



Radical Politics
in
Meghalaya

Problems and Prospects

Susmita Sen Gupta

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Preface

The most significant agent of radical politics in Meghalaya is the CPI which is one of the oldest political parties in the country. According to declarations issued by its highest national organization, it strives to achieve the establishment of national democracy and create conditions for advancing to the goal of establishment of socialism by peaceful means. The working class and their allies will strive their utmost to overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and transform Parliament from an instrument serving the bourgeoisie into a genuine instrument of the people's will for effecting the fundamental transformation in the economic, social and State structure.

Thus, it appears that the CPI is a progressive party interested in the welfare of the people. The national party has a branch in Meghalaya which was originally a part of Assam CPI. After the formation of Meghalaya on January 21, 1972, the Meghalaya unit of the CPI was born. The CPI was the first national party to welcome and support the formation of Meghalaya as an Autonomous State. From its very inception, the CPI claims to have championed the cause of the tribal people and stood for safeguarding their identity. As part of its All-India Programme, the

CPI in Meghalaya seeks the introduction of radical agrarian reform in the State. The party is of the opinion that compulsory universal primary education, agrarian reform and rapid industrialization would pave the way for educational, cultural and economic development of the State. The CPI appeals to the farmers and the rural poor to fight against exploitation and unjust practices to bring about a better system. It seeks to preserve the unity and integrity of the people by fighting against communal and chauvinist forces.

Thus, it appears that the CPI has a concrete political programme for the solution of the burning problems of Meghalaya. The party projects itself as the true promoter of Meghalayan interests. Nevertheless, the CPI has not been able to make any significant breakthrough in the politics of Meghalaya. The CPI has contested all the assembly elections held in Meghalaya so far without achieving any success. This gives rise to a number of questions. What is the relevance of the CPI in the Meghalayan situation? What are the oddities faced by it in its activities in Meghalaya? And so on. The leaders of the party in Meghalaya appear to hold the view that the CPI has failed to achieve any significant political gains in Meghalaya because of the fear among the tribal people that Communists do not allow people to worship God in their own ways. The question is whether this opinion is based on facts. It will also be interesting to examine the manner in which the CPI

works at the grass-roots level in Meghalaya. This will, of course, necessitate an enquiry into the working of the various front organizations of the party. As the book proceeds, the following questions are proposed to be investigated :

1. Does the perspective adopted by the CPI postulate an understanding of the political situation of Meghalaya?
2. What are the main impediments faced by the CPI in Meghalaya in pursuing its radical politics?
3. What is the nature of its front organizations?
4. What are the reasons for the failure of the CPI in Meghalaya elections?

An investigation on the above lines should enable us to understand the reasons behind the failure of radical politics in Meghalaya and to examine whether such politics has any future prospects in the State.

Shillong

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I would like to put on record the ever-willing assistance extended to me in various ways by my friends, Sutapa and Uttama. The encouragement and inspiration given to me by my parents is deeply appreciated and I remain indebted to them.

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Shillong

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1

Radical Politics in North East India : Origin and Development of the CPI

The history of Indian contacts with the International Communist Movement and the formation of the Communist Party of India abroad reaches back into the exciting days of World War I when a section of militant nationalists realized the naivete and futility of sporadic terrorism and felt that it was only with external assistance that an organized national revolutionary movement could be brought about and the country's independence won.¹ Drawing inspiration from the events in the USSR and being convinced that liberation could be achieved only through a communist movement, some Indian nationalists² formed the Communist Party of India at Tashkent in 1921.³ According to Rafiq Ahmad, one of the Muhajirs who set out for Tashkent, "As a matter of fact, the Communist Party of India had been set up towards the end of 1920 at Tashkent... ." ⁴

There appears to be some controversy about the exact place, date and situation of the formation of the CPI. But since this emigre Communist Party of India was affiliated to the Communist International

in the first half of 1921, Muzaffar Ahmad concludes that "the date of the Party's foundation, if it was not 1920, could not have been later than early 1921".⁵ It may be noted here that Rafiq Ahmad's account of the formation of the CPI has been corroborated by Evelyne, wife of M. N. Roy. Jane Degras quotes her as saying that the CPI was founded in October, 1920.⁶

In India, a movement was already afoot for the formation of a Communist Party of India as a result of which a number of amorphous groups were operating in different parts of the country. Of the Communist groups that lay scattered around the country, most active were those in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Lahore and Kanpur.⁷ The First Indian Communist Conference was held on December 26, 1925, at Kanpur. Despite sharp differences of opinion over the ideological orientation of the party, a Central Committee was formed bringing together the representatives of the early Communist groups formed in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Punjab and the North in general. The first Constitution of the Communist Party of India was published towards the end of 1926. The newly constituted Central Committee of the Communist Party of India met in several secret sessions during 1926 and 1929 to work out a programme of action for the organization of Communist movement in India.⁸ In 1930, the Party was formally affiliated to the Communist International.⁹

The leadership of the Communist Party of India when it was united on 18 August 1959, decided to adopt the date of the Kanpur Communist Conference as the date of the formation of the party, but we cannot minimize the importance and significance of the foundation of the party at Tashkent in October 1920.¹⁰ On the basis of the CPI formed in Tashkent, a Centre was created abroad which did a lot of ideological and propaganda work. It was indeed a two-way process in which the independent thinking and acting of groups and comrades here played a considerable part.¹¹

Just after a year of its formation, in the Gauhati session of the Indian National Congress held in 1926, the CPI released a manifesto calling for complete independence and stressing the need for building up organization of workers and peasants on class basis. These aims were spelt out at the Political Sufferers' Conference held during the Gauhati Session and presided over by Dr. Bhupendranath Dutta.¹² The formation and growth of a Communist Party presupposes a certain degree of political consciousness of the working class. In Assam also, the formal establishment of the State unit of the CPI was preceded by more than a decade of preparatory work to awaken the working people to a consciousness of the social conditions in which they lived. The October Revolution inspired a large number of Assamese intellectuals in the twenties and thirties. Despite the limitations of their ideas and information regarding the developments in

Soviet Russia, they all welcomed the changes ushered in by the Socialist Revolution.¹³

Communist activity in India was abruptly cut short by the arrest under instructions of the British Government in India of thirty-one of its most important leaders from different parts of the country on 20th March 1929. The arrests were accompanied by comprehensive search operations throughout the country. From the documents which became available for open investigation after the searches, the duties and tasks of the Communist Party of India as enjoined from time to time by the Comintern were for the first time brought into day light.¹⁴ The trial that was organized against the Communists on the basis of these findings became known as the Meerut Conspiracy case. It made martyrs out of the communists and gave them a unique niche in Indian political life. The trial evoked widespread nationalist sympathy for the accused at Meerut.¹⁵ This case had its impact on the students of Assam, too. Young Jagannath Bhattacharya, the first Communist of Assam, who was then a student of the Banaras Hindu University, was deeply moved. Jadu Saikia, an Assamese Law student of Banaras Hindu University in 1936, states while trying to recollect his memories that he was deeply moved by the Meerut Trial and came into contact with the communists and socialists in Banaras. Saikia distributed both legal and illegal socialist and communist literature among the left-wingers of the Congress in Assam. Saikia mentions that Dhiren

