at its Haripur session in 1938, resolved that the 'imposition of the Federation will do grave injury towards India, as it excluded from the sphere of responsibility vital functions of

37. Telegram No. 2164 from Secretary of State, to Secretary to the Government of Assam, 29 December 1938, Home Department File No. 143/38-Poll and Fed. 1938.

38. Secretary of State, to Secretary to the Governor of Assam, 23 December 1938, Home Department File No. 24/38-Poll and Fed. 1938.

government.³⁹ The federal scheme was also denounced by the Muslim League.

A fresh problem was brought by the Government of India Act, 1935. The Central Government was keen to bring all the Indian princely states still in relations with the local Government of India. But a number of difficulties were found, in the case of Manipur, to stand in the way that it was decided that when the new Act came into force relations with the State should be conducted by the Assam Governor in his personal capacity as Agent of the Crown Representative. In fact this had led to no practical change in the procedure. The scheme of federation in terms of Part II of the Government of India Act, 1935 and all the complicated questions connected with it, was the subject of prolonged correspondence and political discussions between 1936 and 1939 and one of the

39. A.C. Banerjee, Indian Constitutional Documents, Vol. II (1949), p. 327. In the words of Krishnamurti, 'The Government of India Act was conceived in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust, repression and reaction. It is acknowledgedly imperfect and has not obtained the sanction of any section of the Indian peoples or the princes or even of the conservative elements in England. From the British Indian point of view, it has been attacked because it makes the representatives of the states privileged members of the legislatures with semi-contractual rights, with power to delay the future constitutional development.'

'The units which compose the federation are unequal in status and power and the motive of the

(...continued...)

principal issues of the controversy was, of course, the administration of the hill areas. Though they cover some 7,000 square miles out of the State's total area of 8,000 square miles with a population of about 1,50,000, it had never been adjudged safe to leave the hill administration in the hands of the Manipuri ruler. In the words of A.C. Lothian of the Political Department, the Maharaja's only concern with the federation was to regain his direct control over the hill affairs. A.C. Lothian who was in 1936-37 on special duty in connection with the federal scheme, added that the Maharaja's struggle was to free himself from the political domination of the British officers. In this respect the Government of India accepted the views of the Governor that the hill administration should not be necessarily handed over to the Maharaja.⁴⁰ After a gap of two years the Maharaja raised once again the question of the hills when the details of the federation were being

(Footnote continued from previous page)

British government in introducing such an anomalous constitution is obviously to strengthen the reactionary and conservative elements in order to postpone the grant of responsible government' Y.G. Krishnamurti, Indian States and the Federal Plan (Bombay: Ratansey Parker & Co., 1939) p. 75.

⁴⁰. Home Department, Political File No.359, 1936, NAI, New Delhi.

framed. This time he agreed to federate on the terms which included the exclusion of the hill administration from his direct control.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 the question of the federation was relegated to the background. The Women's Bazar Agitation added to the confusion created by the war. The question of Manipur's accession was not taken up before India became independent in August 1947.

THE WOMEN'S BAZAR AGITATION, 1939-41

The Background

The month of December is the harvest season in Manipur. Although the State was liable to the vagaries of nature and severe famines like the rest of India, shortage of food was never a usual phenomenon and self-sufficiency was rather the norm. The rice produced in Manipur was just sufficient for local consumption. However, 1939 was the year of scarcity of food-grains. A severe famine threatened the eastern-most area and Manipuris became restless anticipating the impending tragedy.

That year heavy rains caused great damage to crops. The same happened in the Garo Hills and other areas. The harvest was not up to the expectation. Because of the fall in the production of rice, which was the only staple food of the Manipuris, the local populace came to the point of starvation. The price of rice shot up and the poor people, particularly, were badly affected. Moreover the women-folk earning their livelihood from hand-

pounding of the paddy were rendered unemployed.¹
 The Manipuri women were adversely affected and had to face starvation due to loss of work. The women's bazaar had to be closed down until the situation improved.²

Before the trouble started, the price of rice was only one siccee (equivalent of four annas of that time) per shangbai (about thirty-two kilograms). Later, it rose to two rupees. As the burden of the price-rise increased day by day, the women-folk became more and more agitated. On the other hand, the Manipur State Government did not ban the export of rice. The rice business was mainly run by the outsiders designated as 'Foreign Merchants.' These traders were Marwaris, who monopolized the rice purchases in the State and became its sole exporters. These same people

1. These women-workers purchased paddy from the whole-salers and pounded and sold it in the form of rice at a very reasonable price. And what they got out of that was spent on their livelihood. As the price index moved up, the poor people were unable to purchase rice at the high rate for their daily consumption.

2. The Khwaairamband Keithel or bazar has been only a big market entirely run by the women. It was the main market in the British Reserve area. It opened at about four or five O'clock in the evening and closed at midnight.

operated as money-lenders in Assam.³ As these Marwaris possessed big commercial capital, they naturally controlled and monopolized the whole food-grain business. They purchased all available quantities of paddy at cheap rates in the market and sold rice in turn at higher rates in the neighbouring states. In this way they made fabulous profits. They never sympathized with the cause of the women wage-earners. They were guided solely by self-interest and profiteering. They were thus opposed to the demands of the country people and the labour.

The Government of Manipur took no action against the Marwaris. On the other hand, in November 1939, the export of rice from Manipur was permitted, and the Marwari merchants who had recently started some rice mills in the State bought up large quantities of rice for milling and export.⁴ Had the Government banned the export of

3. E.F. Lydall, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1939-40 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1943), p. 1.

4. Home Department, Political File No. 26 (23), 1940, NAI, New Delhi.

rice promptly, it could have forestalled the crisis. Neither the Maharaja nor the Durbar took any interest. On December 12, 1939, the women-folk openly agitated against the Government policy and the Marwari business community;⁵ a large group of women went to the length of lying down on the roads to stop the movement of rice-carrying trucks which were about to take loads of rice to the Manipur Road. In this way the situation became worse.

On the **other** hand, the Durbar could not evolve a unanimous policy on rice export as the members had different opinions. The Durbar President T. Sharpe and a member, R.K. Bhaskor Singh, voted in favour of rice export. S. Somorendra Singh, I.M. Ibungohal Singh and S. Nadia Chand Singh, other members, advocated a total ban on the export of rice from the State including civil supplies to Kohima. Maharaj Kumar Priyabrata Singh opined that rice should be exported after thorough checking of the State paddy stocks.⁶ The President expressed Durbar's

5. E.F. Lyndall, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1939-40 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1943), p. 1.

6. L. Ibungohal Singh, Introduction to Manipur (Imphal: Friends' Union Press, 1963), p. 49.

inability to bring about a consensus regarding the suspension of rice export. It was his opinion that the decision of the Maharaja would be highly needed at this critical juncture. The excited women, thousands in number, who had been waiting eagerly outside the Durbar Hall with a view to hearing the decision, being unable to console themselves pressurized the President to send immediately a telegram to the Maharaja, who was at Navadip (in Bengal). Urged by the crowd, the President accordingly wired to the Maharaja.⁷ Until the reply came from the Maharaja, Sharpe was not allowed by the crowd to go out of the telegraph office.⁸ The furious crowd besieged the telegraph office till 11 O'clock in the night. The Civil Surgeon, Major P.H. Cummins, who was with Sharpe was also detained. It seemed that even the flies were not allowed to fly off the telegraph office. Cummins, however, managed to slip a note to his driver, who was allowed to pass unmolested. The note, besides

7. All India States Peoples' Conference File No. 18, 1939-1942, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

8. E.F. Lyndall, Administration Report, Manipur State 1939-40 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1943), p. 1.

requesting coffee and sandwiches, also summoned military help.

The arrival of Colonel Bulfield, the Commandant of the Assam Rifles, on the spot saved the British officers who were held up there by the crowd. During the rescue operation, a number of women agitators were injured. For lack of conclusive evidence, it is difficult to affirm that the women were bayoneted with intent to injure and wound. Some twenty persons, however, received wounds from bayonets and five severe wounds.⁹ On 11.3.1940, the Amrita Bazar Patrika, carried the news that two women agitators were injured following a clash between a group of women and the State Civil Police. In that incident, the women surrounded the Durbar Hall with the Durbar members and President, Sharpe inside, demanding immediate disposal of a case in which an Inspector of Police of Imphal was charged with assaulting a woman. The newspaper further mentioned that the women demonstrators kept the members confined in the Durbar Hall for several hours in spite of repeated

9. All India States Peoples' Conference File No. 12, 1940, NMML, New Delhi.

warnings from the State police, who subsequently dispersed them with a mild charge.

Why the Manipuri females were so exasperated? As has been officially explained, perhaps, '... the fact of the strongest causes of resentment against the Assam Rifles in connection with the December (1939) riot was that a number of men of this force were Kuki tribals and touching of their Hindu women by such persons was regarded as a great insult to them.'¹⁰ 'These (Kukis) are looked down as half savages by the Manipuris whose resentment at their touching their women who are Hindus was great.'¹¹

Eventually, the crowd in the telegraph office of the British Reserve compound was shoved away by a detachment of Assam Rifles. However, the tempo of the women's movement was kept up for a few days, then the tempers cooled down.

10. Personal letter from Central Intelligence Office to Governor of Assam, 18 June 1940, Home Department, File No. 26(23)/40-Poll. 1940.

11. Ibid.

On the next day of the Durbar Hall incident, the Political Agent in Manipur received a reply from the Maharaja. He instantly issued an order suspending the export of rice. But this could not normalize the situation, and the agitators turned their attention towards the rice mill-owners, who had assured them to close down their mills with immediate effect. In spite of one mill-owner secretly soaked and boiled some paddy for the purpose of making par-boiled rice; then in this way, he would be able to export rice after converting it into the form of thumped-rice. This un-cooperatise attitude had fanned the movement rapidly. As a result, an angry mob of nearly 10,000 women proceeded to one of the principal mills in order to stop the mill running.¹² At the same time a deputation went to see C. Gimson, Political Agent in Manipur, who was on tour, when he heard about the women movement.

A massive demonstrating crowd of nearly 15,000 threatened to burn down all the rice-mills,

12. E.F. Lyndall, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1939-40 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1943), p. 1.

if the authorities failed to stop milling. The women agitators gave a slogan that the only way the Political Agent could stop this milling by the Marwaris was to have switches taken out. And this was what the Political Agent eventually had to do before the angry throng would disperse. Seeing no alternative, the Political Agent personally went to, and ordered the removal of electric switches of the mills. Then Gimson took chance of persuading the women agitators to go back home. But it did not pacify the women.

One serious incident took place in the last week of December 1939, when certain bullock-carts carrying rice were thrown into the gutter. At the same time women traders had started to boycott the main women market. It continued a month long. However, some of the women traders, violating the understanding among themselves attempted to sit in the bazar. But their piece goods were snatched from them and torn into pieces by the group of women agitators, who were in favour of the bazar economic boycott. No body even dared to complain.

On March 20, 1940, hundreds of women took out a long procession along the main roads of the

Imphal town. A woman was arrested, but she was rescued from the police by the demonstrators. The matter came to the notice of the Political Agent, who rushed to the scene with armed policemen. The State police arrested two more women leaders named Shabi Devi and Kabokhi Devi in connection with picketing foreign cloth. As they failed to furnish bond and securities against their charges, they were sentenced for nine months imprisonment by an order of the Manipur State Durbar. The local market observed complete hartal as a sequel to the conviction of the women leaders.¹³ Further, the general mass including men and women put forward the following demands to the Political Agent and the Maharaja:

1. To stop the export of rice till the next harvest as there is every fear of having a famine due to want of stock.

13. Defying the hartal some of the women leaders of small influence or reputation, about fifty in number, challenged to sit in the market, and they sat regularly. But the great majority were intimidated. This time no attempt was made to interfere with the private business runners. A few of them conducted their business outside the British reserve. Here, the role of the new women leaders was not so successful, as they could not persuade the women-folk convincingly. They repeatedly failed in their attempts to stir up the sentiments of the women eventhough they held several meetings on several occasions.

2. To stop the rice-milling system which has 'eaten up' the earnings of the women of paddy-husking.
3. To remove the present Durbar members who have proved unworthy for the administration and replace them by new members through elections.
4. To remove the present State servants in the Police Department who are all untrained and also found unfit for administration.
5. To establish a Legislative Council as already claimed by the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and a scheme for which had been submitted to the Maharaja as asked for through his Private Secretary.
6. To decide the case of one Chabi Devi, who was assaulted by the Inspector of Police, by snatching her from the crowd and giving two slaps with a kick of boot on the chest.
7. To decide the case of ten women who were imprisoned for one month on the charge of picketing, by the Durbar.

8. To decide the case of one Dinam Ibemhan Devi who was assaulted in an inhuman manner by a police officer causing bleeding for several days. She remained in the Imphal Civil Hospital for several days under the treatment of the civil surgeon.
9. To decide the case of causing unnecessary assault to the innocent crowd on 14.1.40 and thereby causing injuries to forty women and some men.
10. To decide the case of nine leaders of the Praja Sanmilani, who were arrested out of the processionists, on 28.1.40 and detained in the police custody more than twenty hours, without informing the charge on which they arrested.
11. To decide the cause of the bayonet charge and thereby causing severe wounds to twenty women including a woman of more than seventy years.¹⁴

Besides, the demonstrators reminded that if the local authorities did not look into the matter, they would continue the bazar boycott. The

14. The Forward (Calcutta), February 17, 1940, p. 11.

Political Agent, instead of sympathizing the cause of women, felt very much satisfied with the dutiful service rendered by the Assistant Sub-Inspector.¹⁵

The women were also unhappy with the order of the Durbar for the withdrawal of ban on rice export which was promulgated about a year ago. The Political Agent openly refused to do anything until he could get orders from the Viceroy. The Governor General of India and the Governor of Assam, had been approached for favour of causing a prompt inquiry by a tribunal and thereby decide the cases; but no action was taken.¹⁶

Sooner or later, no one seemed to be any longer enthusiastic to the cause of the economic boycott. Gradually the market place was re-occupied by the women-sellers. By the beginning of February

15. The Political Agent, acknowledging the service of the Assistant Sub-Inspector (including other constables) wrote to J.P. Mills, Secretary to the Government of Assam, that '... I wish to place on record my appreciation of the persistence and tact with which the Assistant Sub-Inspector performed his duties and the willingness with which the constables supported him. They had very long hours of most anxious and unpleasant work and they were not found wanting. They kept their tempers even under the insults of women's tongues' Ibid, March 30, 1940, p. 14.

16. All India States Peoples' Conference File No. 18, 1939-42, NMML, New Delhi.

1941, some four or five hundred were sitting regularly. But a fresh problem was created on the issue of allotment of seats to the new and the old occupiers of the market. The Political Agent only to avoid further complications notified that as the seats had been vacated by the old sitters for a long period, he would allot to any one who chose. He announced that if any one of the former sitters wished to return to her respective seat, she should file an application to him within one month. This naturally disappointed the old sitters. They thought that they should be given first preference. The Maharaja was asked by the Political Agent if he had desired to raise any objection on this issue. But the Maharaja was silent. By and by many applications both new and old poured into the Political Agent's office. And for a few days there was a vigorous scramble with many tussles between the parties. However, there was no serious incident. In continuation of the previous notice dated 23.8.1940, the Political Agent wisely issued another notice on September 28, 1940. He cancelled the settlement of old seats for new arrangements. Those who had filed

applications for retaining their old seats would be given first preference. It appeared that the Political Agent did not like to do injustice to those old sitters. He was sure if he had allotted seats to other new-comers, that would have a year long ill-feeling and resentment among themselves.

The women's year long movement gradually died down. The economic distress or the political excitement might lead them to take up other form of agitation, as they had in the past, but this time they had learnt that their best interests lay inside and not outside the Khwairamband Keithal or bazar. The majority of them were economically backward. There might have been serious ill-economic consequences if the movement would have continued. On the other hand, there were no prominent leaders who could guide the demoralised women agitators, as most of them had been locked up. The petty leaders failed to revive the dying spirit of the movement. The women also could not complain as the price of paddy had gone down.¹⁷

17. E. F. Lyndal, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1939-40 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1943), p. 1.

The split in the Working Committee of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha took place in 1939, when some of its members came under the influence that the women agitation should be suspended immediately, which was vehemently opposed by a section of members.

The split in the Working Committee of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had disheartened the agitators. This was the only political party which had been fighting for the cause of the women. The defection in the party itself helped to strengthen the hands of the government. In this way, the lack of political and moral guidance to the women, the economic pressure, defection in the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and with the resumption of their business brought the close of the year long agitation.

Political Repercussions

There was considerable controversy whether the women's uprising was politically motivated. Some observers commented that the scenario had nothing to do with politics. Others said that the women were 'hungry' so they demanded rice only

to fill up their bellies. The price index had risen up very high! They wanted rice at a cheaper rate. They sought for this with no exception. The agitation was stopped when the export of rice was suspended. They came to the market and sat as usually and regularly. There was no organisation in the movement. That was the reason why the struggle did not last long.

The view that the agitation had economic rather than political causes appears to be partially right. But we cannot overlook the political fact that women-folk resorted to direct action for the redress of their grievances. The shortage of rice caused from the heavy export of rice from Manipur to other neighbouring districts was not only the problem which kept the movement going for about one year. If we study in detail we would be able to see the underlying political trends in the movement. It was the party of Hijam Irabot Singh, which aroused and stirred up the feelings and sentiments of the women. Irabot was the architect of this movement. The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha used to give instructions to

the women leaders from time to time.¹⁸ Accordingly, the women stuck to the policies and programmes which were chalked out by the party. The women also received encouragements from Indian political leaders during the movement. 'If I may advise, you should not lose heart and at the same time not indulge in any kind of violence which would give the authorities a pretext to crush your movement. Organise yourselves peacefully and quitly insist on your demands. Do not give in or be frightened by the power of the State. Big changes are coming all over India and your State cannot left out of them',¹⁹ advised Jawaharlal Nehru in a letter to the Working Committee of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha. He expressed his inability to approach the Viceroy or Government in the matter, but assured the Working Committee that all those who learned about their difficulties

18. The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, under the leadership of Hijam Irabot Singh, came into prominence early in 1939, when it submitted a memorial to the Governor-General requesting him to advise the Maharaja to establish a legislative council as a step towards the introduction of a responsible form of government in Manipur.

19. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), March 25, 1940, p. 4.

sympathised with them. Nehru recorded his personal admiration for the way in which the women of Manipur had been carrying the agitation, and wished them success.

The Kamrup Mahila Samity recorded with pride of fight of the Manipuri ladies against injustice done to them by the State authorities. They congratulated them on their stand for justice, patriotism, selfless service, organising capacity and moral courage. The Samity wished that the ladies of Manipur would further continue their movement with complete non-violence and unanimity. It further urged the Government of India and the Maharaja to devise ways and means to meet the demands of the Manipuri females and see that peace and order was restored in the State.²⁰

The link between the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and the women's bazar agitation could be seen from the very beginning. When the women's movement started in full swing in the early part of December 1939, they felt the lack of leadership

20. Ibid, April 9, 1940, p. 10. . .

of Irabot, President of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, who had just gone to Cachar some days back for attending a political conference. Informing him of the women's agitation in Imphal, he was asked by the women leaders to return and lead the movement.

In a massively organised meeting held at Police Bazar, Irabot was pointing out the Government's inefficiency in tackling the situation. He repeatedly condemned the policies of the Government for their carelessness to redress the grievances of the women. As a result of his violent speech, a clash took place between the civilians and the police at the spot.²¹

As the area was already under Section 144IPC, Irabot was arrested on January 9, 1940, on the charge of giving a seditious speech, and sentenced for three years imprisonment under Section 1, u/s124A, I.P.C. by the Manager State

21. Particularly from this occurrence the movement had turned into a different shape as the men had started taking part actively in the women's agitation. Later, it converted into a constitutional movement.