Dutta who had contacts with the Dacca and Calcutta Communists brought banned literature into Assam.¹⁶ Bishnu Borah, a veteran communist leader, says that during that period, Shillong became the centre of smuggling of banned Marxist literature from Sylhet into the Brahmaputra Valley.¹⁷

The political awakening among the students in Assam in the 1920s caused alarm to the British rulers who sought to counteract it with various measures. Mr. Cunningham, the then D.P.I. of Assam, issued a circular in May 1929, banning participation of students in political activities. Refusing to comply with the circular, many students left the institutions. Within a few months, a number of Swadeshi educational institutions sprang up throughout Assam which in course of time became centres of political movement of students. The Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam initially took the form of a student agitation against the Cunningham Circular.¹⁸ From amongst the students and youth who were imprisoned or expelled from educational institutions, quite a few became the future cadres of Terrorist movement and later of Communist movement.¹⁹

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on March 5, 1931, leading to disillusionment among the youth of Assam. These sections, particularly those from the urban areas of Surma Valley constituted revolutionary groups. Ultimately, most of these groups merged into 'Tarun Sangha'. The formation

of the Sangha was followed by several mail robberies, including the Tinsukia Mail Robbery, robberies in the houses of moneylenders and action against police personnel responsible for the torturing of Satyagrahis.²⁰ Some of the leaders of Tarun Sangha accepted scientific socialism on being encouraged by their erstwhile Calcutta colleagues who had already given up terrorism and adopted scientific socialism. These groups remained inside the National Congress and some of them held important offices in the Congress and later in the Congress Socialist Party.²¹

By 1938, Congress Socialist Party groups were functioning in several sub-divisions of Assam, such as Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Sylhet and Goalpara. Leaders of these groups conferred together and decided to take steps towards forming the Assam Congress Socialist Party. Biswanath Mukherjee, Joint Secretary of the All India Students Federation (AISF), while on a tour of Assam in 1938, had established contacts with them and suggested such a move.²² On September 30, 1939, a provincial conference was held in Golaghat which was presided over by Somnath Lahiri, a veteran communist leader and pioneer of the trade union movement. The Assam Congress Samajtantri Dal (Assam Congress Socialist Party) was born as a result of the Conference with Sriman Prafulla Goswami as General Secretary of the 21 member Executive Committee. On the same night, a more exclusive inner group was formed to carry on secret communist

activities. On 20 April 1940, the Executive Committee of the Assam CSP held its first meeting at the house of Siblal Pandit at Lunding.²³

Pro-Communist students seemed to have been playing an important role in the politics of Assam. In 1939, a conference of Assam Chhatra Sanmilan was held at Jorhat.²⁴ It was presided over by Prof. Humayun Kabir and addressed by Mansur Habib, a prominent Communist leader of Bengal and Biswanath Mukherjee, Joint Secretary of AISF. The Conference decided to affiliate the Chhatra Sanmilan to AISF. Gaurisankar Bhattacharya was elected General Secretary of Assam Chhatra Sanmilan and Dadhi Mahanta editor of its organ, *Milan*. Amiya Dasgupta, the AISF leader, remained in Assam for purposes of organization until he was externed from the province in June 1940. He had been deputed by the Bengal Committee of the CPI to organize a communist group in the Brahmaputra Valley under the cover of the CSP. He helped radicalization of the Students' Federation and formation of Marxist Study Circles in several towns of Brahmaputra Valley.²⁵ Influence of the communists on the Assam students was thus increasing steadily.

A Joint Conference of the Students' Federation bodies of both the Valleys, Brahmaputra and Barak as well as of Manipur and the Hills, was held at Shillong in the middle of 1940 with Humayun Kabir in the chair. The conference elected Gaurisankar Bhattacharya as President and Pranesh Chandra

Biswas as Secretary of the emergent confederation. The Conference passed resolutions condemning the Defence of India Rules and directing students not to render any assistance to war efforts. Biswas and Anjali Das, and later Bishnu Bora, went out on an organizational tour of Assam districts, carrying on anti-war propaganda.²⁶ Tea garden workers of Assam went on a strike in protest against the compulsory recruitment of labour for war efforts. Students supported the workers. On 6th December, 1941, the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup, Humphrey, ordered lathi and bayonet charge on anti-war exhibition demonstration of Gauhati students resulting in severe injuries to a large number of them. This occasioned a province-wise continuous student strike and a wave of protest hartals. At the initiative of the AISF, a 'Gauhati Day' was observed for anti-war demonstrations all over the country.²⁷ This protest movement contributed in a big way to the growth of anti-imperialist militant student movement in general and Students' Federation in particular. Assam Provincial Students' Federation led by the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (R.C.P.I.) students who took active part in the 6th December demonstration also consolidated its own base.²⁸ During this period, girl students' committees associated with the Students' Federation were also formed in several towns.

Banned during the years 1934-July 1942, the Communist Party of India carried on its under-

ground activities under the cover of mass organizations. Hence the influence of the Communists was increasing steadily irrespective of the ban.

When Germany declared war against the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Communists characterized the war as "people's war". This stand led to controversy in the political circles of India at that time.²⁹ The communist decision to support the war resulted in the gradual release by the British administration in India of the communist leaders from detention and on 24th July 1942, to the lifting of the ban on the Communist Party itself. In Assam, Biresh Misra, a leader of the Sylhet District Congress Committee (and also a communist), who was in jail since 1940, was released in time for participation in the first legal meeting of the CPI at Sylhet on 27 July 1942.³⁰

The new CPI line was first pushed among the students through the platform of the Assam Chhatra Sanmilan. With some difficulties and despite an organizational split in May 1942, it continued to retain substantial influence over the student community.³¹ In fact, the All India Students' Federation was already split into two rival bodies in 1940. In Assam, one of the rival bodies was represented by the CPI-led Assam Chhatra Sanmilan and the other by the RCPI-led Assam Provincial Students' Federation.³² Communists held key offices in the District Congress Committee of Sylhet and Cachar and were thus able to keep these

committees somewhat in restraint in course of the August turmoil.³³

Communist activities in North Eastern India thus continued to spread. The trial of INA officers by the British in November 1945, gave vent to an unprecedented upsurge of protest demonstrations all over India. Solidarity actions in the wake of all these events of national importance were organized by student organizations and workers' trade unions led by the Assam communists in Shillong, Gauhati, Tezpur and other towns.³⁴ It was in the course of such political activities that the CPI in Assam was able to restore its patriotic image that had been damaged after 1942 following its pro-war stand.³⁵

CPI in North-East India and Trade Union Movement

The emancipation of the working class from the exploitation of the employers and improvement of the overall working conditions and wage standards being the cherished goals of the Communist ideology, the CPIs role in the trade union movement of India in general and of Assam in particular assumes special significance. As a spearhead of left-wing political movement, modern trade unionism came to India after the close of World War I when to the piquant political situation of the country had been added a number of serious socio-economic problems. On the economic front, the post-war years witnessed an unprecedented crisis resulting in the worsening conditions of life and work of the Indian workers.³⁶

In Assam, the persistent economic depression of the 1930s had hit hard not only the agriculturists, but also the province's trade and industries. Planters and industrialists naturally tried to shift the burden onto workers' shoulders. The latter, of course, resisted. On the peasants front, too, old style Ryot Sabhas were giving way, here and there, to militant Kisan Sabhas (or Samitis) of a new type.³⁷ The socialist and communist ideology began to play a significant role in organizing students, workers and peasants on a radical platform.