Durbar.²²

It was the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha which popularized the women's movement in Manipur and other parts of India. The Political Agent firmly believed that some of the agitating women leaders were playing in the hands of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha. He further asserted that the women's agitation, which was started by the bazar women of Imphal against the Government policy of rice export, was gradually taken over by the Mahasabha; later on, the Mahasabha had exploited the women as a tool for fomenting agitation on the Congress lines. E.F. Lydall, the President of the Manipur State Durbar, observed that '... the agitation, which is said to have been fanned by an old prophesy that the appointment time had come for the arrival of a new Maharaja riding on a white elephant. The Mahasabha, a local body with congress affiliations, also took advantage of the unrest suggested that their leader (Irabot) was rider of the prophesy',²³

22. Home Department, Political File No.192, 1943, NAI, New Delhi.

23. E.F. Lyndall, Administration Report, Manipur State, 1939-40 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1943), p. 1.

What do you think
source, say?

A Central Intelligence report showed the role of the Congress in the movement of the Manipuri women and a direct link with the leaders of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha, like Irabot and later Magho Singh with the All India States Peoples' Conference, which helped them in making out plans and direct tactics to be applied in the agitation.²⁴ In a letter from Purnendu Sen, a Congress worker of Sylhet, who had former revolutionary connections, to Labanya Lata Chandra, a leader of the Congress women's movement in Bengal and a member of the women's sub-committee of the Bengal Provincial Committee, that it was clearly indicated that the writer was trying to gather news about the women's agitation in Manipur for the purpose of its publication in the press. He further persuaded Labanya Lata Chandra that if she could prepare to meet the expenses, he would like to send some agents to Manipur. Purnendu Sen also suggested Amrit Kaur, a freedom fighter, should go to Manipur and study the political situation. On account of her ill-health the matter was dropped later on.²⁵

24. Home Department, Political File No.26(23), 1940, NAI, New Delhi.

25. Ibid.

It was quite apparent that the leaders of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha also received regular instructions from the Sylhet and Gauhati Congresses. Irabot occasionally visited Gauhati and Sylhet to see the President of the Assam Provincial Committee with a view to receive instructions. When Irabot was in the Sylhet Jail, his lieutenant Magho Singh assumed the party leadership and tried to keep the movement alive. He used to correspond with Kamala Chatterji, a member of the Jugantar Party, who was working with the Communist Party of India in the Bengal Provincial Student's Federation, in connection with the women's agitation in Imphal.²⁶

The Manipur Government was quite aware of the political developments in the State. The Government was ready to prevent any sort of activities which might lead to commotion and anarchy in the State. Every incident was vigilantly observed. The State administration prohibited meetings of political character in Manipur without prior permission from the same.²⁷ As a precautionary

26. Ibid.

27. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), April 21, 1940, p. 10.

measure, the Government also adopted a policy of prohibiting the entry of unauthorised persons into the State. A strict vigilance was kept to prevent the Congress propagandists from entering Manipur. As suggested by D.A. Brayden, the Central Intelligence Officer, the Political Agent accepted the establishment of Agency at Dimapur.²⁸ This was with a view to prevent the flowing of the Congress political elements and influence over into Manipur. Undoubtedly this was to check the political fomentation of the Manipuri women's agitation by political elements from outside the State.

Administrative Remedies and Reforms

The idea of reforms brought a lot of complications and made it more difficult to follow a line of agreement. The Maharaja, Durbar members

28. The purpose of the establishment of this Agency was to function as a check-post. The Agent would have an opportunity of discussing matters with the State's people leaving the State and should soon get to know any outsiders who visit the State frequently.

and President of the Durbar had different proposals with diverse justifications. Besides, the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha had its own demands.

The Political Agent first of all thought that a radical constitutional reform was not so necessary as the Manipuris never had a tradition of democracy. Though certain elements of it would be found in the Mahasabha and Congress adherents. The women were neither interested in constitutional reforms nor setting up a constituent assembly.²⁹ The Maharaja was also of the opinion that there would be no need of administrative changes. He remarked that the women's disturbance had no direct bearing with the introduction of reforms in the state.³⁰ It was aggravated by the Nikhil Manipur Mahasabha. However, he felt the need of certain administrative changes. In June 1940, he ordered the members of the Durbar to devise a plan to deal with the problem of agitation and give specific

29. Political Agent of Manipur to Secretary of Governor of Assam, 20 January 1940, Home Department File No. 11(7)/40-Poll 1940.

30. Maharaja of Manipur to Political Agent, 22 April 1940, Home Department File No. 26(23), 1940, NAI, New Delhi.

suggestions which could remedy the existing administrative defects. The following were the proposals put forth by the individual Durbar members:

1. Establishment of three or four posts of sub-divisional officers with a police station at every sub-divisional headquarters,
2. A chief court separate from the administrative Durbar,
3. A municipal committee for the capital,
4. A local Manipuri President of Durbar,
5. A legislative assembly composed of twelve elected, and ten nominated members,
6. Abolition of separate administrative branch for the hills,
7. Admission of pleaders into the State courts,
8. Creation of a Manipuri Civil Service with senior and junior divisions,
9. Replacement of cherap and sadar panchayat courts members and the hill sub-divisional officers,

10. Cancellation of village choukidars
and establishment of ten police stations
in the valley and seven in the hills,
11. Restriction on the Maharaja's civil list
to ten per cent of the revenue of the
state,
12. Opening of a department of excise,
13. Introduction of examination system for
the candidates for State services,
14. Revision of pay-scale of State
Government servants,
15. Mineralogical survey in the State,
16. Expansion of Durbar by increasing its
members and inclusion of elderly
statesman,
17. Promotion by efficiency, not by
seniority,
18. Starting of an agricultural department
and co-operative societies,
19. Opening of more hospitals and veterinary
dispensaries outside Imphal, and
20. Introduction of the British administra-
tive system in toto, including trial by
jury.³¹

31. E.F. Lydall, Administrative Report, Manipur State, 1940-41 (Imphal: State Printing Press, 1942), p. 1.

The President of the Durbar was doubtful about the successful implementation of such reforms as the State was lacking in honest, capable and efficient persons who could be employed to implement the reforms.

Secondly, the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha weighed in with a demand for a unicameral legislature of 100 members, eighty to be elected and twenty to be nominated by the Maharaja. The other suggestions were for voting by ballot, no communal electorate, electors to be literate or tax-payers or both, a bill to become law if passed by the Maharaja who would otherwise refer it back to the legislature, the legislature to pass the budget, the civil list to be in a fixed proportion to the State's revenues, the Maharaja to ask the leader of the largest party in the legislature to be prime minister and to choose three cabinet ministers who with him would have joint responsibility to the legislature, the Maharaja appointing more ministers whose responsibility would be individual, the Maharaja to set up a constituent assembly and no body to vote twice over. But the reforms proposed by the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha were never

considered by the Government. The Political Agent was under the impression that as there had never been any form of democratic government in the State, not even municipal or local boards, this proposal seemed to be too wild to consider seriously.³²

Lastly, the Maharaja also submitted a draft of reforms to the Political Agent.³³ He wanted his reforms should be introduced in his State. The constitutional proposals for reforms submitted by the Maharaja (to the Political Agent) may be studied under the following heads:

The State Executive

1. The Executive authority of the State shall be exercised by the Maharaja either directly or through ministers to be chosen from amongst the members of the State Legislative assembly.
2. There shall be a council of ministers of limited number to aid and advise the Maharaja in the exercise of his functions.

32. Political Agent of Manipur to Secretary of Governor of Assam, 20 May 1940, Home Department File No. 26(23)/40-Poll. 1940.

33. Maharaja of Manipur to Political Agent, 22 April 1940, Ibid.

3. If any question arises whether any matter is or is not a matter as respects which the Maharaja is to act in his discretion will be final.
4. The prime minister will be chosen by the Maharaja in consultation with the prime minister of the state who will be a lent Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) officer or a retired officer from British India and shall hold office during the Maharaja's pleasure.
5. The prime minister will be responsible to the Maharaja for the proper administration of the finance and revenue departments and will on behalf of the Maharaja exercise general supervision over the working of all departments. The Maharaja in consultation with the prime minister will arrange for the distribution of work between the prime minister and other ministers.
6. The salaries of ministers shall be such as the state legislature may determine, and until the state legislature so determine, shall be determined by the Maharaja provided that the salary of a minister shall not be varied during his terms of office.

7. The question whether any, and if so, what advice was tendered by the ministers to the Maharaja, shall not be enquired into, in any state court. -
8. In the exercise of his functions the Maharaja shall have three special responsibilities, i.e., (a) the prevention of any grave menace to the peace and tranquility of the state, (b) the safeguarding of legitimate interests of the subjects, (c) and the securing of the peace and good government of the state.

If and in so far as any special responsibility of the Maharaja is involved, the Maharaja shall, in exercise of his functions, exercise his individual judgement as to the action to be taken.

9. If it appears to the Maharaja that the peace or tranquility of the state is endangered by the operations of any persons committing, preparing or attempting to commit, crimes of violence which, in Maharaja's opinion, are intended to overthrow the state government, the Maharaja may, he thinks that the circumstances of the case require him so to

do for combating those operations, direct that his functions shall to such extent as may be specified in that direction, be exercised by the Maharaja in his discretion and, until otherwise provided by a subsequent direction of the Maharaja, those functions to that extent shall be exercised by the Maharaja accordingly.

- 10(a) All executive actions of the state government shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the Maharaja.
- (b) Orders and other instructions made and executed in the name of the Maharaja shall be authenticated in such manner as to be suggested by the prime minister and approved by the Maharaja.
- (c) The prime minister, the ministers and the heads of the departments shall transmit to the Maharaja all informations with respect to the business of the stage government.

The State Legislature

- 1. There shall be a state legislature which will consist of the Maharaja and a chamber to be known as the state legislative assembly.

2. The state legislative assembly will consist of a lent I.C.S. officer or some retired officer from British India and twenty-seven members. Out of twenty-seven members eighteen will be elected - two each from the four panas of Ahallup; Naharup, Khabam and Laipham; eight will be elected - two each from the four leikhais of Kwai, Yaiskul, Khurai and Wangkhai and two will be elected from the Muslim community; nine will be nominated out of which five will be officials and four non-officials.
3. The state legislative assembly unless sooner dissolved shall continue for five years from the date appointed for their first meeting and expiration of five years shall operate as dissolution of the assembly.
4. (a) The assembly shall be summoned to meet at least four times a year.
(b) The Maharaja may in his discretion from time to time summon the assembly to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit and prorogue it.
(c) The Maharaja may in his discretion send any matter to the assembly for discussion.

5. The prime minister will preside the meetings of the assembly and manage its workings.
- (a) All the questions in the assembly shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present. In cases of equality of votes the prime minister shall have a casting vote.
- (b) The assembly shall have power to discuss any matter of the state including the budget.
- (c) The state budget will be drafted by the prime minister, and will be laid by him before the state assembly for examination. After the assembly has recorded its suggestions, if any, for modifications in the prime minister's draft budget, the Maharaja will record his opinion. If the Maharaja desires any modifications in the budget proposed by the assembly, the Maharaja will communicate his opinion to the assembly in order to give them an opportunity of reconsidering their views and submitting a further minute to the Maharaja. The Maharaja will then record his own final opinion indicating clearly the form in which he desires that the budget shall be accepted by the government of Assam and will forward all

the papers to the Political Agent for submission to the government of Assam. The government of Assam after giving due consideration to the wishes of the Maharaja and the assembly, will finally approve the budget with such modifications as it thinks fit. When once approved by the government of Assam the budget must be adhered to subject to such modifications as are allowed by the rules sanctioned by the government of Assam for the keep of the state accounts.

- (d) It shall be the duty of the prime minister to adjourn the meetings of the assembly until more than half of the total number of the members are present.
- (e) The assembly and the council of ministers will submit copies of their proceedings to the Maharaja who may (i) approve thereof, (ii) refer any matter back to the assembly or to the council of ministers as the case may be for further consideration, (iii) veto any resolution and issue what orders he sees fit, stating his reasons in writing. This power of veto will be exercised in very rare cases.

After the Maharaja passed his orders, copies of the proceedings and the order passed thereon will be submitted to the Political Agent.

- (f) If a member be absent without permission of the assembly for thirty days from all meetings of the assembly, the assembly may declare his seat vacant. Provided that in computing this period of thirty days, no account shall be taken of any period during which the assembly is prorogued, or is adjourned for more than three consecutive days.
6. The Armed Police shall be under the control of the Maharaja.
 7. Qualifications of membership in the assembly have to be decided later.
 8. Members of the state legislative assembly shall be entitled to receive such allowances (not salaries) as may be fixed from time to time by the assembly.
 9. No state court shall have power to enquire into the proceedings of the state assembly.

The Maharaja's Legislative Powers

1. (a) If at any time when the state assembly is not in sitting the Maharaja is satisfied that there exist circumstances in the state which render it necessary for the Maharaja to take immediate action, the Maharaja may promulgate such ordinances as the circumstances appear to require.
- (b) Such ordinances shall have the same force and effect as resolutions of the assembly approved by the Maharaja.
- (c) But the ordinances shall be laid before the assembly and shall cease to operate after the expiration of three weeks from the day on which they are so laid, or if a resolution disapproving them is passed by the assembly and approved of by the Maharaja upon the passing of the resolutions.
- (d) The Maharaja may withdraw the ordinances at any time.
- (e) The ordinances shall be void if they relate to matters concerning which the state assembly has no power to make legislation.

2. (a) If at any time the Maharaja is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for the Maharaja to take immediate action for the purpose of enabling him satisfactorily to discharge his functions in so far as the Maharaja is required to act in his discretion or to exercise his individual judgement, the Maharaja may promulgate such ordinances as in his opinion the circumstances of the case enquire.
- (b) The ordinance thus promulgated shall continue in operation for such period not exceeding four months as may be specified therein, but a subsequent ordinance may be extended for a further period not exceeding four months.
- (c) The ordinance shall have the same effect and force as a resolution of the assembly approved of by the Maharaja.
- (d) The Maharaja may withdraw the ordinance at any time.
- (e) If it is an ordinance extending a previous ordinance for a further period, it shall be communicated to the government through the Political Agent.

- (f) The Maharaja shall exercise this power with the concurrence of the government; provided that, if it appears to the Maharaja that it is impracticable to obtain in time the concurrence of the government. The Maharaja may promulgate an ordinance without its concurrence, but in that case the government may in its discretion advise the Maharaja to withdraw the ordinance and the ordinance shall be withdrawn accordingly.

Provisions in Case of Failure of
Constitutional Machinery

1. If at any time the Maharaja is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the state government cannot be carried on properly the Maharaja may by proclamation -
 - (a) declare that the Maharaja's functions shall, to such extent, as may be specified in the proclamation, be exercised by him in his discretion;
 - (b) assume to himself all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by any state constitutional body or authority;
 - (c) any such proclamation may contain such incidental and consequential provisions as

may appear to the Maharaja to be necessary or desirable for giving effect to the objects of the proclamation, including provisions of the state constitution relating to any state constitutional body or authority; (d) provided nothing in the foregoing provisions shall authorise the Maharaja to assume to himself any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the state chief court, or to suspend either in whole or in part the operations of any provisions of the judiciary relating to the state courts.

2. Any such proclamation may be revoked or varied by a subsequent proclamation.
3. (a) A proclamation thus made shall be communicated forthwith to the government.
- (b) A proclamation unless it is a proclamation revoking a previous one shall cease to operate at the expiration of four months.

Provided that, if the government approves of the proclamations continuing in force, the proclamation, shall, unless revoked, continue in force for a further period of eight months from the date on which it would

otherwise have ceased to operate, but no such proclamation shall in any case remain in force for more than two years.

4. If the Maharaja by a proclamation assumes to himself any power of the state legislature to make laws, any law made by the Maharaja in the exercise of that power shall subject to the terms thereof, continue to have effect until two years have elapsed from its date on which its proclamation ceases to have effect, unless sooner repeated or enacted by an appropriate state legislature.

The State Judicature

1. The judicial Durbar under some suitable name (like the chief court of justice) shall continue to exercise the highest original or appellate jurisdiction in the state both civil and criminal cases.
2. The personnel of this court may to some extent be decreased by some gradual process.
3. The Maharaja shall continue to exercise revisional jurisdiction as at present.

4. The state will better borrow a European officer of the Imperial Police to act as superintendent of the state police for three or five years. He will train the state police work in technical and the force of the present state police is untrained.³⁴

The Political Agent remarked that the Maharaja did not mention that how a prime minister would be appointed, and removed from the office. The Maharaja wanted that out of nine members of the State assembly five should be State officials. The Political Agent suggested that there should be at least some elected members otherwise the ministers would be responsible to him only and not to the assembly. The age limit at thirty for the members was also unduly high. With reference to the power of the State assembly, it was not clearly defined that what would be the role of ministers in initiating resolutions, and whether the proceedings of the assembly would go direct to the Maharaja from the assembly or through his council of

34. Ibid.

ministers. The procedure proposed for the budget seemed unduly cumbrous, when dealing with a body of twenty-eight members.

As in the case of judicature, the Political Agent remarked that the intention of the Maharaja was to reduce the Durbar to a purely judicial body. The Maharaja had also overlooked the need of reforming the administration of courts. The Political Agent suggested that these courts should be thoroughly reorganised as they had been the centre of deep-rooted corruption. Further, he said that if the Durbar members had only judicial work, then they should have enough time to supervise the work and duties of the lower courts. It might lead to a better administration of justice.

The Political Agent was certain that the State would not be able to restore and maintain order with the existing police force. He agreed with the Maharaja on his proposal of borrowing a European police officer to re-organise and train the police. But he criticized the Maharaja for his unwillingness to allow the control of the State military police to pass from his own hands.

To the Political Agent, there appeared to be some confusion of the prime minister, who was also to be president of the assembly. The leader of the assembly would take over most of the duties of the President of the Durbar, who did preside over Durbar meetings. The Political Agent presumed that the prime minister would preside over the Council of ministers, but not over the assembly. The confusion might have arisen from the use of the term 'President' of the Durbar.

The Political Agent pointed out that the Maharaja's proposals did not touch the hill tribes. He thought that it would be impossible for the prime minister to be responsible for the administration of the hill tribes in addition to his other duties. It would be necessary to consider a new arrangement for the hills.

Finally, the Political Agent rejected the Maharaja's suggestion that any extra expenditure incurred on account of his proposed reforms might be met by a cut in the pay of the State servants. In his opinion the Maharaja had under-estimated the cost and more important had not realised what an

unfavourable start his reforms would receive, if they were dependent on a reduction in salaries, which were already very small. He remarked that the State military police and the civil list were two heads under which the economies might be effected. On the other hand, the Maharaja wished to increase the expenditure under both.³⁵

Pointing out all the defects and irregularities of the draft proposals of reforms by the Maharaja, C. Gimson, the Political Agent asked him to review it once again. Instead of admitting the validity of the comments by the Political Agent, he rather upheld his reforms. He further observed that 'In view of the pressing demands of the subjects I have ventured to experiment with the proposed constitution. The provision has been made to safeguard its failure. The council of ministers will take over the executive functions, the Durbar will cease to exist as a judicial body. The ministry will necessarily be responsible to me only. Changes will have to be made in the rules for the administration of the State assembly.'³⁶

35. Political Agent of Manipur to Secretary of Governor of Assam, 20 May 1940. Ibid.

36. Maharaja of Manipur to Political Agent, 8 May 1940, Ibid.

The Political Agent referred the proposed reforms to the Governor of Assam, who remarked that the Maharaja's proposed reforms would be '... so nebulous and questions such as the suitability to Manipur have been so insufficiently worked out that they are worth very little indeed.'³⁷ It became apparent that the Maharaja's draft reforms meant almost nothing from a democratic point of view and in fact, if anything, tended to give more power to an autocratic ruler than what he actually possessed. The Governor considered that they were far less likely to satisfy and other element in the State. He assumed that the Maharaja's ruling passion was money. The Governor firmly believed that the reforms proposed by the Political Agent would be more suitable and practicable, and that they would really pacify the excited people. At the same time the Governor felt that if the British officers were to

37. Governor of Assam to Governor-General, 4 June 1940, Home Department File No. 26(23)/40-Poll. 1940.

Supporting the views of the Governor of Assam, the Governor-General was of the opinion that the scheme for constitutional reforms proposed by the Maharaja appeared to be impracticable and wholly unsuited to the needs of the State.

do their duty as trustees, in a sense, for Manipur, they were bound to try and force the ruler to give his subjects a reasonably sound system of administration.³⁸

The Assam Governor informed the Viceroy about his difficulties in convincing the Maharaja as he was unwilling to introduce the reforms in the British pattern. Moreover, the Maharaja was waiting for the introduction of the federation to take up the question of reforms. Keeping in view the critical situation of Manipur, the Governor-General agreed that the proposed reforms should be initiated without further delay. He observed that the question of further reductions in the Maharaja's privy purse that it might be left for later consideration. The Governor-General suggested that the Maharaja was generally inclined to adopt an obstructive attitude; therefore, '... the best course would, perhaps, be after an appropriately brief interval, for you (Assam Governor) to summon him and suggest to him that he should go on a

38. Secretary to the Governor-General, to Governor of Assam, 10 June 1940, Ibid.

pilgrimage or otherwise take a rest from his activities and leave the President under the instruction of the Political Agent and the Governor to proceed with putting matters straight.'³⁹

The Maharaja was probably quite aware of the developments. He was sure that his proposed reforms were not going to be introduced in his State. Seeing no alternative, the Maharaja left Imphal for Calcutta for 'medical check-up'. At the same time, his intention was to delay the introduction of the reforms in his State. The Maharaja vaguely talked of announcing the British proposed reforms on the day of the golden jubilee of his reign. Sensing the obstructive attitude of the Maharaja, the Assam Governor immediately communicated with the Political Agent, expressing his views that '... it is no longer possible to postpone the introduction of reforms designed to bring the administration more into accord with accepted standards of good and efficient

39. Secretary to the Governor of Assam, to Secretary of Crown Representative, 7 June 1940, Ibid.

government.⁴⁰ Later he felt that if the government wanted to achieve success, it should go slowly.

Having reigned for fifty years, the Maharaja announced his intention to abdicate in favour of his eldest son. He died at Navadwip twenty-four days later on November 6, 1941.⁴¹ The long drawn efforts of the British at constitutional reforms were of the demands of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha. The British administrators suspected that the Maharaja aimed at concentrating all powers in his own hands. However, the colonial overlords themselves never intended to go beyond half-hearted constitutional reforms. To conclude, the women's agitation, which later turned into a mass movement, moved the British administration to plan and implement at least some reforms in the State essential to deal with its social and economic problems.

40. Secretary to the Governor of Assam, to Political Agent of Manipur, 6 September 1940, Ibid.

41. Home Department, Political File No. 160, NAI, New Delhi.

THE ABORTIVE PLAN OF A 'PURBACHAL
PRADESH', 1948

Origins of the Movement

The idea of establishing an integrated eastern India frontier province consisting of parts of Assam and Manipur, was a brain-child of the frustrated Bengali elites, who were allegedly discriminated against and suppressed by the local Assamese majority in the heterogeneous province of Assam. The movement for the formation of Purbachal Pradesh on the eastern border of Assam, with a view to giving accommodation to the displaced Hindus of Sylhet and East Bengal (now in Bangladesh) soon began gaining popularity.

After Independence, the Bengalis of Assam were reduced to a tiny minority because the thickly populated district of Sylhet became a part of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). As a result of the partition, the proportion of the Assamese people in the local population of Assam had risen from about a fifth to one-third. But the Bengalis, though much reduced in percentage, formed the largest single group in the province, particularly so because of

the influx of the refugees after the partition.¹

The Bengalis soon began to develop and suffer from a sense of minority complex. The Bengalis did not like the administrative and cultural domination of the Assamese. Above all the imagined superiority complex of the Assamese made the Bengali minority to think more about their community's integrity and safety. To save their identity they planned to arouse the sentiments of other minority groups who were inhabited in different parts of the Assam province.

Like the other minority groups in Assam, some of the political leaders of Manipur were also enthusiastically moved by the cause of the Bengalis, the largest minority in the province. The Manipuri political leaders came out in support of the demand for a united eastern frontier province. The proposed 'Purbachal Pradesh' was to comprise of some Hill districts, frontier areas or tracts, plain districts, and states of the Assam province.²

1. J.K. Choudhury, 'A Case for Purbachal', The Hindustan Standard, November 14, 1948, p. 11.

2. Ibid.

According to Professor J.K. Choudhury, the Purbachal Pradesh could have comprised of hill districts - the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the districts including Shillong, the Garo Hills District, the Lushai Hills District, the Naga Hills District, the Mikir Hills, parts of Nowgong and the Sibsagar district except the mouzas of Barpathar and Sarupathar. In the frontier tracts, it could include the Sadiya and Balipara frontier tracts, the Tirap Frontier Tract with the Lakhimpur Frontier and the Naga tribal areas. In the plain districts, the district of Cachar including Karimganj and the north Cachar sub-divisions. The district of Goalpara was also to be included. Further he felt that Purbachal could be formed with such states like Tripura, Manipur, Cooch-Bihar and the Khasi states (including the above mentioned areas). But he did realise that it would finally depend on the will of the people of these states whether they would like to join Purbachal.³ His argument was that 'Tripura, Manipur or Cooch-Bihar are not such states according to the Government of India as can stand by themselves and

3. Ibid, p. 11.

bear the burden of a full-fledged modern-democratic administration; nor are they geographically continuous to amalgamate with a view to forming one viable unit. The only alternative left to them is, therefore, a merger ...⁴ But the formation of the proposed Pradesh would have resulted in the domination of the backward groups or tribes by the Bengalis and this would not have been palatable to the non-Bengali segments of the population.

Professor Choudhury's arguments were, however, neither cogent nor convincing. Tripura and Manipur have been constituted as different states. Not to talk of the small area which could not form a separate state, even today there are many small countries like Maldives, Sri Lanka, etc., who are even sovereign and independent. It is not the area but the capacity of the administrative efficiency which determines viability of a state. One cannot, however, fail to appreciate Professor Choudhury's plea that the people of every district and state should be allowed to have their own languages and script at the primary stage of education, with Hindustani as a compulsory language. The

4. Ibid.

Constitution has assured educational and cultural rights to the linguistic minorities, and the national educational policy is also similarly oriented.

The formation of a new Purbachal might not be ~~be~~ difficult, provided the people concerned willed it. The problem, however, was whether a strong and an efficient state could have been formed including all the components instead of dividing Assam into pieces. Perhaps a demand for more democratic decentralization in Assam might have been better. But Professor Choudhury seemed to believe that the Assamese and the Bengalis could never come to terms as if they had some deep-rooted animosities and irreconcilable aspirations. The Bengali elites, however, were not unnaturally apprehensive about their position and future under the new set-up as some of the Assamese leaders had given the impression as if they should like to liquidate Manipur culture, literature, script, language and customs. As a matter of fact, such leaders might not have had the slightest consideration for the minorities, whose demand then was to introduce Hindustani as State language. Referring to the vicious step taken by

the Assam Government to introduce Assamese language in all the schools and the colleges of Manipur, Laishram Joychandra Singh of the Manipur State Congress sharply reacted: 'If the Assamese brush aside this logic of facts and stick to the imposition of Assamese as State language, Manipur cannot come into Assam'.⁵ It was, therefore, in the interest of both the Assamese and the Manipuris that there should be some safeguards for the proper development of the culture and language of the minorities.⁶ The declaration that the Assam Government would have Assamese only as the provincial language made the Bengali people more excited.

The Bengali questioned the majority of the Assamese in Assam in view of the fact that they were only about two and half million, whereas the other different groups formed the six and half million of

5. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 3, 1949, p. 7.

6. Ibid, November 3, 1948, p. 7.

They further foresaw that if the Assamese brush aside this logic of facts and stick to the imposition of Assamese as the State language, Manipur could not come into Assam. Then in the interest of both Manipur and Assam a new administrative province should come into existence.

the whole Assamese population. All communities had the same rights in the state and could not accept domination by any one of them. But the fact that the Assamese enjoyed the monopoly in the government jobs was highlighted by Choudhury.⁷

There appeared to be some psychological misunderstanding between the two major groups and the Bengali elites openly criticised the anti-Bengali policy of the Assam Government. The Assam Government on the other hand did not relent and refused to provide settlement facilities to the Hindu Bengali refugees who had come from East Pakistan. B.C. Purkayastha however admitted that '... Assam with its heterogeneous population and undeveloped regions need the Bengali talent for the development of the province. However, Bengali talent is temporarily reserved for Purbachal'.⁸ The Assamese had burnt down and looted the houses of the Bengalis who had been the inhabitants from the time immemorial.

7. Birendra Chandra Purkayastha, 'Purbachala - A Home For Pakistan Refugees', The Hindustan Standard, October 31, 1948, p. 11.

8. Ibid, p. 5.

Nalini Kanta Nag condemned the 'insular parochialism' of the Assamese to eliminate the non-Assamese, particularly the Bengalis from the province of Assam.⁹ He vehemently criticised the Assamese for suppressing the Bengalis politically, economically, linguistically and culturally. The specific complaints, which he pointed out were the disallowance of suffrage to the Bengalis, no appointment of the qualified Bengalis to the vacant posts, no contract from the Assam Government, the ban on starting new industries and business, the forcible ejection of lands, the stoppage of the grants-in-aid to the Bengali institutions, etc.¹⁰ Nalini Kanta Nag again condemned the Assam Government for 'a ruthless policy of extermination of Bengalis'.¹¹

9. Ibid.

10. Chaudhury felt that there were frantic efforts to exclude non-Assamese from the voter's list. This cultural, the economic and political conflict was likely to grow and lead to the disastrous consequences unless checked in time and it could be checked only by separating the non-Assamese areas from Assam. Ibid, August 4, 1948, p. 8.

11. N.K. Nag, 'A Plea For Purbachal Province' Ibid, October 31, 1948, p. 11. Nag foresaw that there could never be a compromise on this score since a change of heart should precede any compromise, but the other side was lacking any desire for this.

In view of the above facts the Bengalis were very much irritated. As a matter of fact, the idea for the formation of a new eastern India frontier province was the brain-child of the Bengalis. The Bengali elite did not appreciate the pressure put by the Hindu Bengali refugees on the Assam Government to accept them as refugees. The main question was that how these landless refugees would be given settlement in the land of Assam, as Sylhet had already ceded to Pakistan. It gave birth to a movement which spread over the other eastern states of India. Some leaders from Cachar, Tripura, Manipur in cooperation with each other formed Purbachal Sangathan Committee and discussed the matter in order to find a solution to bring a peaceful atmosphere in the eastern region of India.

The Calcutta branch of the Purbachal Pradesh Sangathan Committee and the Cachar District Congress leaders also supported at a meeting held in Calcutta on October 25, 1948, the resolution adopted by the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee for the creation of a separate and a new Congress province with Manipur, Tripura, Cachar and Lushai Hills.¹²

12. Ibid, October 27, 1948, p. 3.

On June 30, 1948, the demand for the creation of a separate Congress province having a separate administrative unit was put forward before the Congress Working Committee through a sub-committee. The deputation headed by Kalipada Mukherjee, Secretary of the Bengal Province Congress Committee, included Anil Chanda, the Principal, Paresh Chaudhury and Dilip Chakravarty of the Cachar District Congress Committee.¹³ It contended that 'this area have no cultural or linguistic link with the rest of Assam and even geographically is separated by a high range of hills.'¹⁴

The argument, however, did not carry much weight. From the foregoing statement we can draw a conclusion that the movement was sectarian in character. Assuming that there are no cultural and linguistic similarities among the Assamese and the tribal people it is worthwhile to examine to what extent this could be found in case of Purbachal Pradesh, with Manipuris, Cacharis, Bengalis, Tripuris and Lushais having so very distinct cultures and languages.

13. Ibid, July 3, 1948, p. 2.

14. Ibid.

In a meeting held on August 22, 1948, the Cachar District Congress Committee demanded a separate administrative Congress Province with Manipur, Tripura and Lushai Hills. And a body named the Purbachal Province Organising Committee was also formed with Srijut Paresh Chandra Choudhury as the President and Nani Goswami and Rajendra Bhattacharya as the Joint Secretaries. The aim and object of the body was to ask for a separate Congress province. They insisted that the formation of a new province would be the only solution for the problem of upliftment of this backward area. It was further stated that 'the draft scheme ... not only solves the vexed question of integrating the states but also assures complete autonomy for the districts and states in all internal matters to be administered through District or State Councils as envisaged in the sixth schedule of the draft constitution of India.'¹⁵ It was pointed out that every component unit would not be able to maintain its own culture and language at the district level, until and unless it could arrange for a separate and an independent university and a High Court.

15. Ibid, p. 2.

The ultimate future was to be decided on the principle of self-determination.¹⁶

Professor Jogendra Kumar Choudhury repeatedly emphasized the hard need of an east India frontier province. He tried to convince the people through many lectures on the burning topic of Purbachal Pradesh. He emphasised the point that it would increase the spirit of the Indian nationalism and moreover, it would help in safeguarding people's different cultures and languages.¹⁷ He was of the opinion that the proposed Purbachal Pradesh should be centrally administered.¹⁸ A resolution in appreciation and approval of the steps taken by the Cachar District Committee was unanimously adopted at a meeting presided over by Khan Saheb Rashid Ali Laskar, ex-Member of the Legislative Council.¹⁹

16. Ibid. It was reported that there were indications that the authorities of Manipur (and Tripura) would support this move.

17. Ibid., November 2, 1948, p. 3.

18. Ibid., August 4, 1948, p. 8.

19. Ibid.

Causes of Failure

The Purbachal movement failed to arouse public opinion and was nipped in the bud mainly because it was undesirable cry for an unreasonable demand. The Congress Working Committee at its meeting held on November 18, 1948, turned down the request for a separate Purbachal Pradesh.

The Government considered the demand an outcome of the anti-Assamese feelings and never paid any serious attention to it. The demand was emotional and the justification given by N.K. Nag in his article was one-sided.²⁰ He got involved in petty politics and, it appears, was himself not very clear about it. He intentionally ignored the different components of the tribal groups of Manipur, who formed a considerable share of population. These tribals hardly knew Bengali language. As in the case of the Manipuris, it is a fact that they may be knowing Bengali script,

²⁰. N.K. Nag, 'A plea for Purbachal Province', Ibid, October 31, 1948, p. 11.

but it is not necessary that they should understand Bengali language. It would be the same case with the Lushais. The Bengali language would be quite foreign to them. However, Nalikanta Nag rightly pointed out the similarities of religion between the Hindu Manipuris and the Bengalis who followed Vaishnavism.²¹ But he forgot to mention about the religion of the hill people of Manipur. Hence, his belief that religion would be able to bring unity also did not carry much weight. If we look back to the history we would be able to recall many incidents where religion had failed to play a unifying role. Therefore, Nag's force of argument does not appear to be fully logical.

To take up the case of Professor Debratta Datta's views supporting the proposal of forming a north-east India frontier province. He was in favour of immediate creation of a north-east India frontier province. He concluded that 'The Manipuris too, are afraid of the policy of Assamisation of the present Government of Assam, and hence they are reluctant to be tagged into Assam. If Manipur is put into Assam, it will be

21. Ibid.

done defying the popular will and offering opportunities to our enemy. The mere possibility of placing the state within the Assam has made the Manipur restless.'²²

As the political propaganda was in high tone, a few of the leaders of Manipur were afraid of domination by the Assamese. Some of them openly supported the movement of Purbachal Pradesh. Laishram Joychandra Singh, one of the Congress leaders of Manipur, explained how the idea of a new state in the north-east India came to be highlighted. In his opinion it was purely a linguistic issue.²³ The Congress leaders of Manipur were tooth and nail against the imposition of Assamese language which was being introduced in all the schools and the colleges of Manipur. On the other hand, they were in favour of Hindustani as the State language of Assam. Only this could bring about a compromise on the language issue, the Manipur State appeared to be prepared to come out from

22. Debratta Datta, 'Our North-Eastern Frontier - A Warning', Ibid, September 12, 1948, p. 11.

23. Ibid, November 3, 1948, p. 7.

the province of Assam and form a new administrative unit, i.e. the north-east India frontier province.²⁴

The Assam Bengal Manipuri Society, Cachar District Congress Committee, Congress East Bengal Minority Rehabilitation and Citizenship Right Committee (Cachar), and Mar Mongolian Federation also criticised Gopinath Bordoloi, Premier of Assam, for his anti-Purbachal policies. They jointly condemned his statement on the need to maintain unity as itself disruptive and unwanted.²⁵

It was decided to send a delegation to Delhi to emphasize upon the Congress High Command indispensability of a separate congress administrative block. They proposed to submit a memorandum. The body passed a resolution in favour of Purbachal Pradesh consisting of Goalpara, Cooch-Behar, Garo Hills, Khasi Hills, Naga Hills, Lushai Hills, Cachar, Tripura state and State of Manipur. The meeting which was held at Gujrat Mansion in Bentick

24. Ibid.

25. They further said: 'Hon'ble Sri Bordoloi's undue stress on the 'indigenous' population and bespeaks of narrow parochialism that blatantly challenges all principles and policies persued by the Indian National Congress and the ideals of Indian nationalism.' Ibid, October 22, 1948, p. 5.

street on November 6, 1948, appointed a Committee to mould public opinion in favour of this scheme.²⁶

At the same time, a delegation of three men led by Gopinath Bordoloi with the intention to oppose the plan for Purbachal Province, left Gauhati for Delhi. It was to impress upon the Congress Working Committee for the inclusion of Cachar in the All India People's Conference Committee.²⁷ It was learnt that another deputation from Cachar had left for Delhi with a view to pressurize the Congress Working Committee on the point of a new province.²⁸

But nothing happened to this effect as the Assam Government strongly opposed the Purbachal movement. The Premier of Assam rejected the theory on the geographical strategic grounds. He considered this as a very unwise and disruptive move. However, he conceded that such an important matter should be decided by democratic means in accordance with the

26. Ibid, November 7, 1948, p. 3.

27. Ibid, November 8, 1948, p. 3.

28. Ibid.

wishes of the people.²⁹ An interesting aspect of the situation was that the Premier himself had been encouraging some organisations or persons to oppose the movement of Purbachal Pradesh. The body like 'Cachar Kalyan Samiti' became the forceful agent in propagating against the movement.³⁰ It got encouragement from the side of the Government of Assam.³¹

The Assam Governor was also reportedly interested in seeing the movement fizzle out. It was alleged that Sir Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam, was also singing to the tune of Bordoloi.³² He went

29. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), October 15, 1948, p. 7.

30. On the other hand, Bidyapati Singh, one of the members of the legislative assembly, supporting the move for Purbachal Pradesh warned the people to be on their guard against false, mischievous and reactionary propaganda carried on by some organisations. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 2, 1948, p. 3.

31. B.C. Purkayastha, 'Purbachal - A Home for Pakistan Refugees', Ibid, October 10, 1948, p. 11.

32. Sir Akbar Hydari commented: 'I refer to the canker of provincialism now beginning to infect our body politic. Unless it is cut out and that soon, it will foul the whole of our national life. In the end this growth will strangle it; it will bring about the Balkinisation of India. The only remedy is for us all to realise our mutual interdependence ...' Ibid, August 17, 1948, p. 9.

out on tour with the purpose to dissuade the people from taking part in the movement of Purbachal Pradesh.³³ He went to Silchar and sought the views of pleaders, and also Muktear Bar on the Purbachal Pradesh movement; and was visibly annoyed when he came to know that they had enthusiastically supported the idea of Purbachal Pradesh. Both the Governor and Brigadier Habibur Rahman advised the people to abandon the idea on the plea that smaller provincial units would only weaken the defence of the country.³⁴

The argument of strengthening the defence of the country, at the same time was used by Debratta Datta in favour of a separate province. The argument appeared to carry some weight when he remarked that the 'Discontent in these frontier districts is at such a high pitch at the present movement that our enemy will find a very fertile ground here for fomenting.'³⁵ He further alleged that there were some fascist in outlook among the Assamese who

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid, October 23, 1948, p. 2.