Now, although trade unionism in India as an organized movement was, to a large extent, due to the impact of socialist ideas, the force of that impact was sought to be modified by the moderate attitude of the nationalist leaders who were committed to an ideology which was more Fabian than Marxian. Socialism though their professed goal was, there was nothing communist about it.³⁸ However, due to a decline in the political tempo and demoralization among industrial workers following the great strike wave of 1918-22, the communists intensified their activities to enlist a broad spectrum of working class support for their revolutionary cause and to develop their organizational apparatus within the trade unions.³⁹ According to Overstreet and Windmiller,⁴⁰ it was after the arrival of George Allison (a British Communist) in India in April 1926, that the communists began to "ginger up" their activity in the trade union movement.

During the post-war years, the struggle of the Indian working class suddenly leapt to a position of remarkable strength and trade unionism entered on a period of vigorous growth.⁴¹ Work in the factories and industries in India was jeopardized following several strikes during 1918-22. In Assam, too, a number of strikes paralyzed work in tea gardens, railways and oil companies.⁴² All these strikes were, however, unorganized and spontaneous.

In Assam, the railway workers of the Dibrugarh District were organized for the first time on a class basis by Dr. Benoybhusan Chakrabarty, Kedarnath Goswami and Nilmoni Barthakur - Congressmen with sympathies for Socialist and Communist ideology.⁴³ In the mid 1930s, the workers of the Dibru-Sadia Railway, the Margherita-Ledo Collieries and the A.R.T. owned tea-gardens in Ledo were organized under the Red Flag.⁴⁴

Short-lived strikes in tea-gardens and "a good deal of trouble among railwaymen and contractors' labour, working for the British owned Assam Railways and Trading Company, took place in 1938-39".⁴⁵ The annual conference of the A.R. and T. Co. Labour Union was held in March 1942, at Dibrugarh, with Jadunath Saikia in the chair. Under the Communist guidance, the first conference of the Assam Provincial Trade Union Congress was also held at Dibrugarh on 28 November, 1943. On the one hand, it called upon the workers to boost war efforts through increased production and on the other, urged

the Government to release the national leaders. The general progress of trade unionism under the banner of the C.P.I. was bound to be slow with its pro-war policy, although such a policy did help to circumvent the lack of civil liberties. The provincial branch of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) held its second annual conference at Gauhati on 26-27 May, 1945. Assam's only central working class organization till then, it continued to be under the Communist domination.⁴⁶

The CPI, therefore, wanted to contest all the four tea-labour seats in Assam in the 1946 elections with necessary Congress support, or at least connivance, which was not forthcoming. Finally, it contested three labour seats on its own strength and was miserably defeated. It also contested and lost three general seats.⁴⁷

The discussion on trade unionism in Assam will be incomplete unless we mention the historic Digboi strike of 1939. The smouldering unrest at the little oil town of Digboi in Lakhimpur District was of great significance as its 10,000 workers were concentrated in a sensitive industrial and plantation area. The Administrative Report for the year 1937-38 did not fail to note the signs of trouble brewing there.⁴⁸ A general meeting of the workers of the Assam Oil Company was held on 22 February, 1938, as a consequence of which the A.O.C. Labour Union was formed.⁴⁹ The A.O.C. Labour Union, under the Red Flag, became very popular among the workers. Apart

from the company employees and contract labour, even the fourth grade employees of Oil Company 'Sahibs' came under its banner. The union submitted a 12-point charter of demands as well as a 14-day strike notice. The Company moved the Government for reconciliation. Meanwhile, the Congress Coalition Ministry led by Gopinath Bordoloi was formed in Assam. But the Congress Ministry failed to extend any protection to the workers. The workers resorted to a strike from April 3, 1939. The course of events took a violent turn when on the night of 18th April, the police shot dead two workers and seriously injured two others who later succumbed to death. This event had its repercussions throughout the province. The failure of the Bordoloi Ministry to offer protection to the workers against the exploitation of the British Oil Company might have brought disillusionment to the younger generation and made them thoroughly cynical about the Congress leadership.⁵⁰ The organization of the Digboi labourers as a united force was therefore followed by the youth in Assam turning to progressive ideas.⁵¹ When Digboi-Tinsukia area was declared "protected area" under D.I.R. on September 14, 1939, most of the strike leaders were dubbed communists and were either arrested or externed from Assam, and the workers were subjected to inhuman repression. The historic struggle of the Digboi workers thus came to an end.⁵²

The Digboi strike contributed indirectly to the CPI's growth in Assam in the sense that

disenchantment with the Congress leadership brought a large number of youth under the influence of the communist ideology.⁵³ Even though the strike was not organized by the CPI itself, the strike appears to have received the full backing and support of the party and of its student wing.

CPI and the Peasant Movement in Assam

The system of land tenure in British Assam was not uniform. Along with the system of communal or clan ownership in the hills districts, private property rights in land also existed. Under the Settlement Rules of 1870, the Government, for the first time, categorically and unequivocally recognized the permanent, transferable and heritable rights in rupit (wet paddy) and bari (homestead) lands in private occupation.⁵⁴ Now, a complex problem facing the people of Assam was the pressure on land created by unchecked immigration from over-populated East Bengal, resulting in a clash of interests between the local people and the immigrants. To contain the conflict, a line was drawn to settle immigrants in segregated areas. But the Line System failed to settle the problem.⁵⁵ Local peasants refused to accept an open society lest their separate cultural heritage was eroded through the loss of their lands to the more enterprising immigrants.⁵⁶ A resolution adopted on this issue by the Assam unit of the CPI stated thus :

“The very question of self-existence of the Assamese people as a distinct and growing

nationality now hinges on this problem, and naturally enough, the people of Assam are seriously perturbed with an intense desire for checking further immigration which has been the primary cause for complicating the question of land settlement".⁵⁷

The CPI could not support in unequivocal terms the demand for a policy of wastelands settlement with the landless, irrespective of their race, creed and language. It had to concede that the Assamese people should have the first right to such lands in their own national homeland and that the problem required a political solution. However, it condemned the Government violence in dealing with the immigrant encroachers and their forcible eviction. But such pragmatic gestures were hardly meaningful. The CPI tried its best to remain above petty and communal considerations and suggested the following principles for acceptance by both Congress and Muslim League:

- (i) Stop immigration;
- (ii) Postpone evictions pending working out of planned settlement;
- (iii) Withdraw voluntarily from 'Reserves' illegally encroached upon; and
- (iv) Recognise the right of self-determination for the people of Assam and full democratic and cultural rights to the minorities.⁵⁸

The bulk of the peasants in Assam, who had no surplus to sell, suffered from the war-time increase in the cost of living.⁵⁹ Bireshchandra Misra, a Congress stalwart turned Communist, explained the Communist ideology and the significance of the red flag under the cover of peasant meetings and drew the attention of the farmers as to how their counterparts in Soviet Russia established their own Government through united struggle.⁶⁰ The communists pointed out that despite India's participation in World War I, the plight of the poor and landless did not improve. It was thus proposed to them that they should not support the war nor contribute towards it either in cash or in kind.⁶¹

In the Brahmaputra Valley, particularly in Kamrup and Golaghat, the Communists mobilized their full strength to make their influence felt in the peasant front. The Communist groups also dominated most of the peasant conferences held after the declaration of war.⁶² By the end of 1941, the Communist groups in the Kamrup district succeeded in bringing the peasants to the agitational path.⁶³ However, the overall growth of Kisan Sabhas in Assam remained sluggish through the war years.⁶⁴ The first conference of the CPI-controlled Assam Provincial Kisan Sabha was held at Thekeragaon in Nowgong district in 1946. It talked of peasant unity and wanted Gandhi and Jinnah to come to terms. But as Guha points out, it could suggest no agreeable political solution other than mere patchworks.⁶⁵

In the Surma Valley, the prospect of an effective class organization on the basis of Hindu-Muslim unity was somewhat brighter, despite minor communal clashes engineered here and there. By 1945, a militant struggle for occupancy rights and for the abolition of certain feudal obligations developed among Nankars, peasants settled on rent-free lands in lieu of obligatory personal service to their Zamindars.⁶⁶ In Sylhet, the CPI was thus able to build up a united platform of Hindu and Muslim peasants in certain pockets of their influence against all provocations.⁶⁷

The civil disobedience movement of the thirties eventually took the shape of an unprecedented mass uprising. In 1935, a "Ryot Sabha" was formed at the initiative of Krishna Nath Sarma and others. Later on, a section of disgruntled Congress workers formed a peasants' organization called the "Halowa Sangha". Subsequently, they formed alliances with the leftwingers of the Congress, including the Communists. Its name was changed in 1938 to the Golaghat Krishak Sabha at the initiative of Jadunath Saikia. This may be regarded as the beginning of the organized peasants' movement in Assam under a left leadership.⁶⁸ Under the auspices of the Golaghat Krishak Sabha, the third session of the Golaghat District Krishak Sanmilan was held at Kamargaon on 14th October, 1939. The Conference called upon the peasants to assemble under the Congress banner and demanded a 50 percent reduction in land revenue dues.⁶⁹

Peasant agitation was organized in some places of the Brahmaputra Valley by the underground Communist League - a splinter group of the CPI which was later renamed after the parent body and remained so until it was finally designated as the Revolutionary Communist Party of India in 1943. The Assam Peasant and Labour Party (Krishak Banuva Panchayat) was formed as its open platform at a meeting of delegates from several districts, held at Gauhati on 2 May, 1940.⁷⁰

In November, 1938, Saumyendranath Tagore, the founder of the Communist League, had visited Gauhati and met a group of student youth, associated with the Gauhati Vyayam Sangha. Already disillusioned with the Congress leadership, they were much impressed by Tagore's independent left platform, international experience and Marxism he talked of in the context of the Digboi strike and the general unrest.⁷¹ Led by Haren Kalita, the Gauhati Vyayam Sangha Group joined the Communist League. An underground organizing committee of the League and an open Marxist Youth Study Club, styled 'Radical Institute', meanwhile, had come into existence at Gauhati.⁷² The Progressive Union and the Radical Institute, between them, played a significant role in drawing the cream of Assamese students towards Marxism and the broad front of 'left' nationalism.⁷³ These propaganda activities culminated in the spread of leftist parties in general and the CPI in particular.

In February, 1943, the first conference of the Assam Communists was held secretly in the residence of Khageswar Tamuli at Golaghat. At that time, there were thirty-five party members in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Conference was attended by all members other than Dr. Binoy Chakravarty, Nilmoni Barthakur, Dhiren Dutta, Jagannath Bhattacharya and those who were then in prison. The conference elected the Assam Valley District Committee of CPI under the Bengal Provincial Committee with Jadu Saikia as the Secretary. A decision was also taken to shift the headquarters to Gauhati.⁷⁴

The new committee faced two important organizational problems. First, it was felt that a district unit was necessary for more effective functioning. Accordingly, Jadu Saikia and Dadhi Mahanta wrote to the Bengal Committee, urging the need for a full-fledged Provincial Committee. Bhawani Sen, Muzaffar Ahmed and Biswanath Mukherjee, on behalf of the Bengal Committee appreciated the proposal of the Assam comrades, but went on to remind them that only the party Congress was authorized to give the final verdict on the issue of formation of a separate Provincial Committee. Hence, the Assam leaders were advised to wait for the first congress of the party scheduled to be held at Bombay in mid-1943. The second problem was regarding the wrong implementation of the People's War theory by some members of the party who addressed a gathering organized by the National

War Front set up by the British Government. The People's War Theory did not make it obligatory for the Communists to cooperate with the National War Front. The party, therefore, pulled up those who misinterpreted the CPI's policy and instructed them to work amongst trade union organizations.⁷⁵

However, despite these problems, the CPI workers carried on with their activities. The Red Flag Railway Workers' Union became quite active in the Pandu-Gauhati, Luming and Dibrugarh-Tinsukia areas.⁷⁶ During this period, an organization called Mahila Atma Raksha Samity (Women's Self Defence Committee) was set up at the initiative of women communists and sympathizers to face the Japanese aggression. Such committees sprang up in Dibrugarh, Shillong and Sylhet.⁷⁷

In 1943, Salt became extremely scarce in Assam.⁷⁸ The Communists took the initiative and a joint movement was built up along with the Congress, Muslim League and other parties to fight against the scarcity of salt artificially created by the traders in collaboration with the Government's supply officials, including the British Deputy Commissioner in Dibrugarh. The movement later spread to other areas as well.⁷⁹

In May, 1943, the first open congress of CPI was held in Bombay. This Congress paved the way for the formation of an All-India structure of party organizations. As desired by the Assam leaders, the Assam provincial organizing committee of the CPI

was formed.⁸⁰ Biresh Misra was elected Secretary and Biswanath Mukherjee took charge of the Assam unit on behalf of the Central Committee. By the beginning of 1944, Achintya Bhattacharya, Secretary, Cachar District Congress Committee, joined the CPI and played a leading role in building up the party in Cachar and expanding its base in Kisan areas. Irawat Singh, the Manipur leader, who played a legendary role in the famous 'Rice Satyagraha' was influenced by the Marxist-Leninist ideology during his imprisonment. He was able to induct a large number of Manipuri youth into the party. He worked for sometime in Cachar among the local Manipur peasantry⁸¹ as a result of which the entire Manipuri peasant belt of Cachar came under the party's influence. This enhanced the formation of a district unit of the party.⁸²