35. D. Datta, 'Our North Eastern Frontier - A Warning', Ibid, September 12, 1948, p. 11.

considered themselves having a close racial affinity with the Burmese, and looked upon them as their spiritual home.³⁶ He referred to the Communist movement which really threatened the internal peace and tranquility of the country, particularly, in the north-east India region. The neighbouring countries like Burma and Malaya had become victims of the Communist insurgency. The Government appeared to share some of his apprehensions and the closure of the Palel-Tummu road by an Ordinance of the Assam Government, was not without significance.

Datta recalled that the Burmese reign of Manipur as not an event of 'distant past' and felt stories of Burmese infiltration into Cachar and Upper Assam are yet fresh enough to be exploited by our enemy by raising the cry of the revival of old bonds.³⁷ Taking into consideration all these factors, Datta suggested that the only solution would be the formation of a new province directly to be administered by the Centre.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

The Assam Government, however, never seriously took up the demand for Purbachal Pradesh and turned down it as impracticable. It appears that both the Assam Government as well as the Central Government had fully understood the game of the Bengali elites, who were guided more by their personal communal whims, than anything else. With the passage of time the problem got complicated. Then the matter was taken up by the Central Congress Committee. In a resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee on September 8, 1948, the proposal for the formation of Purbachal Pradesh in the north-eastern India was strongly criticized and outrightly rejected. The Committee at the sametime promised to multi-culture character of the province of Assam.³⁸ Also the protection of diverse languages was assured. Moreover the languages of the Manipuris and the Lushais were recognized by a resolution of the

38. Beside that, even in the matter of election, sufficient safeguards had been provided so that any possible clique might not intervene or impose its will, which was another major reason which led a strong section to decide for the cessation from the Assam province Congress.

Congress Working Committee.³⁹ The people, it appeared fully appreciated the line taken by the Congress Working Committee, which was under the circumstances the only reasonable course for maintaining solidarity in the north-eastern region without jeopardising the culture and the linguistic interest of the heterogeneous community living there. And so in the due course, the movement for the creation of a new province fizzled out.

39. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), November 18, 1948, p. 1. The decision of the Working Committee had come as a devastating blow to the reactionary group of politicians, which was taking the advantage of this unfortunate controversy so long, trying to create chaos and confusion in the north-east region.

Chapter VIII

THE MOVEMENT FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT
1946-49Early Demands

By 1946, Manipur, like the rest of India, had reached the final stage of the nationalist struggle. Anticipating the withdrawal of the British from India, the Manipuri leaders came out with their own projections of the future political set up in Manipur. The Congress Party campaigned for the immediate establishment of the responsible government with an elected assembly to replace the monarchy; but the constitutional movement had only taken roots by the late 1930s when the Women's Bazar Agitation led by Hijam Irabot Singh was launched for the ban on rice export and the establishment of the responsible government.

After the death of Sir Chura Chand Singh, his eldest son Bodha Chandra Singh took over the charge of the administration; for a pretty long year, the hereditary ruler supposed that he would be able to reign peacefully unhindered by any political trouble; but unfortunately he was seriously disturbed with the outbreak of the World War II. Manipur became in 1942

a target of the Japanese air raids and a battle front. During the war the capital seemed to be completely deserted; the administration remained at a standstill for sometime then was taken over by the military.¹ With the end of the war in 1945 the Japanese retreated from Manipur. After the war the British Government had declared their intention to quit India for ever. This news reached Manipur by passing through many tall mountains and valleys. This caused much political excitement and the demand for the responsible government was intensified.

A resolution passed by the All-Manipur Mahasabha Council's Working Committee on August 2, 1948, asked the Maharaja of Manipur to proclaim the establishment of the responsible government in the State within a year. It further requested him immediately to setup a constitution-making machinery composed of the leaders of public opinion.²

The Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha was the first political organisation which took up the political

1. Home Department Political File No. 183, 1943, NAI, New Delhi.

2. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), September 2, 1946, p. 3.

issues of Manipur. Since then the party had been active in the State politics. It took the leading part in the compounders' strike and in the primary school teachers' demand for pay-hike. It also demanded the curtailment of the big salaries of the Durbar members and an increase in the pay of the low-paid public employees.

In one case it was decided in the Fifth Annual Session of the Manipur Students' Federation which was held at the Manipur Dramatic Union Hall under the Presidency of Dwijamani Dev Sharma, a leading political figure, that an immediate installation of a responsible government should be effected. The resolution also demanded the easily introduction of the local self-government in the State.³

As the British Government made known its intention to transfer power to the Indian hands, a

3. Ibid, June 21, 1946, p. 2. It also demanded the Calcutta University and the Manipur State Durbar for the recognition of the Manipuri vernacular in the Bachelor of Arts examination. It further emphasised the necessity of the establishment of a full-fledged college of Science and Arts, and a free and a compulsory primary education.

meeting of the Organising Committee of the Socialist Party of Manipur was held at Imphal under the Presidentship of Bijoy Chandra Singh. It adopted a resolution for the early introduction of the popular government.⁴

Being apprehended the imminent political developments, the Maharaja instituted a constitution-making body for the future administration of the Manipur State. This was announced on December 12, 1946. The Manipur State Durbar after having a discourse with the Agent to the Governor-General, had accepted to form an Interim Government, with some State officials of the present regime, for the time being, before the making of a new constitution.⁵ The Interim Council was inaugurated by the Maharaja on August 14, 1947. The Maharaj Kumar Priyabarta Singh, the younger brother of Maharaj Bodha Chandra Singh, became the first Chief Minister of the Manipur State. Four ministers from the plains and two from the hills were appointed.

4. Ibid, July 28, 1947, p. 5.

5. Ibid.

The Era of Political Factionalism

With the creation of an Interim Council as the political executive, started the era of the factionalism in the Manipuri politics and the State Congress Party split into two groups. The selection of the members of the Interim Council was left to the Maharaja's discretion. Those Congress leaders who had not been considered at all became angry with the Maharaja. They developed an inferiority complex. This dissatisfaction among a section of the Congressmen was responsible for the growth of the factionalism in the Party. As the chances of the compromise narrowed down a Congress group led by late Elangbam Tompok Singh separated from the united Congress Party. The remaining Congress group was headed by Tomal Singh. And both of them became the Presidents of their respective wings. It was a matter of question whether whose party would be the real and the genuine Congress. It was very difficult to answer because both of the Congresses claimed right. Both of the sections started condemning each other.

The Organising Committee of the Socialist Party of Manipur rejected the plea of the selection of the members of the Interim Council. It advocated only a

popular Interim Government will be able to properly charge the responsibilities at the present juncture.⁶

The Committee was of the opinion that a constituent assembly elected on the adult franchise should immediately be established and recommended that the formation of an interim government should be left to the people and their organisations. The Committee did not favour the interference of the Maharaja with the affairs of the people.⁷ Fairly speaking, the Maharaja should have approached in a democratic way, so that the people might have been satisfied. He could have arranged an election for the purpose. That would have credited more to him.

. Laishram Achaw Singh, one of the members of the Congress Working Committee, issued a statement: 'There seems to be some confusions in the minds of the public about the reported move of the state congress to come to some half-hearted arrangements with the State Authorities on the question of the

6. Ibid, July 28, 1947, p. 5.

7. Ibid.

Interim Ministry of Manipur State.⁸ Late Doctor (Physician) Leiren Singh, one of the supporters of the Congress led by Tompok, criticised the high-handedness from which it led to the splitting of the Congress.⁹ This was reported to the President of the All India States People's Conference. The Congress led by Tompok charged against the Congress led by Tomal for violating the Congress discipline, as they joined the Interim Council.

The Congress problem started just after the so-called night 'secret negotiation', on the question of forming an interim government, between Pearson, Durbar President, and some Congress leaders namely, R.K. Bhubon Singh, the Congress President, Dwijamani Dev Sharma, Jogeshwar Singh and Khoimacha Singh, the Secretary of the Congress, on the other side. The content of the negotiation was unknown thoroughly. Naturally, this created more suspicions in the minds of the other Congress members. Immediately after the incident took place a meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress was called

8. Elangbam Tompok to President of the All India States Peoples' Conference, 23 August 1947, Private Office Records, 19/MSc, 1947.

9. Telegram from Doctor Leiren Singh to President of the All India States Peoples' Conference, Manipur State Congress File No. 5, 1947-48 (Date is not mentioned).

in the night of July 16, 1947. But those suspected persons who took part in the secret negotiation did not turn up. The other members present in the meeting declined to disclose anything about the agreement. Achaw Singh tried in vain to let out something on the secret negotiation, and went on saying that if they could make a demand on the introduction of the interim government. But the matter was dropped for the following day the 17th instant at 9 a.m. This time the Working Committee discussed on the content of the letter given by Bhubon on the night of the 14th July. As Bhubon could not attend the meeting due to illness, Gouramani Sharma was appointed temporary President. In the meeting a charge-sheet was brought against Bhubon, Khoimacha Singh, Jogeshwar Singh that they were the gentlemen who recommended the names of two of them - Dwijamani Dev and Krishnamohan Singh - and two other State officials one of them a cousin of Bhubon for the ministership of the Council. The President in his letter specially mentioned the fact that the names of those two State officials could not be given out to the Committee even on that day. However, the discussion went on for about three

hours. It was revealed in the meeting, that they went against the policy of the committee itself as let down in its resolutions, viz., the formation of an popular interim government in complete accord with the All India States Peoples' Conference resolutions, policies and decisions and also that they were, in so doing, acting against the discipline of the Congress organisation.¹⁰

It was really a sinister game played by the unprincipled Congressmen to their colleagues. It was an act of crime to cheat the public by political manouvering with the help of Major Pearson. It was also a matter of shame on their part not to take the Working Committee into their confidence. It was not at all befitting on their part to finally submit the personnel of the ministry without prior consultation of the Committee. So the natural conclusion was that they had acted against the policy and discipline of the Manipur State

10. General Secretary of the Manipur State Congress, to General Secretary of the All India States Peoples' Conference, 17 September 1947, Private Office Records, 1947 (File No. is not mentioned).

Congress. The Committee, therefore, passed a censure motion on Bhubon and his associates by strong disapproving of their actions by nine votes to five.¹¹ The Committee further authorized Krishnamohan to call an urgent meeting of the Committee to take the requisite steps. The dissentients claimed that they should give minutes of dissent, quite contrary to the constitutional principles of any political organisation. However, their motion was put down by a majority vote though the President of the day was a partisan on the side of the dissentients.¹²

In a special meeting of the Working Committee which was held on July 21, 1947, at Bhagyabati press, the main topic of the discussion centred round the plan of the interim government. When the sitting commenced, a point of order was raised by one member

11. Proceedings of the Manipur State Congress, 17 July 1947, Manipur State Congress, 1947, Ibid.

12. It should be noted in their connection the fact that there was no higher authority of the Manipur State Congress other than the Working Committee. All the members of the Working Committee were accepted after the election of the President by a general meeting of the Congressmen. No representatives of the council of Congressmen existed on that day as of higher authority above the Working Committee.

stating that the appointment of the three additional Working Committee members was unconstitutional and arbitrary. But that was ruled out by the President. At that very moment, the same member demanded the resignation of the President as illogical conclusion of the censure motion passed on July 17, 1947. The President, however, refused to do so and urged the house to hear them again.¹³

The General Secretary began to move a counter resolution recommending the adoption of the secret plan to the Working Committee. Achaw raised a point of order on account of the fact that the plan was already considered and was disapproved and a censure motion passed on July 7, 1947. The dissentients confidently claimed that the matter should be reconsidered though they were in the minority. It was against the constitutional principle and the democratic practice of all political organisations in the world to manouver in this way so as to be able to impose their decision upon the Working Committee by a minority of official

13. Proceedings of the Manipur State Congress, 21 April, 1947, Private Office Records, 19/MS.C., 1947.

clique. The President showed his high-handedness and obstinacy by pressing the motion. The speaker once again demanded the resignation of the President. A point of information was also raised if the names of those two State officials who had been recommended to the Council could be divulged at that time. The President replied in the negative. It was a wonder that such a matter of public importance could not be given out in the Working Committee which was assumed to be the representative of the people. In spite of repeated demands of the resignation of the President and his bloc in the Working Committee. The President and his bloc in the Working Committee violated flagrantly the principle and the policy of the Congress and acted contrary to proper procedure. It was therefore vividly proved that they were the seceders who were somehow trying their utmost to maintain their position by political manouvering and have refused to hand over office. They had set up an unconstitutional body and were creating an intricate sensation in the minds of the people.¹⁴

14. Proceedings of the Manipur State Congress, 21 July 1947, Private Office Records, 19/MS.C. 1947.

Soon after the incident, an emergency meeting of the Working Committee was held on the night of July 21, 1947, and Tompok was recommended as the President of the new Cabinet and Chandrahas Singh was authorised as the General Secretary to take up requisite steps for carrying on the activity of the Congress.

Tompok was duly elected as the President in the general meeting of the Congressmen convened for the purpose on July 24, 1947, and a new Cabinet was formed and ratified by the meeting.¹⁵

When the matter came to a climax, the Chief Minister manouvered to pacify the rebellious Congress section by offering the post of Education Minister in the State Council to be formed, to their unquestioned leader Tompok, eventhough he did not recognise the new Cabinet. Tompok could not accept the position as the plan was quite defective and was not at all up to the expectations and in aspirations of the people. Because

15. Elangbam Tompok to Chief Minister of Manipur, 25 July 1947, Private Office Records, 1947 (File No. is not mentioned).

Krishnamohan and Tompok were only the peoples' representatives in the State Council of seven members. The Working Committee in the meantime rejected the proposal and demanded a truly popular interim government.

In the meanwhile, the Bhuban clique set up their own committee sponsored by the State Government and the Maharaja and they accepted the office in the name of the State Congress against the wishes of the vast majority of the public. Bhubon, himself belonged to the ruling family and Krishnamohan being brother-in-law of the Maharaja had allied themselves with the Maharaja to keep up the ruler in power.¹⁶

Finally, the members of the Working Committee unitedly resolved to enquire into the matter and take proper steps to save from an impossible situation and to prevent from the imminent public disorder on sequent upon the secret alliance and the strengthening of the Maharaja's hands in taking repressive measures to put down the popular and the legitimate demand for a responsible form of government. It would be

16. Proceedings of the Manipur State Congress, 24 July 1947, Manipur State Congress, 1947, Ibid.

illogical to form an interim government without prior consultation with the State Congress. The Working Committee highly condemned the action of Major Pearson, the Chief Minister of the State Council, who in complete disregard of the people's wishes and demands entered into a secret negotiation with some politically self-motivated members of the Working Committee on the issue of the Interim ministry.¹⁷

The Committee after analysing the prevailing political situation considered the formation of a interim government highly essential, otherwise, the progress towards the responsible government might be hindered and arrested, and the disturbances and the troubles might break out in the State. The local authorities should in the case bear the responsibility. Besides, they outrightly rejected the rules of the administration for the Manipur State, 1947, as introduced by the Maharaja could not be the basis of the interim government.¹⁸

17. Proceedings of the Manipur State Congress, 31 July 1947, Manipur State Congress, 1947, Ibid.

18. Ibid.

To quote the words of Bipin Pal Dass, a Socialist leader of Assam, who happened to visit Manipur, addressing a public meeting held at the Manipur Dramatic Union Hall, that 'The Manipur State Rules for Administration, 1947 was a direct challenge to the people of Manipur and the State Congress. It was high time to reject the draft constitution of the constitution-making body which embodied provisions falling far short of full responsible government.'¹⁹ Further, encouraging the people he drew the attention to Nehru's statement that the people's power would be supreme in all the Indian states. Sovereignty should go to the people and an intensified struggle for a responsible government should be advocated. Once again, Dass in a meeting of the Socialist workers held at Imphal, reminded, or rather excited the people that they should not stop their struggle for a responsible government, and be ready to face any source of trouble. Lastly, he further urged the people to endeavour to end the defective system of passport which prohibited free entry of the out-

19. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), July 28, 1947, p. 5.

siders into Manipur without prior permission from the State Government. Really, many of the political leaders were dis-appointed as they were not allowed to enter Manipur. Dass ironically commented that it was a great insult to the Manipuris.²⁰

Coming back to the main theme of the problem of the formation of the State Council, the hill people and the Muslims protested on their exclusion in this respect. They alleged that the nomination of the present minister was illegal. In a meeting held on August 24, 1947, the attitude of the Maharaja was also condemned by the student's Congress wing, Krishak Sabha, etc. But the Maharaja seemed to be unheeded to such political development.²¹

20. The system of the 'inner line' permit had been adopted since the advent of the British rule in the State because the strategic considerations required it. Free entry might threaten the peace and tranquility of the border territory. Being conscious of this fact the British Government enforced the 'inner line' permit system. Even after the withdrawal of the British Government from India the same old system has been continued. Keeping in view of the advantage of the 'inner line' system the Maharaja and his Government intentionally did not abolish it. This would help to check the entry of the political mongers in Manipur. The Maharaja was really afraid of the outsiders who could instigate the people to revolt against his rule.

21. Manipur State Congress, Private Office Records, 1947 (File No. is not mentioned).

If the Maharaja could have judged the political situation, he would have surely saved the Congress from the impending crisis. Neither his Government nor he himself took the least interest in the welfare of the people and the State. He appointed in the constitutional making body only those persons who were his patrons. He appointed his younger brother as the first Chief Minister of Manipur; on the other hand, this would never serve the purpose of the proposal of compromise between the two Congress groups. The Maharaja should not have supported the Congress led by Tomal.

Negotiations for the Congress Unity

After the splitting of the Manipur State Congress into two rival groups, the efforts were continuously made for the reconciliation and the unity between the two while both continued to claim to be the genuine Congress Party. In Manipur, the united Congress Party was the only largest political organisation before the split-up. Even before the satyagraha the matter was discussed to bring a compromise between the two

groups; when the satyagraha was ended, the issue of the negotiation was a matter of daily question.

The only difference lied on the point: Tompok's Congress wanted the other Congress section headed by Tomal should follow them in spirit; only then they would be able to achieve their first and foremost goal, i.e., the establishment of the full responsible government. If the Congress led by Tomal regretted the consequences of the split, and did not accept the constitution drafted by the constitution-making body, and demanded immediately the full responsible government, then there would be a definite chance of the normalisation, as before, of the strained relationship between the two contending Congresses.²² But, unfortunately this condition was not entertained by the Congress led by Tomal. In a meeting held on September 20, 1947, at Atom Babu Sharma's residence, the Tompok Congress came out with the following four points:

1. there should be re-election;
2. the President of the Congress should be elected by the primary members;

22. Manipur State Congress File No. 5, 1947, Congress Office, Imphal.

3. there should be a selection of fifteen members by the Working Committee according to the old constitution;
4. there should be a cancellation of three members from the category of the voter-candidate of the Congress, because they - Krishnamohan, Dwijamani Dev and Bhubon - illogally and secretly took part in the negotiation in connection with the formation of an interim government without prior consultation with the Congress Working Committee.²³

With exception to the last point, Tomal's Congress accepted the remaining three conditions on the term of the compromise. It showed that the chance of the negotiation was broken down. Seeing the less chance of agreement between the two factions of the Congress, Sarangadhar, General Secretary of the All India States Peoples' Conference, left Imphal on September 21, 1947, who came to solve the Manipur State Congress crisis.

23. Manipur State Congress, Private Office Records, 1947 (File No. is not mentioned).

On the eve of the satyagraha a Negotiating Committee was formed. On October 28, 1947, in a meeting, it was resolved that the two rival Congresses should unite together once again as before. Gourahari, the President of the Committee requested Tompok not to start any sort of agitation unless the two Congresses united.²⁴ The Committee asked the Congresses to send their suggestions on the term of compromise. Further the Committee informed them on November 2, that it might be handicapped in narrowing down the differences if there were no quick and definite replies from the Congresses. Despite, the Committee would be compelled to regret if any sort of agitation took place in the meanwhile. But all the attempts and the exertions of the Committee were in vain, as the satyagraha movement had started already.