The first district conference of the CPI was held in 1938 in Sylhet. Chittâ Das was elected Secretary of the district committee. The party's weekly journal *Naya Duniya* was edited by Jyotirmoy Nandy⁸³ who was elected Congress Secretary in the second conference of the party. Biresh Misra, a leader of the district Congress and of the Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P.), came in close contact with the party as a result of his participation in mass movements along with communists. Subsequently, he joined the party in 1941 and then became the first Secretary of Assam Provincial Organizing Committee of CPI.⁸⁴ In 1941, a conference of the communist workers was held at Dacca-Dakshin, Sylhet, in which Surma Valley

District Committee of CPI under Bengal Provincial Committee was formed. On behalf of the Brahmaputra Valley comrades, Bishnu Bora attended the conference as fraternal delegate.⁸⁵ Thus, the CPI was able to draw in its ranks prominent Congress Socialist Party leaders who worked actively towards the party's development in Assam. The party also extended its sphere of influence beyond the Brahmaputra Valley by forming the Surma Valley District Committee of the CPI. The Congress Socialists and Communists in Assam came together to fight against the grouping scheme.⁸⁶ The Assam Provincial Organizing Committee of the CPI called the AICC Resolution a death-blow to Assam's birth right to decide her own constitution and her relations with Bengal and other provinces. It called upon the Assamese people and "their mighty Congress Organization" to break away from the compromising policy of the leadership.⁸⁷

In course of its memorandum to the Cabinet Mission, the CPI emphasized its stand for an undivided federal India. But at the same time, it suggested that the proposed interim Government be entrusted with the task of setting up a boundary commission to re-draw the boundaries on the basis of natural ancient home-lands of every people.⁸⁸ The CPI's stand was perfectly in tune with J.V. Stalin's ideological formulation in 1912 that India was still a melting pot of several growing nationalities.⁸⁹

Hill leaders like late J.J.M. Nichols Roy and others rendered support to their counterparts in the

plains in opposing the Cabinet Mission proposal. T. Aliba Imti Ao, the Naga National Council leader, came out openly against the grouping scheme and offered to send a group of volunteers to prevent coercive occupation of land by immigrants during the so-called civil disobedience movement led by the Muslim League. Eventually, the Congress leadership was forced to reject the Cabinet Mission proposal. MacDonald Konger appealed to all the members of the Legislature belonging to Assam proper to cooperate with each other in imposing immediate measures for "stopping further immigration into the Assam Valley from outside and for evicting all encroachers from the reserves, thereby saving the peace-loving children of the soil from economic, social and political ruination".⁹⁰ Eventually the Congress leadership was forced to reject the Cabinet Mission proposal.⁹¹ The role played by the communists in this struggle contributed towards mobilizing public opinion against the grouping scheme. The communists also made use of this opportunity to endear themselves to the Assamese people on a highly sensitive and sentimental issue.

Cultural activities organized in the form of songs, dances and drama in the languages of the indigenous people can play a very significant role in awakening the political consciousness and patriotic feelings of the people of a nation under foreign domination. The Indian People's Theatre Association was organized in May 1943, during the CPI's first congress in Bombay to inject communist ideology into Indian

cultural life,⁹² the inspiration being the glorious role played by the Chinese People's Theatre Movement in awakening consciousness among the Chinese people during the Anti-Japanese freedom struggle. Its role in the cultural regeneration of India cannot be underestimated. Many veteran artists and musicians rendered their services to the IPTA. Through the IPTA movement, the CPI was able to make breakthrough amongst the intellectuals in Assam. A number of poets, writers and musicians assembled under the party's banner.⁹³ The CPI claimed that one troupe that toured the country in 1943-44 collected Rs. 200,000 for the famine stricken people of Bengal.⁹⁴ The IPTA brought back the memories of forgotten heroes like U Tirot Sing, Kiang Nongbah, Piali Phukan, Maniram Dewan and other freedom fighters through its shadow plays.⁹⁵

As the CPI began to establish itself firmly all over Assam, it was felt that the party should have an organ of its own. Accordingly, in 1946, the first CPI journal in Assamese, a weekly called *Natun Asam* was published from Gauhati with Dadhi Mahanta as its editor. This journal propagated the cause of the working class and repudiated the anti-communist slogans of the reactionaries. During the late forties, several books and pamphlets on Marxism including *Communist Manifesto* were published in Assamese by the CPI and also by Pragati Prakash Bhawan of RCPI. The propaganda activities conducted by *Natun Asam* and books and pamphlets on Marxism were

instrumental for the popularization of scientific socialism and for education of the cadres.⁹⁶

After 1947, the CPI spelt out the need to carry forward the revolution to a new stage - the stage of the completion of the unfinished anti-imperialist, anti-feudal tasks of rejuvenating and building a prosperous national economy, of ensuring better living standards for our people and enlarging and enriching the field of democracy, so as to open the road to socialism for them.⁹⁷ However, after 1947, a group of Trotskyites within the Communist Party discarded the very notion of India's independence as false and urged the importance of freedom through armed struggle and creation of liberated zones. B.T. Ranadive advocated a militant policy of violent insurrection and guerilla activity. Ranadive felt confident that the time was ripe and his was the responsibility to engineer the final revolution in India like the October uprising of 1917 in Russia.⁹⁸ The violent policy engineered by Ranadive thoroughly isolated the party from the masses. Taking advantage of the popular sentiment and the divisions within the party, the Congress leadership let loose a reign of terror. Hundreds of Communists in Assam were hauled up.⁹⁹

The first provincial conference of the CPI was held at Gauhati in February, 1948, and attended by delegates from all districts of Assam. The conference did make some sound economic pronouncements and put forward viable solutions of national problems. An

eighteen-member strong provincial committee was elected with Biresh Misra as its secretary.¹⁰⁰

The deviationist tendencies among a section of the CPI caused concern to the International Communist Movement. The Cominform issued through its organ "For a lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy", of 27th January, 1950, a new directive to the Indian Communist Party. The new dictat called upon the working class to unite with all classes, parties, groups and organizations willing to fight the imperialists and their hirelings and to form a broad, nationwide front headed by the working class and its vanguard, the Communist Party.¹⁰¹ It pointed out that while fighting reformism, the Party Centre committed certain errors in dogmatist and sectarian directions, which restricted the scope of the struggle of the workers and the toiling masses and prevented the mobilization of the broadest masses in the same.¹⁰² This led to a decline of the Ranadive line.¹⁰³ In Assam, the fight against the Ranadive line was carried on by Jyotirmoy Nandy, Phani Bora, Dadhi Mahanta, Biren Dutta, Bijon Roy, Prafulla Misra and others.¹⁰⁴ At the end of 1952, the Union of India had its first general elections. Now, the Communist Party had managed in the first half of 1951 to patch up the differences in its ranks and put up a show of unity on the basis of the United Front Programme outlined by the Cominform Journal.¹⁰⁵

In 1951, the reinstatement of the dissolved Assam Provincial Committee took place. Biresh Misra, who

pursued the left adventurist line in Assam was removed and replaced by Phani Bora as the Secretary of the Committee.¹⁰⁶ In a meeting of party workers held at Gauhati, the draft programme of the party was discussed and efforts were made to reorganize the party.¹⁰⁷ During 1948-51, the party seemed to gain substantially in organizational sphere because many of the members worked as whole timers to build the party organization with renewed vigour. And as a result, in the General Election of 1952, the CPI candidate Gaurisankar Bhattacharya emerged winner from Gauhati Assembly constituency. As Dadhi Mahanta pointed out, the railway workers and the fighting Beltala peasantry voted for the party candidate. The urban Bengali middle class stood firmly behind the CPI because in the wake of the anti-Bengali disturbances at Gauhati in 1948, the party strongly defended the interests of the minorities. This victory enhanced the prestige of the party in Assam to a great extent.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, in a provincial conference of R.C.P.I. held at Gauhati, a decision was taken to dissolve the party and merge with the CPI. The unification of the Communist movement resulted in the expansion of its mass base. The party won 4 seats in the 1957 General Election and Phani Bora came out as the winner in the 1959 Nowgong bye-election.¹⁰⁹

The CPI participated actively in the oil refinery movement, food movement etc.¹¹⁰ In 1960, came the

demand for making Assamese the state language. As a result, Assamese-Bengali fractricidal riot broke out. While the CPI had no clear policy on the language question, it always fought against chauvinism. The CPI State Council met at Gauhati and under the guidance of the Central Committee, adopted a resolution according to which Assamese should be declared the State language of Assam, Bengali shall be the official language in Cachar upto district level and the hill districts shall have a language chosen by the hills people themselves. Most of these recommendations were eventually enshrined in the Assamese Language Act. The CPI's ambiguous position on the language issue, however, resulted in a setback for the party in Assam.¹¹¹

In the 1962 General Election, the CPI was virtually routed out. The party stood unrepresented in the Assembly. The Party's role during the language disturbances could not impress progressive sections of the society.¹¹² In October, 1962, the Chinese Army crossed the McMahon Line and advanced to the foothills of North-Eastern Frontier Province (NEFA). The CPI condemned the Chinese action, but the pro-Peking section within the CPI opposed the party line. In Assam, hundreds of Communists were detained under the Defence of India Rules (DIR) and the police was given a free hand.¹¹³ All these factors contributed to the party's rout in the 1962 Election.

Split in Communist Movement and its effect on the CPI in Assam

Early in 1959 began the people's revolt in Tibet as a result of which the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans had to seek refuge in India. The Communists were on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, they could not admit, as Communists, the possibility of a Socialist country indulging in aggression. On the other hand, anxious to retain the support and esteem of the people as a national party, they could not but take into consideration their anger and resentment against China. The differences that existed in the party now became more manifest and it was clearly divided into two groups, one of which sought inspiration from Moscow while the other sought it from Peking. Owing to these differences and also for ideological reasons, the Communist Party could not adopt anything but an equivocal position.¹¹⁴ When China crossed the McMahon Line in October 1962, again a very difficult situation was created for the Communists. It took the party full two weeks to adopt a resolution on the situation. The resolution characterized the Chinese action as aggression and called upon the people to unite for the defence of the country. This resolution sharpened the division of the party into two groups - one left and the other right.¹¹⁵

The Assam State Council of the CPI met in June 1964 at Krishnai, Goalpara, to take disciplinary action against Achintya Bhattacharya, Biresw Misra,

Nandeswar Talukdar and Suren Hazarika, the four Council members, for their anti-party activities. These four members in collaboration with some others formed a separate party committee of C.P.I. (M) in Assam.¹¹⁶

But despite the split in the communist movement, the CPI gained in influence and organizational strength during this period. In the general election held in Assam in 1967, the CPI captured 8 seats (seven on party ticket and one as independent). Six independent members joined the CPI parliamentary group in the Assembly.¹¹⁷ The party M.L.As' performance in the Assembly, their attitude of solidarity with the cause of the minorities, detection of corruption and nepotism of the Congress Government with documentary evidence, formation and expansion of mass organizations and support for mass movements enabled the party to assert considerable influence in Assam during that period.¹¹⁸ In 1969, the Assam unit of the CPI celebrated its Silver Jubilee. At the time of the split, the total membership of the party was 3,000 only. But in 1969, the primary membership rose to more than 7,000 including in Meghalaya.¹¹⁹

Origin and Growth of the CPI in the Hills

Under-administered and kept in seclusion as the museum specimens of 'backward tracts', there was practically no political development in the hills of Assam, except for the Khasi-Jaintia Hills District,

until the end of World War II.¹²⁰ All India political parties and organizations had been making some attempts since 1938 to draw the hills people into their folds but with little success. They had no access to the 'excluded areas' or even to the interior of the 'partially excluded areas'. As a result, their contacts were limited to Shillong and to the hills students studying in other district towns.¹²¹

Christianity and literacy made rapid progress in the twentieth century. Because of the deep religiosity of the hills people and the fierce opposition of the church towards communists, the latter's influence on the Christian hills students was neither stable nor deep. What appealed to them most was the communist approach to the national question. They collected from bookshops at Shillong, Gauhati and Jorhat dozens of copies of such Marxist publications as were relevant to the subject, particularly copies of the USSR Constitution, for the consumption of their reading public at home.¹²² In order to cultivate Marxist ideas among the Khasis, the Shillong unit of the CPI published a number of pamphlets in the Khasi language such as "Ka Jinglailuid ha ka Niam ha ka U.S.S.R.". (Religion in the Soviet Union) and "la ka Jaid Bynriew ha Russia" (How National Question was solved in U.S.S.R.). The Soviet concept of a multinational State (each nationality therein with a formal right to secede) and of autonomous regions was to their liking, afraid as they were of domination by the plains people. The impact of the

USSR Constitution was soon to be seen on the growth of their group consciousness.¹²³

In 1937, Soumen Tagore, the founder of the Communist League, came to Shillong and stayed for two months during which he helped a left-oriented Congressman, Kiriti Chaudhuri, to organize the Municipal workers of Shillong. The efforts in this direction culminated in the formation of Shillong Municipal Workers' Union with Swami Saradananda as President and Kiriti Chaudhuri as Secretary.¹²⁴ The Government Press Workers, too, were organized under a Union. The Municipal Workers struck work in 1938. This may be regarded as the first workers' strike in Shillong. In 1940, the Government Press Workers also resorted to strike.¹²⁵ Students' Federation expressed solidarity with the striking workers.¹²⁶

During the late thirties, several all-India leaders with leftist inclinations visited Shillong. This led to the radicalization of students in Shillong. Subhas Chandra Bose,¹²⁷ founder of the Forward Bloc, came to Shillong in 1937 and addressed public gatherings. He also visited Shillong in 1938. Soli Batlivwala and Sajjad Zaheer of CPI addressed public meetings in Shillong in 1939. Shillong Students' Federation was formed in 1938 with Sailen Neogy as Secretary.¹²⁸ In 1940, the first joint conference of Assam Valley, Surma Valley and Shillong Students' Federations was held at Opera Hall, Shillong, under the presidency of Humayun Kabir. The conference

was addressed by Biswanath Mukherjee (CPI) and Biswanath Dube (Bolshevik Party), Ajoy Bhattacharya and Gaurishankar Bhattacharya.¹²⁹