When the satyagraha was called off, the student Congress wing had taken the matter of the negotiation, and appealed to the leaders of both Congresses to work unitedly for the development and bring a socio-economic revolution in the State. Though the student wing referred to the successful

24. President of Negotiating Committee, to President of Manipur State Congress, 31 October 1947, Ibid.

satyagraha, they regretted the disunity among the Congressmen.²⁵

Debeswar Sarma, the Indian Dominion Agent in Manipur, seemed to be interested in the Congress crisis of Manipur, as he invited four members from each Congress to the informal conference with a view to bring out a solution on the issue of replacing the present Council for a popular interim council and a constituent assembly in order to frame a constitution for the responsible government. But he failed consecutively to bring a common term of agreement.²⁶ On the first day of the meeting, the Congress led by Tompok raised certain points that the ministry should be distributed between the two Congresses in a proportionate ratio and an immediate dissolution of the present ministry. However, the other Congress led by Tomal accepted the dismissal of the present ministry and the substitution of the four Congress nominees if the dissentients were once again allowed

25. Assistant Secretary of the Manipur State Students' Congress, to Manipur State Congress, 4 December 1947, Manipur State Congress File No. 5, 1948, Congress Office, Imphal.

26. Manipur State Congress, Publicity Department File No. 2, 1948, Congress Office, Imphal.

to join the old Congress.²⁷ But such a condition was not acceptable to the Congress led by Tompok. As decided by the Working Committee (Resolution 1, 28.2.48), a sitting of the Manipur State Congress Parishad was arranged in Imphal at Manipur Dramatic Union Hall in connection with the settlement of the problem created by the split of the Congress. But the hope of bringing the two Congresses into one was never fulfilled.

Satyagraha against the Maharaja

As the Interim Council and the new rules for the administration of Manipur, 1947 did not meet the demand of the Tompok group, it eventually led to the launching of the first political satyagraha in Manipur. A dissident faction of the Tompok Congress

27. On the other hand, the Congress led by Tomal blamed the Congress group of Tompok that '... the seceder party went back upon their words and demanded immediate unconditional dissolution of the present Ministry leaving the whole thing in chaos and thus giving them greater opportunity to aggravate the present disorder. They further wanted their party to continue as a separate congress. The motive of the seceder party was evidently to leave every thing in melting pot for political adventurism.' Ibid.

did not think that a responsible government was going to be established very soon; so they decided to launch a satyagraha to press the demand for a responsible government in Manipur. It was a massive satyagraha which spread to the far-flung villages of the capital. The satyagrahis' main aim was to bring an end of the autocratic rule, as 'For centuries together the Manipuris have been groaning under the yoke of the Rajas. Now with the course of events in the world at large and India in particular, the freedom-loving people of Manipur can no longer bear this medieval system in Manipur with the Raja as the sole dictator in the State'²⁸

On August 15, 1947, a group of Congress led by Tompok using the Indian Congress caps and hoisting the National flag tried to enter the palace with a view to worshipping the image of Govindji as a mark of the Independence Day celebration. They were not allowed to enter the palace by an order of the Maharaja because they came with the Indian National flag and the

28. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), September 30, 1947, p. 5.

Congress caps.²⁹ The Maharaja suspected the move was politically-motivated; whatever the case might be, the Maharaja did commit a mistake in tackling the situation. In fact, he was deadly opposed to the Congress led by Tompok for their anti-feudal and anti-monarchical attitudes. Moreover, he should not have disrespected the national flag. This irrational on his part had complicated the issue. This did not cause violence. However, many of them were arrested on the spot for breaking the laws of the State.³⁰ Subsequently, the arrest had incited the public sentiment from which it was likely to spread in the form of a large-scale agitation.

The General Secretary of the Manipur Socialist Party issued a press note declaring that 'They (Socialists) are now rising to end this feudalism once and for all and establish full responsible Government. They can no longer remain silent when the Tri-colour flag, symbol of India's

29. Manipur State Congress, Publicity Department File No. 2, 1948, Congress Office, Imphal.

30. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), September 24, 1947, p. 7.

freedom, has been dishonoured by the Raja.'³¹ The General Secretary further requested the people of Assam to help the Manipuris in their struggle for the achievement of the political and civil liberties.³² This was responded by the Socialist Party of Assam. So far the Assam Socialist Party members and the workers were greatly excited by the satyagraha movement in Manipur and some of them came to Manipur to take part in the agitation. A few of them were arrested by the State police for not having obtained prior permission from the Government. Later, they were released at Mao, the border station in the north of Manipur.³³

Sarangadhar, the General Secretary of the All India State Peoples' Conference and one of the members of the Constituent Assembly, issued a

31. Ibid, September 30, 1947, p. 5. A resolution was also passed in a public meeting held on August 24, 1947 that 'This meeting of the people of Manipur of all shades of opinion places on record its deep sense of grief at the dishonouring of the Indian Union Flag and the Gandhi cap and resolving that a Satyagraha movement will be launched to vindicate the honour of the flag and the cap.' Ibid, September 10, 1947, p. 8.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid, September 24, 1947, p. 7.

statement condemning the rude attitude of the local authorities of Manipur in holding up the members of the delegation of the Assam Socialist Party, namely, Hareswar Goswami, Principal Hem Barua, etc. He expressed with deep shock that 'We are free and the whole country is ours. You can go anywhere in your peaceful pursuits and no power on earth can stop you. Manipur claims to be independent but carries on this British system of permits imposed on non-Manipuris. This is absolutely no ground for it. There is no emergency nor any other condition. But feudalism still clutches at the British apron. I invite fighter all over to smash this citadel of old fashioned reaction'.³⁴

When Dass was in Manipur, it was understood that he had conversation with Captain Priyabarta,

34. Ibid. Like Dass, Hareswar Goswami, one of the members of the National Executive of the Socialist Party of India, held the same views. He did not justify the arrest of the Socialist delegates on the ground of being they were foreigners. He added that 'Nowhere in India this system (inner line permit) is in vogue. In Manipur too there can be no reason for its continuance after the withdrawal of the British from India. This only betrays a desire to remain independent and free from the Indian Union. Otherwise, how and why does Manipur restrict the freedom of movement of the people by such an abnoxious and medieval system, and

(Footnote continued)

Chief Minister of Manipur, regarding the 'pass system'. But his argument of hoisting up the national flag in front of the Govindji temple was unreasonable as it was not the general practice in all over India. It seemed to be politically motivated only to create a problem and tease the Maharaja. Anyway he admitted that the immediate cause of the satyagraha was the hoisting up of the national flag in front of the temple and entering in the palace with the Gandhi caps.³⁵ He also talked to the Political Agent and Debeswar Sarma. He indicated that Manipur's case would be reviewed like the other states of India in the next session of the All India States Peoples' Conference.³⁶

(Footnote continued from previous page)

that too, of an Indian. It does against the fundamental rights of an Indian as enunciated by the Constituent Assembly. Every lover of freedom must fight this system. When too it is added the insult hurried by the Maharaja to the Union flag on August 15, the whole game becomes very clear. Manipur cannot at one and the same time join the Indian Union and disrespect its flag.' Ibid.

35. Ibid, September 26, 1947, p. 4.

36. Ibid, September 24, 1947, p. 7.

In September 1947, the Tumpok Congress submitted an ultimatum to the State authorities in the following terms:

1. The interim government, which was recently introduced, should be reconstituted according to the popular demand, that is, all the members of the Government should be elected by the people and that no members should be nominated by the Maharaja as had been done.
2. A constituent assembly elected on the basis of the universal franchise should immediately be set up to draw up a constitution.
3. The 'pass system' whereby an outsider was to take a pass from the State authorities for the entry into Manipur should immediately be suspended.
4. The Indian Union flag and the wearing of the Gandhi cap should be allowed in the temple of the palace, which had been disallowed even after the Manipur State had joined the Indian Union.

5. The land revenue, which was very high and the incidents of which were very high on the peasants, should be revised and redressed so as to give relief to the people.³⁷

On November 6, 1947, a general strike was observed in the State. And all the Government offices like police Station, Revenue Department, Registration Office, Chief Court, Palace, Chief Minister's residence, etc., were picketed.³⁸ But the Education Office was excluded as it was related to the sheet of learning. Subsequently, several public meetings were conducted, and long processions were taken out in Imphal. In defiance of the order of the Maharaja, the agitators started cutting bamboos and firewoods from the reserved forest of the Maharaja.³⁹ The satyagrahis' slogans like 'Bande Mataram' had thundered the air of Manipur. The reports of the

37. Ibid.

38. The Daily Praja (Imphal), November 12, 1947, p. 1.

39. Manipur State Congress, Publicity Department File No. 2, 1948, Congress Office, Imphal.

clashes between the State police and the satyagrahis were coming in. In one of the happenings, on November 7th, the State police fired more than sixty rounds of blanks upon a large crowd of the satyagrahis gathering at police ground only to disperse them.⁴⁰ About twenty persons were reported injured and no death reported.⁴¹ Some of the policemen were captured and detained by the satyagrahis but they were released stripped off their police uniforms.

On the tenth day of the non-cooperation movement in Manipur, an 'anti-repression day' was observed on November 14, under the leadership of Tompok, the Dictator of the Satyagraha Council of Action. The picketing was still continued. The majority of offices cooled deserted. The State police

40. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 9, 1947, p. 1.

41. Later with the start of the satyagraha, i.e. between November 6 and November 19, about seventy people were reported injured. Manipur State Congress File No. 5, 1947-48, Congress Office, Imphal.

was condemned for their rude and cruel handling of the satyagrahis. The satyagrahis vehemently denounced the police firing, the lathi-charge and the employment of the Assam Rifles to crush the demonstrators; they also decried the State's 'repressive policy'.⁴² As a protest against the blatant use of the Assam Rifles in suppressing the peaceful satyagraha movement, the Manipur Satyagraha Aid Committee of the Assam Socialist Party sent telegrams to Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah, the then President of the All India States Peoples' Conference.⁴³

The satyagraha movement seemed to be not subsided before long. As the movement spread throughout Manipur, it also affected the student community. Now the State authorities instructed the school authorities to find those students who took part in one incident of hartal. In a letter addressed to the President of the Manipur State

42. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 14, 1947, p. 2.

43. Telegram from Elangbam Tompok to V.B. Patel, 8 November, 1947, Manipur State Congress, 1947 (File No. is not mentioned).

Congress (the Tompok group), the students' General Secretary, on behalf of the Students' Strike Committee, expressed that the action of the Government was nothing except victimization of the girl and the boy students. The Committee further threatened that if the Government did not exempt the fine, it would turn into a serious consequence.⁴⁴

A Hindustan Standard correspondent reported that the Maharaja's men were trying to sabotage the agitation by inciting people to violence.⁴⁵ The General Secretary of the Congress led by Tompok commented that the Maharaja and the Durbar could not fairly run the Government. Theirs became an administration of the police and the bullies. In a statement issued from the office of the Manipur Socialist Party, the people were warned to be vigilant against the activities of the anti-satyagraha movement, as they were trying to suppress the national movement by hook or by crook.⁴⁶

44. Secretary of Students' Strike Committee, to President of Manipur State Congress, 11 October 1947, Ibid.

45. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 8, 1947, p. 5.

46. Ibid., September 10, 1947, p. 8.

By a resolution a conference of the Manipuris of the newly constituted district of Cachar held on October 28, 1947, at Masughat, Silchar, congratulated the people of Manipur for their struggle for the full responsible government.⁴⁷ The late Socialist leader Jaya Prakash Narayan sympathized with the cause. Wishing them all success in their struggle he said: '... I hope you too will soon be reaching your goal and that your progress would be rapid and sure ...'⁴⁸

The End of Satyagraha

After a long struggle between the State forces and the people's pressure, at last, the later had to win the ground. The Maharaja and his Government could not overlook all the time the rightful demand of the majority. The Government

47. Proceedings of the Surma Valley Manipur Association, 28 October 1947, Manipur State Congress, 1947 (File No. is not mentioned).

48. Jaya Prakash Narayan to People of Manipur, 24 December 1947, Manipur State Congress, Publicity Department File No. 2, 1948, Congress Office, Imphal.

has been a machinery to look after the well-beings of the people; an autocratic ruler would never last long; it is only a question of time and tide; a change ought to take place sooner or later in due course. And, now people have been more and more politically conscious.

At the eleventh hour, the Maharaja's declaration came out that the draft constitution drawn up and submitted in the last July by the constitution-making committee consisting of elected representatives from the plains and the hills would be introduced soon.⁴⁹ But the Chief Minister opined that 'There appears to be no reason why this constitution which, I am advised, ensures full responsible government, should not be given a trial. I am, however, prepared to invite and consider the opinion and advice of the Constitutional Advisor of the Constituent Assembly of the Indian Dominion on the draft constitution, as to whether any clause in its conflicts against the concept of responsible

49. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 26, 1947, p. 3.

government.'⁵⁰ He further appealed to the people to work out the constitution. He also expressed his strong opinion to crush the anti-social elements for maintaining a strict law and order in the State.

The Dominion Agent in Manipur, speaking at a mammoth public meeting held at Imphal on April 23, assured the people that 'As the agent of the Dominion of India in Manipur, I have to say two things here. There are (1) Responsible Government is going to be introduced in Manipur State by April 1948. And (2) the Dominion of India cannot look upon chaos and disorder in this frontier State with equanimity. There should be peace, progress and rule of law here. The Dominion Government is interested in attainment of both objectives. I seek the whole-hearted cooperation of all peoples of Manipur State for this end.'⁵¹

The announcement of the Chief Minister affirmed the promise of the Maharaja for the estab-

50. Manipur State Congress, Private Office Records, 1947 (File No. is not mentioned).

51. Elangbam Tompok to Dominion Agent in Manipur, 25 November 1947, Private Office Records, MSC/47, 1947.

lishment of the responsible government by April 1, 1948. This brought a change in the future political development in Manipur. Soon, the declaration of the Maharaja calmed down the satyagrahis. As a result of the recent change in the policy of the local government, the Manipur State Congress led by Tompok decided to call off the satyagraha on November 26, 1947.⁵² The Dominion Agent said that it was a wise decision. On the other hand, the State Government accepted to fulfil their four demands, viz., the dissolution of the State Council, the introduction of the full responsible government, the institution of the constituent assembly and the grant of the people's civil liberties.⁵³

As a celebration of the successful satyagraha movement, the Manipur State Congress led by Tompok made a programme for calling out a long procession on November 28, 1947; and in this way, the satyagraha in Manipur came to an end.

52. Elangbam Tompok to Dominion Agent in Manipur, 26 November 1947, Ibid.

53. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 28, 1947, p. 1.

Chapter IX

MANIPUR'S INTEGRATION WITH THE INDIAN UNION: 1949

Prelude

When the British announced their intention to transfer power to the Indians some selfish and ambitious leaders saw an opportunity to reap a rich harvest by creating political upheaval in the State. They made out a case for the immediate installation of a full responsible government and a constituent assembly composed of elected members; subsequently, a satyagraha was launched in the State. An election to the Legislative Assembly thereafter was held in which no single party could secure an absolute majority to form a government.¹ It inevitably led to political instability in the State. In the meanwhile, the question of the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union became the principal political issue and the public opinion was sharply divided over it.

1. In the election that was held in June 1948, the State Congress Party secured nineteen seats in a House of fifty-three. The ministry was formed by the Praja Santi Party in coalition with other parties. But the fall of the ministry was brought because of the lack of the cohesion among the members.

A section of people preferred rather the creation of a composite North-East India Frontier Province comprised of Cachar, Tripura, Manipur and Lushai hills; the another section desired to merge with Assam. Some leaders advocated the idea an independent Manipur. The Congress group led by Tomal Singh was alone committed to Manipur's integration with the Indian Union; and some of this group even threatened to launch a satyagraha if the integration was not effected forthwith. The Government of India was anxious to complete the merger of the princely states within the Indian Union to bring the political homogeneity and the democracy to all parts of India.² When the first phase of the mergers was over only eight states were left unmerged, namely, Kashmir, Hyderabad, Benares, Tripura, Cooch-Bihar, Khasi Hills States (including sixteen small units), Mysore and Manipur.³

2. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), August 15, 1949, p. 2.

3. Ibid.

Impediments

However, Manipur underwent a great political turmoil before the merger was effected. The Hindustan Standard on May 28, 1947, reported that some leaders from the four adjoining states of Assam — Cooch-Bihar, Tripura, Khasi Hills and Manipur — were to meet in a conference to be held in Shillong in June 1947, to discuss the problems arising out of the future constitutional changes.⁴ It was also learnt that these states, excluding Cooch-Bihar, had nominated some of their delegates to represent their case with the Constituent Assembly.⁵ These small states were suspicious of whether their cultural identity would be preserved within the Indian Union.

The position of Manipur was rather delicate. According to an unconfirmed report, the Anti-Fascist People's Federation League, the people of Manipur invited U Aung San, Deputy Chairman of the Burmese Interim Government, to visit their State. It was mentioned in the report that, the Manipuris

4. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), May 11, 1947, p. 3.

5. Ibid., April 28, 1947, p. 1.

wished to roll into one with the State of Burma in order to establish a permanent tie with the same. It was also reported that U Aung San was expected to be flown to Manipur in May 1947, to meet with the leaders of Manipur.⁶ A news published in Rangoon on May 12, 1947, contained the clarification made by U Ba Choe, Information Minister of Burma, to the Associated Press of America, that '... his country would neither encourage the border State of Manipur to incorporate itself as a part of Burma, nor discourage the State from joining Burma.'⁷ U Ba Choe added, 'you may be certain the Burma Government will refrain from interfering'⁸ with the decisions of the Manipuris. Further he firmly and confidently remarked that U. Aung San, Deputy Chairman of the Governor's Executive Council, would like to visit India for a discussion about the future of Manipur only if he were invited by Jawaharlal Nehru. But he was quite conscious of the desire of the Manipuris to mix with the Burmans; and he wished to go to Manipur for the purpose. At the same time U Ba Choe clarified that

6. Ibid., May 12, 1947, p. 2.

7. Ibid., May 12, 1947, p. 2.

8. Ibid.

'Burma has no wish to encroach upon other's territories. When the Burmese Government has given to States within Burma the right of self determination for deciding whether they should amalgamate with Burma proper or not, it is unlikely that Burma would seek an outside state to merge irrespective of past associations between Burma and the State'.⁹

Whatever the case might be the Burmese would have definitely liked the merger of Manipur with them. In a Rangoon information of May 11, 1947, it was described clearly that Manipur was once a part of Burma some one hundred years ago. Later, it came out of Burma when the Britishers overran the country. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say, with no partiality, that the Burmese leaders wanted that Manipur should come and join Burma. In support of this view it would be appropriate to quote the words of U Ba Choe, which are as follows, 'The Manipuris being Hindus may not want association with Muslim Bengal, but that is a matter for the Indian Government to decide ...'¹⁰

9. Ibid., May 14, 1949, p. 5.

10. Ibid.

In the meantime, the Communist Party of Manipur was carrying out subversive activities near the Burma-Manipur boundaries. The Communist infiltration in Manipur was repeatedly reported from time to time. It was reported from Shillong that a few Communist insurgents had entered into Ukhrul (in the north-east of Manipur) and looted the rifles from the hill people.¹¹ It was also informed that considerable arms and ammunitions including the modern weapons had been smuggled by the underground Indian Communists into Assam through Manipur from the Red-held areas of Upper Chindwin and the Hukang valleys in Burma. The Manipuri Communists were reported to have taken part in this activity. It was the time when the Communists movement in the north-east region of India was rapidly increasing.¹²

The report that there had been a move for the inclusion of Manipur in the Burmese territory was highly described as fabrication by two Congress leaders-cum members of the executive of the Manipur State Congress Party. The two gentlemen — Krishna

11. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), March 5, 1949, p. 5.

12. Ibid., July 23, 1949, p. 5.

Mohan Singh and Jogeshwar Singh — clarified their stand in a statement published in a local newspaper, that the 'Manipuris would resent this fantastic report. This is a sinister move engineered by few followers of the C.P.I. in Manipur State. The State Congress and the people could not even dream of it and were deadly against it'.¹³ Further, it added, 'Not to speak of incorporation of Manipur into Burma, the State Government and the people now demanded for bringing under the direct control and administration of the Kabaw valley, the area between the Ango hills in Burma and Moreh of Manipur for which the British Government have been passing an annual tribute to the State'.¹⁴ These two leaders assured that Manipur being a Hindu State would not like to join Burma whose religion had been ethnically quite different from the Manipuris. Hence, Manipur would rather prefer to merge with the Indian Union.¹⁵ The two Congress posed that the Congress party of Manipur as 'only a nationalist party' which

13. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), May 21, 1947, p. 5.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

According to him Manipur being culturally different from other states would prefer to be independent.

As the Government was well informed of the Communist activities in Manipur, several efforts were made to arrest Irabot who had been underground for a long time; but the State Government could never catch hold of him alive. At last he died in Rangoon. The political situation in Manipur favoured the Communists to be dealt with firm hands. Analysing all the facts of the political development in Manipur, the Government of India decided to bring the State under the grip of the Centre. And it was the dream of Patel to see India consolidated.¹⁸

The problem of merger was to be solved urgently as Manipur had the international boundary with Burma. The Indian leaders were aware of the old feud between Burma and Manipur over the issue of the Kabaw Valley. The British Raj had ceded the Kabaw Valley to Burma under the treaty of Yandaboo signed in 1825. The Indian leaders foresaw that in the future the trouble might ensue on the issue of the Kabaw Valley. This would surely disturb the

^{18.} The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), July 6, 1947, p. 5.

neighbourly relations of India with the independent Burma. In the meanwhile, the clashes on the Manipur-Burma border had been reported from time to time.¹⁹

Besides, the Naga frontier problem was also there. Athiko Daiho, a Mao Naga leader openly and boldly demanded the separation of the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur and Assam with a view to form a separate Naga State. He wanted that the Nagas of Manipur should join their brotheren Nagas of Assam. He further advocated for the establishment of an Eastern Frontier Hill Federation within or without an independent India so that the existence of their nationalities, rights and privileges would be recognised by India.²⁰ As to the reaction of the hill people's demand, Khoimacha Singh, a Congress leader, said that '... the Manipur State Congress stand for solidarity of His Highness's territories, the people of Manipur will resist any attempt as dismemberment of the State by any section.'²¹ It

19. Ibid., September 12, 1949, p. 3.

20. Home Department, Political File No. 333, 1946, NAI, New Delhi.

21. Ibid.

was reported that Daiho's men were engaged in collecting taxes on potatoes. The cutting of the telephone-lines, the telegraph wires and the interference with the despatch of the mails were also reported. For the security measures, the Assam Rifles were stationed at several disturbed areas.²² The Mao Nagas demanded the Government for the immediate withdrawal of the imposition of rice duty on them. They thought that it was a repressive measure on the part of the State Council on the Mao Nagas who were fighting and leading the other Naga tribes of the State to amalgamate themselves with the Nagas of the Naga Hills on the basis of their closer affinity with them.²³ Later, the Naga National League was formed in the early part of 1948 under the Presidentship of Pukeni and Athikho Daiho

22. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), September 1, 1948, p. 3.

23. The Mao Nagas in Manipur consumed a fair amount of rice from the Manipur valley. No duty was ever known to be imposed on rice movement within Manipur when the white folk (Britishers) were in power. Immediately after the resumption of power by the Manipuris (Meiteis), the imposition of duty on rice commenced at the rate of four annas per maund in December (1947) last. Since then the duty had been enhanced up to two rupees per maund and was actually realised.

as its Secretary.²⁴ The political aim of the league was to represent the cause of the Nagas. On January 24, 1949, the Mao Nagas submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Prime Minister of India Dominion, demanding the consolidation of the Naga inhabited areas under one administrative unit. They further suggested that a referendum might be called to ascertain the wishes of the Nagas of Manipur.²⁵

In the Naga Hills (now Nagaland), Imti Aliba Ao, the first President of the 'Naga National Council', said that he would be giving an ultimatum to the Prime Minister of India and the Assam Governor.²⁶ He

24. The Naga National League was the only political organization set up in order to work and consolidate the Nagas of Manipur. It pledged itself to stand together with other hill tribes in the state as well as outside it in order to demand self-determination of the hill peoples in general without in any way injuring the general interest of Assam and India.

25. Memorandum submitted by Naga Leaders to Deputy Prime Minister, 24 January 1948, Manipur State Congress File No. 5, 1948.

26. The Naga Hills District Tribal Council which was established under the Chairmanship of Charles Pawsey in 1945 with an object to train the Nagas in the art of self-administration, had changed its name and the whole set-up to the Naga National Council in 1946. It stands in 1946; The solidarity of the Naga tribes, including those in the unadministered areas, which scattered all over the north-east hilly region of India and the north-west frontier of Burma. Its aim was to bring about amity and understanding among the different tribes. It strongly protested against the grouping of Assam with Bengal. It demanded the Naga Hills should be continuously included in an autonomous Assam in a free India, with local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas; and the Nagas should have a separate electorate.

threatened: If the authorities failed to look into the matter, the Naga Hills would automatically discontinue to be a part of the Indian Union from December 6, 1947.²⁷ A delegation of the Naga leaders had flown to New Delhi to discuss with the appropriate authorities and the leaders what they described as 'their claim for independence' after the British withdrawal from India on August 15, 1947.²⁸ It was understood that the delegation already met Gandhi and Jinnah and placed before them their view points.²⁹ It was presumed that the movement was instigated by the Communist elements in Assam.³⁰

Angami Zapu Phizo, who became the President of the Naga National Council on December 11, 1950, was the person who dreamt of a larger Nagaland comprising of the whole Naga inhabited areas in the northeast frontier of India and the northwest frontier of Burma.

27. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), November 26, 1947, p. 3.

28. Ibid., July 22, p. 2.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., November 26, 1947, p. 3.

But the movement of Naga self-determination was as old as 1929; the issue had well-gripped the Naga minds and public opinion had already been moulded against the continual dominance of the Britishers over the Nagas. It was in the same year the Nagas had requested His Majesty's Government of Great Britain in vain 'to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times'.³¹ The Naga problem was discussed in the British parliament; the Government, however, was reluctant to endorse the Nagas' claim to self-determination.

Sir Reginald Coupland, a British constitutional expert, drew up a plan for the creation of a Crown Colony comprising of all the Naga contiguous areas of India and Burma; at the same time, the territorial integrity of it should be guaranteed by the Governments of India and Burma.³² But the Coupland plan was strongly criticised by Sir Andrew Clow, Governor of Assam, as impracticable, even though it received appreciations and supports from several British

31. Memorandum on Naga-self-determination submitted to the Simon Commission on January 10, 1929.

32. R. Reid, Years of Change in Bengal and Assam (London: 1966), p. 110.

politicians and officials. Sir Charles Pawsey, the last British Deputy Commissioner in the Naga Hills, made his own effort to revive the Coupland plan as an alternative to the Naga demand for complete independence, just before the termination of the British rule in India; but the Government of India was openly against his proposal and rejected the Coupland plan. Phizo outrightly branded it as a policy of British imperialism and colonialism.

On February 20, 1947, the Naga National Council submitted a memorandum to His Majesty's Government and the Government of India, demanding the setting up of an interim government of the people with financial provisions for a period of ten years at the end of which the Nagas should be left to choose an appropriate government under which they themselves choose to live. But unfortunately, on the issues of Naga self-determination and interim government, no agreement could be arrived at between the Naga National Council and the Government of India, despite many efforts on both sides.

On June 26, 1947, the then Assam Governor Sir Akbar Hydari held a three-day negotiation with the members of the Naga National Council. Engulfed

in a controversy on the interpretation of Clause 9 of the Hydari Agreement, 1947, the negotiation ended in a fiasco; otherwise Phizo asserted that the agreement envisaged that the Nagas would be independent after the expiry of the ten-year period.³³

A seven-member delegation of the Naga National Council consisting of Phizo, Khrisanisa, Kughato, Kezehol, John Angami, Theyiechuthie Sakhrie and Lhousituo met Gandhi on July 19, 1947, at Bhangi Colony, New Delhi. The delegation told Gandhi that the Nagas were never Indians and the Naga Hills had never been a part of the Indian territory; independence was certainly an inalienable right of the Naga people. Further, the delegates well apprised the Father of Nation that the Nagas would be celebrating August 15 as their Independence Day. They also complained of the intimidation of Hydari to use force if the Nagas declared independence, informing their apprehension to Gandhi. Gandhi replied that if the Nagas were not really willing to join the Indian Union, nobody would force them to do that. He

33. P.D. Stracey, Nagaland Nightmare (Bombay: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1968), p. 69.

further rapped out: Hydari was wrong, and I would ask militarymen to shoot me first before one Naga was shot.³⁴

Discarding the Hydari Agreement on August 14, 1947, the Naga National Council sent a telegram to the Government of India, intimating that the Nagas would be free to decide their own future at the end of the ten-year period. It so happened, Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a religious fanatic, on January 30, 1948, before he could come to Kohima, Nagaland, and settle the Naga case as he had promised. Then, Hydari came to an untimely end, on December 28, 1948, of a heart stroke at Thumbuthong in Manipur, leaving the Nagas in the lurch. After this tragedy, the Nagas thought that the then Chief Minister Gopinath Bordoloi could be something for them; but he had frustrated the Naga delegates whom he met on November 9, 1949, informing that the Government of India had no longer considered the Hydari Agreement to be existing. Destroyed the hopes of further negotiation, the Nagas now decided

34. V. Venkata Rao, A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India, 1874-1974 (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1976), pp. 314-315.

to change their future course of politics, as they had developed in their minds some sort of doubts and misgivings on the good faith of the Indian Government.

On July 9, 1948, Phizo was arrested on the ground of possessing certain documents prejudicial to India's security. On the compassionate ground, he was released from the Presidency Jail of Calcutta on parole on December 18, 1948; then the Government of India extended the period of parole for a special medical treatment at the Welsh Mission Hospital, Shillong, as his wife and baby had met a vehicle accident on December 4, 1948 between the village of Khonoma and Jotsoma in Nagaland. Believing that Phizo had given up the anti-Indian political activities, Nari Rustomji, the then Political Advisor to the Assam Government, unconditionally set him free from the jail. But Phizo never changed his old path of the political propagation of the Naga independence and the anti-national activities.³⁵ Later, the Phizoites resorted

35. Phizo quietly slipped out of India in 1957 and took political asylum in England. The seventy-four year old Phizo has been the President of the Naga National Council in absentia ever since his self-exile in London. He never came back to India. Still he claimed that the Nagas were never Indian citizens and

(Footnote continued on next page)

to violence as a means of achieving Nagas' freedom; but even today, this had not brought a permanent solution in spite of relentless efforts by the Government to bring peace in Nagaland.

At the same time, the Mizo problem could not be overlooked; in other incident, the Mizo Union demanded Mizos' independence. A conference of the Mizo Union consisting of representatives from Manipur, Lushai Hills and Cachar was held at Lakhipur (in Cachar district), on November 21, 1946, with Bawichhuaka as the President. It resolved that all the Mizo areas in Manipur, Lushai Hills, Cachar district, Chittagong Hills Tract and other adjacent places should be amalgamated into one administrative unit and designated as the Mizoram district because all these people have a common culture, language, religion, geographical

(Footnote continued from previous page)

Nagaland was never an integral part of India. This was proved by his first ever dialogue, that hardly lasted some twenty minutes, with the Prime Minister Morarji Desai in India House, London, on June 14, 1977.

Even today, Phizo has been the source of political inspiration to the Naga people who have been demanding Naga independence for the last thirty-three years. The Nagas firmly believe that their problem cannot be solved without Phizo. The underground movement for a sovereign state of Nagaland is still in continuance.

contiguity and the most important of all is that the area occupies a strategic position from the point of defence.³⁶ It demanded that the widest autonomy should be given to the Mizo district along with the right of representing in the Constituent Assembly; Not even before completing two months, it wrote to the President of the Constituent Assembly that its representative should be given membership in the Advisory Committee for the Tribal Areas of Assam. If it was excluded from the Constituent Assembly, the Mizo Union threatened that they would form a separate constitution exclusively for the Mizos. Then, they would decide whether they would seek the British protection for the time being, or join the Chin Hills in Burma and form a separate province within Burma, or declare an independent sovereign country.

The intricate politics among the members of the Mizo Union undermined the cause of independence: The Leftists submitted a memorandum to the Bordoloi

³⁶ V. Venkata Rao, A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India, 1874-1974 (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd., 1976), p. 497.

Committee when it visited Aijal, present capital of Mizoram, on April 17, 1947, stating that the Mizoland should be a part of India for a period of at least ten years after which they would decide what they would do with themselves. During this period they would govern themselves through a district council. The Rightists stood for complete independence; on the other hand, the two co-opted members of the Bordoloi Committee, Khawtinkhuma and Saprawnga, on behalf of the Mizo people agreed to be a part of the Indian Union. Lalmawia, the founder of the United Mizo Freedom Organization, made up his mind to form an independent Chin state; later on, he opted to merge the Mizo Hills with Burma. But his proposal did not get much support from U Nu, Prime Minister of Burma.³⁷

In late 1948, the civil disobedience started in the Mizo Hills; it took mainly in the form of riotous assaults on the chiefs whom the commoners branded as exploiters. The Unionists reiterated their demand for the abolition of the oppressive systems of the village chiefs and the installation

37. Ibid., p. 515

of the district council. The Government of Assam hesitated to launch upon a drastic legislation as demanded by the Mizo Union. The Unionists, however, were pacified by Nari Rustomji, Political Advisor to the Governor on tribal affairs, when he visited the district in January 1949 with a promise to implement the Sixth Schedule; as a result, prior to the formation of the district council, the Lushai Hills District along got an Advisory Council.³⁸ But the solution of the Mizo problem remained unfulfilled; in fact, the Mizos resorted to political violence as an immediate means of achieving independence. Nevertheless, the Government of India was not at all prepared to accept an independent Mizo-homeland.³⁹

38. Shibani Kinokar Chaube, Hill Politics in North-East India (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1973), p. 164.

39. Ever since the birth of the Mizo National Front, Laldenga as its President, was preaching openly complete independence. Laldenga who had been living in Delhi since July 1976 as a guest of the Government of India was arrested on July 8, 1979 from his residence on the ground of sedition, conspiracy and waging war against the State. On October 30, 1965, the Mizo National Front submitted a memorandum to the late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, stating that the Mizos, from the time immemorial, lived in complete independence. The Mizo Hills had never been an integral part of India.

Manipur's Accession Achieved

Being aware of the political problems of the north-eastern region the Indian leaders were afraid that Assam might possibly developed fissiparous tendencies. The eastern region important as it was the geographically and strategically needed the fullest integration with the Indian Union to forestall all the possible dangers. The Union Government took the matter very seriously. It was understood that the discussion was started among the high political circles of Assam regarding the merger of the small states like Manipur, Cooch-

(Footnote continued from the previous page)

It was thirteen years ago that the Mizo movement suddenly erupted into large-scale violence; the revolt came in the wake of a devastating famine in 1959. By March 1966, the Mizo National Front declared independence. Recently, the outlawed Mizo National Front launched the quit Mizoram movement on the plea that the non-Mizos were agents of the Centre; and in occupation of the Mizoram, they were spoiling Mizo nationalism. They were given ultimatum for leaving Mizoram for all by July 1, 1979. This had created a panic among the non-Mizos. However, the timely action of the police brought the tense situation under control. Subsequently, the Government has suppressed the Mizo insurgency with the help of a strong military operation. But force could not be an only means for the permanent solution of the Mizo problem. The repressive measures would make the local people more hostile to the Government. It would be better if the Centre could understand the real happenings in Mizoram; and this would mean initiating a dialogue with the Mizo leaders on sorting out things and evolving a satisfactory and a lasting solution to the problem plaguing that area.

Behar and Tripura in the Assam Province like that of eight states of Orissa, eight states of Deccan, etc. The matter was put up before Patel when he came to Assam.⁴⁰

With due reference to the question of the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union, a team of Sri Prakasa, Governor of Assam, A.B. Chatterjee, Joint Secretary, States Ministry of the Government of India and Rustomji, arrived at Imphal on March 22, 1949. This was followed up after the declaration of the States Ministry of the Government of India to incorporate some of the states namely, Benaras, Rampur, Tehri Garewal states, Khasi Hills states, Cooch-Bihar, Tripura and Manipur with the Indian Union as these with due regard to their geographical positions and other consideration.⁴¹

The need for an immediate Central take-over of Manipur's administration was emphasized by Gopinath Bordoloi, Premier of Assam, in a letter

40. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), January 12, 1948, p. 5.

41. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), March 23, 1949, p. 5.

which he sent to Patel on May 4, 1949, in which he informed that '... the Central C.I.D. sometimes suspected the Communist leaders, Irabot Singh of Manipur as having received shelter in the place itself. It is now suspected that Irabot Singh is somewhere in Burma, acting in league with the Communists of Manipur. You have already seen what the R.C.P. is doing in Dum Dum. I have not the slightest doubt that the Manipur Government will not be able to do anything substantial to help the Assam Rifles or Our Forces, if a serious situation arises'.⁴² Further, he cautioned Patel that it would be '... dangerous to maintain a weak and vacillating State near our borders and also to give them independence to act as they liked'.⁴³ Patel himself confirmed that 'from a careful study of international affairs, it appears almost certain that the danger, if it comes to India, is likely to come from this Burma borders'.⁴⁴

42. Durga Das (Ed.), Sardar Patel's Correspondence, VIII (Ahmedabad: 1974), p. 527.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., pp. 517-18.

During this time the Manipur State Congress led by Tomal Singh was uproarious in demanding the abolition of the Maharaja's gaddi and the immediate take-over of the Manipur administration by the Centre. They had been agitating for a long time. Such an action of Tomal was never sympathized by the other Congress group led by Elangbam Tompok Singh. They were in the advocacy of the formation of 'Purbachal Pradesh' comprised of Tripura, Cachar, Lushai Hills and Manipur. This demand was even prevalent when the two rival Congresses were one; but the difference of opinion developed after the Congress split.

Criticising the resolution of Tomal's Congress, Laishram Achaw Singh, Secretary of the Manipur Socialist Party and one of the members of the Manipur State Assembly commented, 'The Manipur State Congress in its annual sitting on the 30th April last has committed another great blunder by asking the Government of India to take over the administration of Manipur State as a centrally administered area. The Congress while advocating the necessity of a strong government in this frontier State of Manipur has sought the direct intervention of the centre, in spite of the fact

that a more or less democratic form of Government has been set up in Manipur since the introduction of the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947'.⁴⁵ But the Socialist Party of Manipur rejected the idea of a separate province. And 'It should be the duty of the Indian Government to consult the leaders of public opinion before they take any step on this matter. The Socialist Party of Assam has given the right lead by adopting the principle of a Federated Province of Assam where in the different cultural and linguistic groups in Assam should enjoy full cultural autonomy. The principle has never been questioned for the solution nor has any alternative been suggested for the solution of this complicated problem. The

45. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), April 16, 1949, p. 3. He further said: 'Any change of Government can only be brought about by peaceful and democratic means. We wonder how a political party wedded to non-violence and Khadi can adopt extra-constitutional methods for their own political end by calling their rivals bad names'. Moreover, a centrally administered autonomous unit of Manipur would become just a military outpost with little political and civic freedom, for which the Manipur people have fought since 1939. Their decision is premature and inopportune as they lack the necessary backing of the masses of Manipur'. Ibid.