In 1939-40, Barin Dutta, a member of the Communist Party group that functioned in Sylhet since 1938, visited Shillong while he was underground and through party classes, initiated a group of students and youth of Shillong to Marxism-Leninism. Towards the end of 1942, this group was transformed into a party cell and by the middle of 1943, the Shillong Local Committee of CPI was formed with Benubinode Chaudhuri as Secretary. Shyamapada Dutta, Bijon Roy, Anjali Das, Benubinode Chaudhuri, Himangshu Gupta and others played an important role in the party's formation.¹³⁰ The Shillong unit established links with the students of different hills of Assam and propagated progressive ideas, but failed to build any party organization in the hills. Through its bookstall "Friends of the Soviet Union" (later Booklands), the party circulated thousands of copies of Marxist books in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Naga Hills and Mizo Hills.¹³¹

It may be noted that the Shillong local unit of the CPI formed at the initiative of local Bengalis could not recruit tribal cadres excepting one or two during the war years. However, the Students' Federation was able to establish rapport with the hills students in various colleges of Assam and Calcutta. For example, G.G. Swell, a Khasi student then studying

in Calcutta, was a member of the Working Committee of the Bengal Provincial Students' Association in 1945.¹³² At the same time, the Assam Hill Students' Federation was formed in Assam, with T. Aliba Imti Ao, a Naga student, as its Secretary. This body, jointly with Assam affiliate of the AISF, organized the All-Assam Students' Educational Conference in 1946 at Shillong, which adopted a charter of demands for the spread of education in the province in general and the hills in particular. Several tribal students, who actively participated in this conference, later emerged as local leaders in their respective regions.¹³³ The student wing of the CPI thus played an important role in politicizing the students of the hills of Assam. The Shillong unit of the CPI proposed autonomy for the Hills and this policy was eventually adopted by the all-India leadership of the party for all the tribal areas of India.¹³⁴ This point will be elaborated in the second chapter.

During 1944-45, the Shillong unit of the CPI organized the workers of Commercial Carrying Company, the Grade IV Government Employees' Association, Motor Workers' Union, Shop Assistants' Association etc. The party revitalized the Ministerial Employees' Association as a militant organization. The party was actively involved in the Municipal Strike and the Post and Telegraph Employees' Strike of 1946. It also organized the women into the Mahila Atma Raksha Samity (Women's Self-Defence Committee). Benubinode Chaudhury, Paresh Das,

Binoy Lahiri, Hiru Datta, Debabrata Das and Benoy Deb played an active role in the formation of trade unions.¹³⁵ It is interesting to note that all the party activists were Bengali in a town dominated by Khasis.

The Shillong unit of the CPI spearheaded the food movement in the capital against scarcity of rice and soaring prices in 1966. In the police firing that followed, a student was killed and many injured while a large number of Communist workers and sympathizers were detained under the Defence of India Rules. The party also organized the First Oil Refinery movement in Shillong. During the Bangladesh Liberation Struggle, the party units in Khasi and Garo Hills played a key role in assisting the liberation movement. The Bangladesh Mukti Sangram Sahayak Samity was organized on the initiative of the Shillong Committee of the CPI to help the Freedom Fighters in all possible ways. The Samity gave the call for a Shillong Bandh on April 7, 1971.¹³⁶

In 1950, the Hajong tribals of Mymensingh district (erstwhile East Pakistan) inspired by Moni Singh rose in rebellion against feudal oppression. The Hajong Communists formed a parallel administration by liberating a number of villages. On being resisted by the Pakistani army from advancing farther, they took refuge in Baghmara¹³⁷ in the Garo Hills border and continued their struggle against Pakistani authorities under the command of Lalit Sarkar and late Padmalochan Sarkar.

Subsequently, they became permanent settlers of the Indian Union.¹³⁸ On the initiative of Lalit Sarkar, a unit of the Communist Party was set up in the Garo Hills in the early sixties. Robin Rema, a preacher turned Communist, is a prominent leader of the party's Garo Hills Unit.¹³⁹ The Garo Hills party unit fought for three assembly seats in 1967 and for two in 1972, but failed to win any seats. The party organized the first ever Kisan demonstration in 1969, a landmark in the Kisan movement in Garo Hills. It has also organized some trade unions in Garo Hills.¹⁴⁰ Late Padmalochan Sarkar, one of the leaders of the Hajong rebellion, settled down in Khasi Hills. He, along with Chandramohan Hajong and Raimohan Hajong¹⁴¹, made a valuable contribution to the formation of the Communist Party in South Khasi Hills.¹⁴²

CPI in Assam and Naga Struggle

The CPI, while advocating cultural and regional autonomy for the Naga people, had strongly opposed any military solution of the Naga problem and had emphasized the need for a negotiated settlement between the Government of India and the Naga National Council.¹⁴³ The CPI had broadly backed the demands submitted by the N.N.C. in the form of an ultimatum in November, 1947.¹⁴⁴ In the Memorandum of November 1947, addressed to the Prime Minister of India,¹⁴⁵ the Assam Provincial Organizing Committee of the CPI maintained that the demand for a sovereign independent Nagaland

put forward by the N.N.C. was, in effect, a demand for greater autonomy and not for secession from the Indian Union. Since the tone of the CPI Memorandum exhibited a great degree of sympathy for the N.N.C. led movement, the CPI was subsequently criticized for encouraging the secessionist movement in the Naga Hills.¹⁴⁶ According to Udayan Misra, the ideological standpoint on the problem of nationalities in India certainly played a role in the party's assessment of the Naga struggle in the fifties.¹⁴⁷

By the mid-fifties, however, the CPI insisted that the Nagas could realize their destiny as a separate nationality only within the Indian Union.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the ambiguity which marked the CPI's 1947 memorandum had, by the mid-fifties, been replaced by a call for regional autonomy for the Nagas within the Indian Union to be worked out through negotiations with "all patriotic Naga leaders".¹⁴⁹

Formation of the Meghalaya State Committee of the CPI

When the Autonomous State of Meghalaya was born on April 2, 1970, it was felt that the formation of a full-fledged State was only a matter of time. The new State eventually came into being on January 21, 1972, at a time when the political scenario in the region was relatively peaceful. As the inauguration of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya took place in 1970, the Meghalaya Co-ordination Committee of the CPI was formed to carry on the activities of the party

in the new administrative and political order.¹⁵⁰ In the next chapter, we propose to examine the issue of the Hill State in order to examine the CPI's stand on regional aspirations for autonomy and statehood, because fortunes of all political parties in Meghalaya seem to be connected closely with their stand on this issue.