Socialist Party would rather welcome a referendum in deciding the future relation of Manipur State with the Indian Union'.⁴⁶

Not long ago, the Congress led by Tomal decided to launch a satyagraha in the whole State in order to abolish the autocracy of the Maharaja. It was known that a delegation of three men — Krishnamohan Singh, a member of the Congress Working Committee, Shaugaizam Somorendra Singh and Dwijamani Dev Sharma — had left Imphal for Delhi in connection with the recent political development. The programmes of the political mission was to meet some Congress high commands like, Pattabi Sitaramayya, President of the Indian National Congress, Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India, etc. They discussed the matter of the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union; and they gave word that if the Centre delayed and failed to work out the integration, they would immediately launch a satyagraha movement. It was expected that the three delegates would be laying down their demands before the Congress Working Committee's meeting to be held shortly in New Delhi

46. Ibid.

on July 16, 1949.⁴⁷ The delegation would also put up an issue on the merger of Manipur with the Assam Province as totally unacceptable on the cultural and the economic grounds.⁴⁸

Not later than a few days ago, Prakasa, Governor of Assam, accompanied by Rustomji, left Gauhati for Benaras en route to Delhi by air on September 4, 1949. The Premier of Assam was already in Delhi in connection with the future administration of Manipur (and other states).⁴⁹ In Delhi they had an hours-long discussion with the States Ministry on September 6, 1949. After the talk was over the Governor had left for Bombay. On September 8, 1949 the Governor accompanied by Rustomji met Sardar Patel, who was ailing at that time, at Birla House in Bombay. They apprised him of the political situation in Manipur. Patel reportedly asked him:

47. Ibid., July 10, 1949, p. 3.

48. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), July 13, 1949, p. 8.

49. The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), September 6, 1949, p. 1.

'... is there no our Indian Brigadier?'⁵⁰ It meant that force should be used if Manipur opposed the merger with the Indian Union. Now, the Governor fully understood what to do next; immediately he left Bombay for Shillong.

As soon as Prakasa reached Shillong, he invited Maharaja Bodha Chandra Singh, as advised by the Central leaders, to meet him at Shillong at an early date. It was clearly understood that the Maharaja had to be pressurized to sign the Instrument of Accession.⁵¹ As directed by the Governor of Assam, the Maharaja came to Shillong to discuss the future of his State. The policy and programme of the Government of India was placed before the Maharaja. After going through the typed documents prepared by the Assam Government according to the advice of the Central Government, the Maharaja did not wish to sign them as some of their provisions were unsavoury to him; in the meantime,

50. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), September 9, 1949, p. 10.

51. Sudhkar Bhat, The Challenge of the North-East (Bombay: Popular Prakashani, 1975), p. 47.

the Assam Governor informed Sardar Patel about his reluctance.⁵² The telegram of September 18, 1949, reads: 'Begins had discussions with H.H. (High Highness) of Manipur this morning H.H. threatens returning to Manipur without holding any discussion or signing agreement. H.H. must not under any circumstances be allowed to return to Manipur with his advisors and I have accordingly instructed police to be detained here his party if they attempt to return before signing of agreement. Please telegraph immediately repeat immediately authority for detention of H.H. and Advisors under Regulation III or by whatever other means you consider might be appropriate. Have already warned sub-area to be prepared for any eventually in Manipur. Grateful for further instructions. Ends. Will keep you

52. On the other hand, it was learnt that the Maharaja had informed the Chamber of Princes that he wanted Manipur to be grouped with Sikkim and the Khasi states and not with Tripura. Home Department, Political File No. 5(8), 1947, NAI, New Delhi.

closely informed of further development (if) here addressed'.⁵³

It was very clear that the Maharaja was not agreeable to certain conditions of the document of the merger agreement. He also knew that force would be used against him if he did not sign the agreement. He was in a confused state of mind. To avoid technical complications, the Maharaja requested the Governor to allow him to go back home as he would not be able to sign the agreement unless he consulted with the State Assembly. But that was a political gimmick only to escape from the critical situation. This intention of the Maharaja was already sensed by the Governor and his Advisor; so they were very eager to finalize the agreement as soon as possible before he left Shillong for Manipur. On the other hand, the Central leaders would have probably been apprehensive of a possible rebellion like that of 1891 to break out if the Maharaja was allowed to return to his State. The security arrangements,

53. Durga Das (Ed.), Sardar Patel's Correspondence, VIII (Ahmedabad: Navajivara Publishing House, 1973), p. 528.

therefore, were tightened along the borders of Manipur. The Maharaja had to be detained in Shillong unless he signed the documents of the agreement. The Governor pressurized the Maharaja at his best to do it; and he tempted the Maharaja that he would get a privy purse of a few lakhs for the whole of his life if he signed the agreement.⁵⁴ At this moment, the Maharaja was conveyed a rumour that his younger brother Maharajkumar Priyabrata was to be installed as the Maharaja of Manipur. For him (Maharaja) this was just like a thunder in his brain. At last, the Maharaja afraid of the use of force on the part of the Government, jealous of his younger brother and lousy of the privy purse reconciled with his fate and agreed to sign the agreement. The final arrangements were made for the ceremony in the Government House in Shillong. Maharaj Bodha Chandra Singh executed the documents of the agreement of

54. After the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union, the Maharaja received a payment of Rs300,000/- annually free of all taxes to cover all expenses of the ruler and his family including expenses on account of his personal staff, maintenance of his residence, marriages and other ceremonies. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), December 27, 1949, p. 4.

the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union on September 21, 1949.⁵⁵

The culmination of Sardar Patel's 'Bloodless Revolution' was gradually completed.⁵⁶ The Union Government took over the administration of Manipur on October 15, 1949, and a Chief Commissioner was appointed.⁵⁷ The State Assembly was dissolved. Rawal Amar Singh, the erstwhile Dewan of Manipur, designated as the first Chief Commissioner took charge on the morning of October 15.⁵⁸

55. White Paper on Indian States (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1950), pp. 232-234.

56. The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), October 13, 1949, p. 1.

57. Ibid., October 16, 1949, p. 1.

58. Ibid., October 17, 1949, p. 7.

Chapter X

CONCLUSION

The present study aims at a historical survey of political development in Manipur since the revolt of 1890-91. Nine distinct periods of this process have been singled out for the detailed treatment in the preceding chapters.

The important events of these periods which have had any significant impact on the course of the State's political development have been thoroughly researched. To mention only few of them, in December 1917, the Thado Kukis who had responded poorly to the calls for the Labour Corps sent to France early in the year, broke into open armed rebellion. In 1930-32, Jadonang and Gaidinliu revolted against the British power in Manipur with a view to establishing a 'Naga Raj'. The question of Manipur's accession to the proposed Indian federation was greatly controversial during 1936-38. The Women's Bazar Agitation that took place in 1939 was a product of the economic and the political pressures in the State. From 1946 onwards Manipur saw a movement of political and constitutional reforms. Immediately after the independence a movement was started by the intelligentsia to form a North-East India Frontier Province along with Manipur, Cachar, Tripura and

Lushai Hills. But due to the lack of the popular support the political movement soon fizzled out.

Manipur in its present territorial limits has existed as an independent political unit for about 2,000 years. Ruled by a succession of dynasties, the State has in the past undergone many periods of civil strife, mutual killings, bloodshed and turmoil; the absolute rule of the rajahs came to an end with the dawn of the Indian independence in 1947.

Manipur differs from other states in history and culture due to its peculiar geographic location. It is situated in the most isolated and neglected eastern part of the Indian Union. It was a British protected State, under the superintendence and the control of the Assam administration. Though of small size, Manipur is rich in history. The State which came under the British control as a princely State in 1891, was merged in the Indian Union on October 15, 1949, and made the administrative charge of a Chief Commissioner.

The origins of political development of Manipur may be traced to the period of the Kuki Insurgency (1917-1919) which had a direct bearing on the policy of the British Indian Government towards

this princely state. It was a first major revolt by the tribals after the Manipur uprising of 1891. For a long period, it could not be subdued by the authorities, the normalcy was restored only when the British took a strong military 'punitive measure' against the rebels. Some of the British officers even thought of using hand-grenades and powerful guns and planes to crush the rebellion but that idea was dropped immediately because of the non-availability of ammunition.

The British policy of 'forced recruitment' from the hill tribes, especially the Kukis, for the establishment of a Labour Corps which was supposed to serve in the British Army in Mesopotamia (Iraq) during the World War I, was the immediate cause of the Kuki Rebellion. At the beginning of 1917, the Assam Government was assigned a quota for supply of the labourers for the deployment in Mesopotamia; the matter was referred to the Maharaja of the Manipur State. Immediately, the Maharaja started recruiting labourers or coolies from the hill tribes, two thousands in number. But a further requirement of two thousand labourers, for the establishment of a Second Labour Company, could not be raised up because of the size and frequency of the drafts demanded for the first corps of

the hillmen; therefore, he offered a Second Corps (Labour), to be recruited, when required, from his Valley. Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy and Governor-General in India, wrote to Maharaja informing a further Second Labour Corps was not required for the purpose at present. After some time, the Government of India felt the need of a second Labour Company; the matter was discussed in a political conference held in Shillong. The British Political Agent in Manipur, Higgins, was confident at this time that he would be able to raise up a Second Labour Corps of the hillmen. A dialogue was arranged between the Political Agent and the Kuki village heads. But the Kuki chiefs declined to supply the labourers. The Political Agent, with an escort of fifty rifles, left Imphal with a view to having another conversation; as the Kuki chiefs did not turn up, he burnt the Mombi village which he found deserted. The burning of a Kuki village was a blunderous offence ever committed by a Political Agent which provoked the restless tribals to rioting and violence. The recalcitrant Kuki chiefs (Luchingba) now flatly refused to carry out the orders of the Government of India, and an open armed rebellion broke out.

The rebellion in most of the hill areas of Manipur soon spread to the bordering territory. The Kukis of the unadministered area of Somra Tract and some adjacent area within the neighbouring Burma had been affected seriously. The revolt was politically embarrassing to the governments of Manipur and Burma. To cope with the situation, some seasoned British officers proposed to construct a new road at Mawleik (Burma) running to Manipur State, but dropped the idea due to an inevitable economic pressure on the state exchequer.

An Armistice was signed in May 1919 and many British military officers were rewarded with higher ranks in appreciation of their services during the Kuki outbreak. The military campaign nevertheless ended up with a huge loss of human lives and the destruction of a large number of cattle and several tribal villages. It cost a few laks of rupees. However, the villages affected by the punitive expedition were compensated to some extent for their sufferings.

As the uprising came to a close, a number of riotous and unruly Kuki chiefs were convicted and executed; and the other prisoners were lodged in the Sadiya Jail.

The main causes of the rebellion may be ascribed to the apathy on the part of the State administration and misunderstanding of the critical situation and of the Kuki psychology; but the immediate provocation was provided by the burning of the Mombi village. The role of the corrupt lambus (interpreters) was also responsible for the outbreak. A lack of direct link between the hill tribes and the State Government and want of mutual understanding between them created a cleavage between them. Moreover, the Kukis were afraid of going to a foreign land which was quite unknown to them; adding to this, they were unwilling to leave their villages at a critical juncture, as the rival Nagas might take an advantage of attacking their families. It seemed that both the Political Agent and the Maharaja were oblivious to the traditional feud between the Nagas and the Kukis; above all, it very well be suspected that the information regarding the ill-treatment of the Indians in Mesopotamia had been leaked out to the Kukis; they were, therefore, ready to pay money rather than serve as labourers.

The significance of the Kuki uprising lay in its political repercussions; the political bearing of the rebellion, however, whatever the case might be,

aimed at the overthrow of the British Government and the suppression of the Nagas whom the Kukis had been grudging for the last many years. And the rebels directed it towards the subjugation of the plain subjects, i.e., Meiteis. A no-tax campaign was also launched during the Kuki rebellion. It was the only local armed political uprising against the British India Government and the State administration in Manipur.

When the rebellion subsided, the British Government fully realised the strong feelings of the rebels and thereafter took steps for the reform of the tribal administration and for the mutual understanding and benefit. Finally, the rules for the administration of the Manipur State, originally framed in 1916, were revised keeping in view the need for the better administration among the hill tribes.

The Naga unrest spans the two phases marked by the rise, growth and suppression of the rebellious cults of Jadonang and Gaidinliu **respectively**.

The political aim of Jadonang's movement was to establish a Kabui Naga Raj by overthrowing the domination of the British, of the Manipuris and of the Kukis.

Jadonang was the chief leader of this unique movement; he who professed to be starting a new cult. He was regarded as God or Messiah of the Kabui Naga group. Originally as a 'Maiba' or Medicine-man he played on the minds of the Kabuis to such an extent that they began to look upon him as a god who would overthrow the existing British administration. Jadonang sent words to all the Kabuis: 'There is a word (prophacy) that Milong (Nagas) will become great; let us try and kill the Sarkar (British administration-mine)'. He just came to the notice of the British authority in 1927 when he caused unrest amongst the Kabuis. In 1928, he was put into jail telling the people the British Raj was coming to an end and that a Kabui Naga Raj was to be established in its place. Jadonang told all the Kabui Nagas not to pay any more revenue to the British Government from 1931-32 and that all revenue was to be paid to him. There was suspicion that he had got Congress infection from Lakhipur (Assam).

Jadonang was wanted not only as the leader of the new movement but also as a murderer. After his arrest the criminal investigations were started against him and others of his village for the brutal murder, in 1929, of four unarmed Hindu Manipuris who

were journeying towards Cachar. It appeared likely that the victims were put to death at the instance of Jadonang probably as sacrifices to his gods as well as to show his followers his power and defiance of the existing laws of the state. He was convicted with six other Kabui Nagas of the village of Kambiron and was sentenced to be hanged. The human sacrifice brought him to the gallows in August 1931. The other convicts were sentenced to imprisonment.

Gaidinliu, the torch-bearer of Jadonang, took up the mission of her master after his execution. She preached the same political religion of her leader. In season and out season it was preached that when Gaidinliu's day would come those who had supported her would be blessed in every way, and those who had opposed her would certainly meet with disaster. Jadonang who was believed then to be present in spirit was held to be that 'Naga King', who would reign jointly with Gaidinliu. 'The day of Nagas is coming' was the slogan. This really involved the dis-appearance of the British rule in India. As long as Gaidinliu was at large her influence would diminish little.

When the civil disobedience movement was in full swing in the plains in 1930, Gaidinliu launched a no-tax campaign in the hills. To get rid of the

British control meant to them the establishment of a 'Naga Raj', evidently because these illiterate highlanders had little knowledge of the world outside their hill abodes in the frontiers of Assam. The British authorities tried to nip the movement in the bud by capturing the Naga leaders though it was not an easy task for them. Even after the execution of Jadonang, Gaidinliu wielded tremendous influence over the hill tribes. Her movement became the cause of the serious alarm to the governments of Assam and Manipur. The local British authorities had to take recourse to repressive measures including the burning of the villages and the mass arrests. The repression was intensified with the failure of the government to trace the whereabouts of Gaidinliu.

With the arrest of Gaidinliu her movement disintegrated gradually. She was sentenced to transportation for life on a charge of murder by the Political Agent in Manipur. She was praised by Jawaharlal Nehru as a powerful freedom fighter. She was released from the jail at his instance when India became free.

The Government of India Act, 1935, posed a serious problem to Manipur with regard to its federal

scheme. The Government of India was anxious to bring in it all the states still in relations with the local governments of India. But in the case of Manipur so many difficult problems were found to stand in the way that it was decided that when the new Act came into force relations with the State should be conducted by the Governor of Assam province in his personal capacity as the Agent of the Crown Representative. He was authorised under Section 287 of the Government of India Act, 1935, to discharge such functions of the Crown in its relations with the Manipur State as had hitherto been performed by the Governor-in-Council in Assam. This in fact led no practical change in the erstwhile political set-up.

One of the principal subjects of the controversy was, of course, the administration of the hill areas. Though they covered some 7,000 square miles out of the State's total area of 8,000 square miles and contained a population of about 150,000, it had never, and with good reason, been adjudged safe to leave their administration in the hands of the ruler. The opinion of the Governor of Assam as regards the administration of the hill portions was that they could not possibly be handed over to the ruler of Manipur; the Government of India accepted the views of the Government of Assam.

Some two years later i.e. in 1938, the Maharaja of Manipur again raised the question of the hills during the course of the discussion on the details of the federation, but he agreed this time to federate on terms which covered the exclusion of the hill areas from his direct control. Previously he was unwilling to join the proposed federation due to his vanity. He wanted a free hand in the administration of the plains and the hills of Manipur without any interference from the British authorities. But the hopes that the federation would be established by 1938, i.e. a year after the inauguration of the provincial autonomy were never fulfilled. Further talks on the question of the federation were brought to an abrupt end by the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. A Government of India letter informed that it was not expected that in view of the war pre-occupation, Her Majesty's Government would be able to give active attention to the federal problem.

This massively organised women's agitation was the first of its kind in Manipur. The agitation took place because of the scarcity of rice; in its later phase, the agitation acquired the political

overtones as well. The slogans like 'Britishers go back' became popular during the movement; however, the agitation never got out of control.

It was from Nepal to Travancore and Cochin: All the states of the British Indian Empire were witnessing the beginnings of the political awakening. Manipur, though far away in the north-eastern corner of India, could not lag behind the others. The women's agitation was a sort of reaction against the administration of the Manipur State where the autocratic powers were exercised by the Durbar members and the Maharaja.

The agitation had its origin in the acute scarcity of rice in Manipur owing to the floods. A ban was imposed on the export of rice. In November, however, when the harvest season was on, the ban was suddenly lifted and the price of rice shot up causing acute hardship to the people of the State.

The sheer economic necessity had disturbed the placid life of the people of Manipur, so to say, the womenfolk had been forced to agitate due to the ruthless economic dispensation under the rule of the Maharaja. This resulted in a political confusion in the State. Having no other alternative, the

Government had to ban the export of rice again and fulfilled some of the demands of the women agitators. Gradually the movement subsided.

The demand for the formation of a new Eastern India Frontier Province came in the wake of the partition of Bengal. The movement was mainly guided by the Bengali elites who needed a safeguard against the majority rule of the Assamese in Assam.

It is worthwhile to ponder why on earth there had been such a sudden demand at all. According to the views of the Bengali elites it had been evident that the Assamese people have been suffering from the narrow 'Valley jealousy'. Even the body politic of Assam was no exception. The inhabitants of Assam thought that since the province bore the name 'Assam' which they interpreted, was a corruption of the term 'Ahom' the whole of the province was their own homeland and all others were but outsiders. The insular parochialism of the Assamese had prompted them to seek an opportunity just to eliminate the non-Assamese, especially the Bengalis who happened to be a part and parcel of the province.

A consequence of a short-sighted policy on the part of the Assamese people was Bengali-baiting

in political, economic, linguistic and cultural spheres. The Bengalis were being manhandled, their hearth and home being burnt down and looted, their means of living being snatched away, even those domiciles who had been living in the province for generations together. Further, the elites complained that the Assamese had been following a ruthless policy of the extermination of the Bengalis.

The Bengalis declared that there could never be a compromise on this score since a change of hearts should precede any compromise, but that was not to be on the other side. Therefore, to rehabilitate the immigrants of Assam and thousands of the unfortunate refugees from Bengal there was no other way out but the immediate formation of the proposed 'Purbachal Province'.

The proposed North-East India Frontier Province might comprise of Manipur, Cachar, Tripura, Lushai Hills, Naga Hills and Khasi and Jaintia Hills; geographically these states represent a compact area. The elites justified the joining of Manipur to the proposed new province for the reason that the Manipuris well understood Bengali and spoke it too; besides, the Hindu Bengalis and the Hindu Manipuris had a common

religious tie, both being the followers of Vaishnavism. Some of the political leaders of Manipur advocated the formation of a new province in the north-east of India. But this idea was not incorporated with that of the Central leaders of India. The Government of India was tooth and nail against the formation of a North-East India Frontier Province. By a resolution, the Congress Working Committee rejected the idea of the formation of a separate North-East India Frontier Province. As the movement was one-sided it could not endure.

The years 1946-49 saw the assimilation of the democratic ideas by the Manipuris; they consequently started agitating for the establishment of a responsible government. A draft constitution was passed by the Manipur State Durbar on July 26, 1941. On September 26, 1947, the Maharaja promised an announcement on the constitution within eight months from that date. In the meantime, to replace the State Durbar presided over by Pearson, an interim state council was set up consisting of two ministers from the Manipur State Congress, two ministers representing the hills and two ministers nominated by the Manipur State Congress from amongst the State officials and the chief minister nominated by the Maharaja. The new cabinet of the

ministers was thus set up and began to function from August 14, 1947. Some members of the Manipur State Congress disapprove of the method and personnel taken into the newly formed State Council, seceded and formed themselves into a group of Congress. Now two separate Congress parties appeared on the political scene of Manipur both of them demanding the immediate establishment of responsible government.