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73. A. Guha, *Op.cit.*, p. 254.
74. Dadhi Mahanta, *Jatiya Mukti Sangramar Patabhumit Bharatar Communist Party*, (Gauhati, 1969), published on the occasion of Silver Jubilee Celebration of the CPI in Assam, p. 48.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
76. For details, see Barpujari, *op. cit.*, pp. 149 and 191-193.
77. Prafulla Misra, '*Communist Movement in Assam*', *op.cit.*, p. 30.
78. For a discussion on scarcity of salt and other essential commodities in Assam and the CPI's stand, see Barpujari, *op.cit.*, pp. 165-167, 167-170 and 188-189.

79. Prafulla Misra, 'Communist Movement in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 30, Misra's interview with Bishnu Bora in 1972 at Shillong.
80. See Jyotirmoy Nandy, 'Mor Koifiyat', *Rupali Jayanti Sonwaran*, 1969, p. 18.
81. Amalendu Guha, *op.cit.*, p. 295.
82. P. Misra, 'The Communist Party of India in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 21.
83. Jyotirmoy Nandy, "Asamat Party Pratisthar Joranir Dinborar Smriticharan", *Janamat*, December 22, 1975, p. 12.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
85. Prafulla Misra, 'The Communist Party of India in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 22.
86. For detail, see Guha, *op.cit.*, pp. 309-315.
87. *Assam Fight for Freedom and Democracy: Draft Resolutions of Assam Communists* (Assam Provincial Organizing Committee, CPI, Gauhati, n.d.)
88. *CPI Memorandum of 15 April quoted in IAR* (January-June 1946), Vol. I, pp. 220-21.
89. J. V. Stalin, as cited by R. Palme Dutt, *India Today* (2nd Indian edn, Calcutta, 1970), p. 473.
90. *APAI*, 1944-45, No. 708, *Khasi and Jaintia Hills*, 31 March, 1945.
91. For further details, see D. C. Gupta, *Indian National Movement*, (New Delhi, 1970), pp. 255-257 and 260.
92. Overstreet and Windmiller, *op.cit.*, pp. 435-436.
93. For details, see P. Misra, 'The Communist Party of India in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 23.

94. *People's Age*, IV (January 6, 1946), p. 12.
95. P. Misra, 'The Communist Party of India in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 23.
96. See Misra, "Communist Movement in Assam", *op. cit.*, p. 32.
97. For details, see M.R. Masani, *op.cit.*, pp. 70 and 73.
98. *Loc.cit.*
99. Phani Bora, "Asamat Communist Partyr Pachish Bachar" in CPI, Assam State Council, *Silver Jubilee Souvenir* (in Assamese, May 1969, Gauhati), p. 25.
100. Dadhi Mahanta, *Jatiya Mukti Sangramar etc.*, *op.cit.*, p. 53.
101. See *The Communist* (Quoted in a statement of the Editorial Board of this monthly journal of the CPI February-March, 1950.
102. *Ibid.*
103. See, M. R. Masani, *op.cit.*, p. 85.
104. See Jyotirmoy Nandy, "*Mor Koifyat*", *op.cit.*, pp. 19-20. Also see Phani Bora, "*Asamat Communist Partyr etc.*", *op.cit.*, p. 25.
105. M. R. Masani, *op.cit.*, p. 110.
106. Dadhi Mahanta, *Jatiya Mukti Sangramar Patabhumit etc.*, *op.cit.*, p. 57.
107. *Loc.cit.*
108. *Loc.cit.*
109. It is interesting to note that he won the Nowgong seat by defeating the prominent Congress leader and former Minister for Education in Assam, Devkanta Baruah.

110. Dadhi Mahanta, *op.cit.*, p. 58.
111. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.
112. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
113. P. Misra, 'Communist Movement in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 38.
114. M. R. Masani, *Op.cit.*, Appendix by V. B. Karnik, p. 252.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 258. Also see Mohan Ram, *Indian Communism: Split Within A Split*, (New Delhi, 1969), Chapter V.
116. Dadhi Mahanta, *op.cit.*, p. 62.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
118. *Loc.cit.*
119. Phani Bora, 'Asamat Communist Partyr Pachish Bachar', *op.cit.*, p. 25.
120. A. Guha, *op.cit.*, p. 321.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
122. See Prafulla Misra, 'Communist Movement in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 37. Also see Amalendu Guha, *op.cit.*, p. 324. Information obtained by Guha from the relevant bookshops.
123. *Loc.cit.*
124. Interview with Prafulla Misra, dated 2nd March 1988. His discussions with Kiriti Chaudhuri, late Hiru Bhattacharya and late Sushil Bhadra who were connected with the said Union.
125. *Ibid.*, Misra's discussion with Sushil Bhadra who played an important role in organizing the strike.
126. Misra, 'Communist Movement in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 36.

127. Subhas Chandra Bose, though not a Communist, certainly had radical views on socio-political issues. He founded 'Forward Bloc', a party with leftist leanings.
128. Misra, *op.cit.*, p. 36.
129. Interview with Prafulla Misra, dated 2nd March, 1988. Misra, who was in Shillong at that time, met Humayun Kabir when he came to Shillong.
130. P. Misra, '*Communist Movement in Assam*', *op.cit.*, p. 37.
131. *Loc.cit.*
132. A. Guha, *op.cit.*, p. 323.
133. S. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, (Calcutta, 1973), pp. 73 and 141. Also P. Misra, '*Communist Movement in Assam*', *op.cit.*, p. 37.
134. '*Programme of the Communist Party of India*', *op.cit.*, pp. 58-59. While discussing the party's policies regarding the tribal problem, the CPI programme stated that the national democratic government will give regional autonomy to the tribal areas inhabited by the tribal peoples.
135. P. Misra, '*Communist Movement in Assam*', *op.cit.*, p. 37.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
137. *Janamat*, 29 November, 1965, p. 4. For discussion on Hajong rebellion, see Pramatha Gupta, *Tribal People in Liberation Struggle* (Calcutta, 1983), pp. 69-98.
138. P. Misra, '*Communist Movement in Assam*', *op.cit.*, pp. 37-38.
139. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

140. *Loc.cit.*
141. Interview with Prafulla Misra dated the 30th May, 1987.
142. Misra, *op.cit.*, p. 38.
143. Udayan Misra, 'The CPI and the Naga Struggle: Initial Years', in *North East Quarterly*, April-June, 1987, p. 34.
144. Ultimatum submitted by the Naga National Council to the Government of India, November 4, 1947.
145. Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the Assam Provincial Committee of the CPI, November 24, 1947.
146. P. Misra, 'Communist Movement in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 37.
147. Udayan Misra, *op.cit.*, p. 39. For a discussion on the CPI's Resolution regarding the nationality issue, see Mohan Ram, *Indian Communism*, (New Delhi, 1969), pp. 14-16 and 60-65.
148. See Phani Bora, *Nagas: The Real Story*, New Delhi, 1956.
149. "End this Miniature War in Naga Hills", *New Age*, July 1, 1956.
150. P. Misra, 'Communist Movement in Assam', *op.cit.*, p. 38.



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