The splinter Congress group suggested that the Maharaja should establish a popular interim council by dissolving the present interim council. Further, they appealed to the State Government that a new constitution providing full responsible government should be framed through a constituent assembly elected on the adult franchise.

The new Congress started satyagraha and civil resistance on November 6, 1947. Seeing this state of affairs the old Congress adopted a resolution on November 11, 1947, reiterating its demand for a full responsible government in Manipur with a view to removing discontent in the State. The Maharaja introduced in 1948 a responsible government in Manipur. The first Manipur State assembly, elected on the universal adult franchise, was inaugurated by

him on October 18, 1948.

At the end of the World War II, the British were planning to quit India and transfer power to the native hands.

While the whole of India was amidst political excitement, in Manipur too, some leaders started agitation against the Maharaja demanding a responsible government. The Congress agitated and urged the Government of India to merge Manipur with the Indian Union as Manipur in their view could not become a viable State. No doubt, some political leaders who were not in favour of the merger with the Indian Union, had also been agitating throughout the year. Besides, the Communist Party of Manipur did try to sell Manipur to the neighbouring state of Burma; the ill-design, however, was nipped in the bud.

The Maharaja was strongly opposed to the integration with the Indian Union on terms offered by the British. But the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, assured that the State of Manipur would retain its separate identity. Mahatma Gandhi also made it public that no state would be merged without the consent of its people. The Maharaja, however, remained complacent in this regard. But the political parties restlessly

worked and got the sympathy of the Central Congress leaders of India. At last, on September 21, 1949, the Maharaja of Manipur signed the merger agreement in Shillong.

With the integration of Manipur into the Indian Union as the last State, Sardar Patel's dream of unification of India by abolishing the native state was practically realised. The State assembly and the council of Manipur State stood abolished in consequence of the merger agreement and Manipur then became a Chief Commissioner's Province exercising the powers of the Maharaja-in-Council. A new chapter in the political history of Manipur was thus opened ending up the age-long political hierarchy in Manipur. Today Manipur is proud of becoming one of the full-fledged states of the Indian Union, and stands equal in status with the other states.

APPENDIX I

RULES FOR THE MANAGEMENT
OF
THE STATE OF MANIPUR, 1916*

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

1. Administration: His Highness the Raja will be responsible for the administration of the State. He will be assisted by a Darbar, which will consist of an officer specially selected by the Government of Assam who will be styled the President, and of at least three Manipuri Members who may hold charge of departments and shall be called ordinary members. Three additional members may be appointed, who while not holding charge of any department, will attend all meetings of the Darbar and speak and vote equally with the other members.

2. Appointment of Members: His Highness, in consultation with the Political Agent, will appoint the ordinary and additional members of the Darbar. No member shall be removed without the express consent of the Political Agent in writing.

* Extracts from the Rules for the Management of the State of Manipur, 1916 (Imphal).

3. Meeting of the Darbar: The Darbar will meet for the transaction of business under the presidency of the President, whose presence is obligatory, unless dispensed with by the Political Agent. Four shall form a quorum and, in cases of equality of voters, the presiding officer shall have a casting vote.

4. Distribution of Works: The President will be responsible to His Highness for the proper administration of the finance and Revenue Departments and will on behalf of His Highness, exercise general supervision over the working of all other departments. His Highness in consultation with the Political Agent will arrange for the distribution of work between himself and the ordinary members.

5. Responsibility of Members: Each ordinary member will be responsible to His Highness for the proper administration of the department committed to his charge. He will dispose of all ordinary business, but must bring questions of importance to His Highness's notice, through the Darbar, which in forwarding matter to His Highness may make any representation it sees of it. His Highness's orders will be notified to the Darbar in writing. His Highness may call on any member to submit to him any matter connected with his

department and pass orders thereon; such orders shall be notified to the Darbar in writing.

6. His Highness's Powers as Regards Resolutions Passed by the Darbar: The Darbar will submit copies of its proceedings to His Highness, who may (1) approve thereof, (2) refer any matter back to the Darbar for further discussion, (3) veto any resolution and issue what orders he sees fit, stating his reasons in writing. After His Highness has passed his orders, copies of the proceedings and the orders passed thereon will be submitted to the Political Agent in English.

7. Darbar's Position: The Darbar has the right to be consulted in all matters of importance affecting the State and with reference to any proposed alteration in established procedure or custom. The Darbar may communicate with the Political Agent, through His Highness regarding any matters of importance.

8. Appointments of Officials: His Highness will appoint all title-holders and officials drawing pay of more than Rs. 15 a month and the members of the Cherap and all Panchayat Courts. Other officials will be

appointed by the Members in charge of the department. Members in charge of departments will submit to His Highness the names of suitable persons to fill vacancies which may occur in posts which are in His Highness's gift.

9. President's Powers of Reference: The President may, after consultation with His Highness refer any matter affecting any State department to the Political Agent. The Political Agent may refer any matter which has been submitted to him under this rule or under the provisions of rule 6 for the orders of the Government of Assam but before doing so he shall consult His Highness. The Political Agent may, if he considers it necessary, direct that any order to which he takes exception and which he is referring under this rule shall be held in suspense until the orders of the Government of Assam have been received.

10. The Budget: The annual budget will consist of two parts, one part relating to the hills tribes and other part of the State generally the budget in both parts will be drafted by the President, and will be laid by him before the Darbar for examination. After the Darbar has recorded its suggestions if any,

for modifications in the President's draft budget, His Highness will record his own opinion. If His Highness desires any modification in the budget proposed by the Darbar, His Highness will communicate his opinion to the Darbar in order to give them an opportunity of reconsidering their views and submitting a further minute to His Highness. His Highness will then record his own final opinion indicating clearly the forum in which he desires that the budget shall be accepted by the Government of Assam and will forward all the papers to the Political Agent for submission to the Governor of Assam. The Government of Assam after giving due consideration to the wishes of His Highness and the Darbar, will finally approve the budget with such modifications as it sees fit. When once approved by the Government of Assam the budget must be adhered to subject to such modifications as are allowed by the rules sanctioned by the Government of Assam for the keeping of the State Accounts.

11. Hill Administration: The hill tribes are administered by the President assisted by one or more Officers on His Highness's behalf in accordance

with rules approved by the Government of Assam but His Highness shall be consulted in all matters of importance, and the Political Agent, in consultation with the President shall give effect to His Highness's wishes so far as is consistent with the orders of the Government of Assam. If the Political Agent is unable to agree to His Highness's proposals, the matter shall, if His Highness so wishes, be referred to the Government of Assam.

APPENDIX II

THE MANIPUR STATE CONSTITUTION ACT, 1947*

CHAPTER III

The Executive

10. Council of Ministers:- (a) Subject to the provisions of this Act and subject also to the provisions of the Rules for the Administration of the Manipur State the Executive Authority of the State is delegated to and shall vest in the Council of Ministers.

(b) Where under this Act or the Rules for the Administration of the State, it is requisite that the approval of the Maharajah shall be taken to any measure, the Chief Minister shall seek the approval of the Maharajah in person or in writing and shall obtain the Maharajah's orders thereon. Should in any case the Maharajah's approval be withheld, the Maharajah shall be pleased to inform the Chief Minister in person or in writing and to communicate his reason for withholding such approval in writing to the Council.

* Extract from Manipur State Constitution Act 1947, (Imphal: State Press, 1947).

CHAPTER IV

The State Assembly

17. There shall be constituted a State Assembly. The Assembly shall be elected for a period of three years and shall comprise Representatives freely elected by the people on an adult franchise and on the principle of Joint Electorate. Elections shall be in such manner and by such franchise as may be laid down under the Rules for the elections to the State Assembly provided always that the Representatives returnable from General, Hill and Mahamadan Constituencies shall be in the ratios of 30: 18: 3 respectively with an additional two seats for the Representatives of Educational and Commercial Interests.

18 The State Assembly may debate all matters concerning the Government and well being of the State which, in the opinion of five Members of the Assembly, it is in the public interest to debate. The Assembly shall tender such advice to the Council of Ministers in any matter in which a majority of the Members present, are agreed on the advice which shall be tendered provided that no matter touching the Maharajah's Prerogative shall be debated and provided

that the Maharajah may on the advice of the Council, veto debate on any matter where such course shall in the public interest be necessary.

19. The State Assembly shall not tender advice to the Council on any matter which is of primary concern to the Hill People unless such advice has the support of a majority of the Hill Representatives in the Assembly.

20. Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Assembly may make Rules for regulating its proceedings and the conduct of Business.

21. Where in any case it is required to pass a vote of no confidence against a Minister of the Council for his individual acts, a motion of no confidence, signed by not less than ten Members of the Assembly and laying out in detail, the facts giving rise to the motion, may with the permission of the Speaker of the Assembly be moved. If such motion shall receive the support of at least 75% of the Members present and voting, it shall be forwarded through the Chief Minister to the Maharajah, who, unless there appear strong and valid reasons to the contrary which shall be recorded in writing, shall

after consultation with the Chief Minister require the Minister against whom the motion has been passed to resign.

22. Where in any case the State Council or the Maharajah is in the special circumstances of any case unable to accept the advice of the Assembly, the Maharajah or the State Council as the case may be, shall communicate in writing the reasons which have led to such course and shall give facilities for personal discussion of the matter with a representative or representatives deputed by the Assembly.

23. Subject to the provisions of this Act and to the Rules framed under it for the disposal of the Assembly Business, there shall be Freedom of speech in the Assembly and no Member shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of any speech or vote given by him in the Assembly or a committee thereof and no person shall be liable in respect of any publication by or under the authority of the Assembly of any report, paper, vote or proceedings.

24. No Member of the Assembly shall be liable to arrest or detention in prison under a Civil Process:-

(a) If he is a Member of the Assembly, during the continuance of the Assembly,

(b) If he is a Member of any Committee of the Assembly, during the continuance of the meeting of the Committee.

25. The elected Ministers, the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Members of the Assembly shall receive such emoluments as may be determined from time to time by the Assembly.

CHAPTER V

The Law Making Authority

26. The Law Making Authority in the State shall consist of the Maharajah in Council in Collaboration with the State Assembly acting under Section 18, above.

27. When the Council or the Assembly consider that a law should be enacted the Council shall cause a bill to be drafted, which shall be laid before the

Assembly and a reasonable time shall be given for consideration thereof. The Council shall then cause to be made such alterations or amendments as may be deemed necessary in the light of the advice tendered by the Assembly and the Chief Minister shall submit the Bill in its final form for the assent of the Maharajah.

On the receipt of the Maharajah's Assent the Bill shall be published in the State Gazette and shall become an Act having the force of Law.

29. Should the Maharajah in any case withhold his Assent to a Bill, that Bill shall lapse as if it had not been passed. If the Assent of the Maharajah is not forthcoming within one calendar month of the Bill being submitted to him he shall be deemed to have withheld his Assent.

30. Where the Assent of the Maharajah to any Bill is withheld, the Council may cause the selfsame Bill to be introduced in the next session of the Assembly and if passed without amendment by a 75% majority of the Assembly, the Bill shall be certified over the Seal of the Council and shall become Law.

31. Nothing in this Chapter shall be deemed to derogate from the absolute right of the Maharajah in Council to promulgate, in emergency cases, orders having the force of law without previous reference to the Assembly where the public interest in their opinion demands that such order shall be promulgated provided that the first opportunity shall be taken of laying the order before the Assembly for consideration. Any such order shall not have the force of law for a period of more than six months.

CHAPTER VI

Finance

32. The Revenue of the State and such other receipts as may accrue from whatever source, less such reasonable percentage of the total real Revenue as may be reserved for the Civil List, are placed at the disposal of the Council for expenditure on the Government of the State in the manner prescribed by the State Account Rules saving that in every year a sum representing not less than $17\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the average real revenue of the State for the preceding three years shall be allocated for

expenditure on the welfare and administration of the Hill people.

33. The Minister in charge of Finance shall prepare an Annual Budget showing the estimated receipts and expenditure for the ensuring year classified under the prescribed heads of account and shall submit it to the Assembly within fifteen days of its meeting for the Budget Session along with a statement of account for the previous year.

34. The Assembly shall after considering the Budget, submit it with their recommendation to the Council, who, having made such modifications as may be deemed necessary shall submit it to the Maharajah for approval. Where any delay occurs in the granting of Assent to the Budget by the Maharajah and where such Assent has not been obtained by the first day of the financial year, provisional effect shall be given to the Budget as passed by the Assembly and funds shall be drawn against its provisions as if it had received Assent.

35. The Maharajah's Civil List shall be fixed at a figure equal to 10% of the real revenues of the State over the preceding three years, provided that

no extraordinary revenues shall be taken into account when determining this amount and provided that no State revenue in excess of Rs. twenty lakhs shall be taken into account in any one year. The appropriation to the Maharajah's Civil List shall be non-votable and shall not be the subject of debate in the Assembly.

36. No tax whatsoever shall be shown in the budget and no tax shall be collected by any officer of the State or by any person unless such tax has been imposed by due process of Law.

CHAPTER VII

Hill People

38. The Council shall be responsible for the welfare and the good administration of the Hill People of the State and shall provide such funds for this purpose as may, subject to the provision of Section 32 above, be deemed necessary, provided that the Local Authorities in the Hills shall exercise such powers of Local Self Government as may be laid down in the Manipur State Hill (Administration) Regulation, 1947.

CHAPTER IX

The Judicature

(a) There shall be a complete separation of the Judiciary from the Executive.

CHAPTER X

Fundamental Rights and Duties of
Citizenship

44. All citizens shall be equal before the law. Titles and other privileges of birth shall not be recognised in the eyes of law.

45. The liberty of the individual shall be guaranteed. No person may be subjected to any judicial interrogation or placed under arrest or be in any other way deprived of his liberty, save as provided by law.

46. No person shall be tried save by a competent Court.

47. No person may be tried except by a competent Court who shall give all opportunity to such person to defend himself by all legal means.

48. All penalties shall be as determined by law.

49. Capital punishment may not be inflicted for purely political crimes.

50. No citizen may be banished from the State, expelled from one part of the country to another, and obliged to reside in a specified place save in such cases as may be expressly determined by law.

51. Every dwelling shall be inviolable save under express provision of law.

52. There shall be guaranteed to all people, Justice, Social, Economic and Political; equality of status, of opportunity and before the law; freedom of thought, expression of belief, faith, worship, vocation, association, and action, subject to law and public morality.

53. The practice of Arts and Sciences shall be unrestricted and shall enjoy the protection and support of the State.

54. Without any prejudice to the communities concerned, public institutions shall be opened to all citizens of the State.

55. (a) All Officials of the State or of a Local Government shall be answerable before the law for their individual and unlawful actions.

(b) Where damage is caused to an individual by the act of an official of the State or an official of a Local Government, such individual may sue the State before the Chief Court and may seek redress save where such damage has been caused by a bona fide act of a State servant in pursuance of a policy duly laid down by a Competent Authority.

CHAPTER XI

General Clauses

56. Any provision of this act may be subject to amendment by the Maharajah in Council provided that such amendment is laid before the Assembly and receives the support of at least 80% of the members of the State Assembly present and voting, when such amendment is debated.

57. Where in any case circumstances arise which prevent the proper operation in law or in spirit of this Constitution Act, the Council may at their discretion refer the matter for decision to such authority outside the State as may be

decided hereafter and the decision of that authority shall be binding.

58. The Court Language of the State shall be Manipuri or English.

Sd/-

(Bodh Chandra Singh)
Maharajah of Manipur

APPENDIX III

MANIPUR MERGER AGREEMENT*

AGREEMENT made this twentyfirst day of September 1949 between the Governor-General of India and His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur.

WHEREAS in the best interests of the State of Manipur as well as of the Dominion of India it is desirable - to provide for the administration of the said State by or under the authority of the Dominion Government.

IT IS HEREBY AGREED as follows:-

Article 1

His Highness the Maharaja of Manipur hereby cedes to the Dominion Government full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers far in to the governance of the State agrees to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government on the fifteenth day of October 1949 (hereinafter referred to as "the said day").

As from the said day the Dominion Government will be competent to exercise the said powers,

*Ministry of States, White Papers on Indian States, (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1950), Appendix XXXII, pp. 232-34.

Article II

His Highness the Maharaja shall continue to enjoy the pernal rights, privileges, dignities, titles, authority over religious observances, customs, usages, rites and ceremonies and institutions incharge of the same in the State, which he would have enjoyed had this agreement not been made.

Article III

His Highness the Maharaja shall with effect from the said day be entitled to receive for his lifetime from the revenues of the State annually for his Privy Purse the sum of Rupees three lakhs free of all taxes.

This amount is intended to cover all the expenses of the Ruler and his family, including expenses on account of his personal staff and armed guards, maintenance of his residences, marriages and other ceremonies, etc. and the allowances to the Ruler's relations who on the date of execution of this agreement were in receipt of such allowances from the revenues of the State, and will neither be increased nor reduced for any reason whatsoever;

The Government of India undertake that the said sum of Rupees three lakhs shall be paid to His Highness the Maharaja in four equal instalments in advance at the beginning of each quarter from the State treasury as may be specified by the Government of India.

Article IV

His Highness the Maharaja shall be entitled to the full ownership, use and enjoyment of all private properties (as distinct from State properties) belonging to him on the date of this agreement.

His Highness the Maharaja will furnish to the Dominion Government before the first January 1950 an inventory of all the immovable property, securities and cash balance held by him as such private property.

If any dispute arises as to whether any item of property is the private property of His Highness the Maharaja or State property, it shall be referred to a judicial Officer qualified to be appointed as a High Court Judge, and the decision of that officer shall be final and binding on both parties;

Provided the His Highness the Maharaja's right to the use of the residences known as "Redlands" and "Les Chatalettes" in Shillong, and the property in the town of Gauhati known as "Manipuri Basti" shall not be questioned.

Article V

All the members of His Highness's family shall be entitled to all the personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by them whether within or outside the territories of the State, immediately before the 15th August 1947.

Article VI

The Dominion Government guarantees the succession, according to law and custom, to the gaddi of the State and to His Highness the Maharaja's personal rights, privileges, dignities, titles, authority over religious observances customs, usages, rites and ceremonies and institutions incharge of the same in the State.

Article VII

No enquiry shall be made by or under the authority of the Government, and no proceedings shall

lie in any Court in Manipur, against His Highness the Maharaja whether in a personal capacity or otherwise, in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by him or under his authority during the period of his administration of that State.

Article VIII

(1) The Government of India hereby guarantees either the continuance in service of the permanent members of the Public Service of Manipur on conditions which will be not less advantageous than those on which they were serving before the date on which the administration of Manipur is made over to the Government of India or the payment of reasonable compensation.

(2) The Government of India further guarantees the continuance of pensions and leave salaries sanctioned by His Highness the Maharaja to servants of the State who have retired or proceeded on leave preparatory to retirement, before the date on which the administration of Manipur is made over to the Government of India.

(3) The Government of India also undertake to make suitable provisions for the employment of

authority and jurisdiction in such manner and through such agency as it may think of it.

Manipur - is in the various branches of Public Services, and in every way encourage Manipuris to join them. They also undertake to preserve various law, customs and conventions prevailing in the State pertaining to the social, economic and religious life of the people.

Article IX

Except with the previous sanction of the Government of India no proceedings, civil or criminal, shall be instituted against any person in respect of any act done or purporting to be done in the execution of this duties as a servant of the State before the day on which the administration is made over to the Government of India.

In confirmation whereof Mr Vapal Pangunni Menon, Advisor to the Government of India in the Ministry of States, has appended his signature on behalf and with the authority of the Governor-General of India and His Highness Maharaj Bodh Chandra Singh, Maharaja of Manipur has appended his signature on behalf of himself, his heirs and successors.

Sd/-
(BODH CHANDRA SINGH)
Maharaja of Manipur

Sd/-
(V.P. Menon)
Advisor to the
Government of India
Ministry of States

Sd/-
(SRI PRAKASA)
Governor of Assam
Shillong, September 21, 1949.

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