CHAPTER III: RELATION BETWEEN THE RULING AND THE OPPOSITION PARTIES (1972 – 85)

1. Introduction:

In a parliamentary democracy, the Ruling and the Opposition parties constitute two basic blocs inside the legislature. The Ruling party is the group in majority and the Opposition is the group in minority inside the House. Though both the Ruling and the Opposition generally function as two contending blocs, there is a tacit agreement that the party or the group in majority is to govern and the party or the group in minority is to point out the flaws of the ruling party while running the government. The Ruling or the party in majority allows the Opposition or the minority group a reasonable amount of freedom of speech, association and movement. Similarly, the Opposition also allows the Ruling party to implement its programs. This is the natural and constitutional relation between the two sides in parliamentary democracies. Both also generally work together in the arrangement of the House. The
Opposition often does not function for the sake of opposing the Ruling party alone. It supports policies and programs of the government which they consider to be in the interest of the public, and there need not necessarily be an ever widening gape between the Ruling and the Opposition. Opposition's criticism is expected to serve the purpose of maintaining a close relation between government policy and public opinion.

Parliamentary democracy also functions according to certain postulates. One of the most important of them is that of the responsibility of the government to the legislature and through the legislature to the electorate. Another postulate is that of the peaceful transfer of governmental authority either as a result of a general election or resignation of a ministry. In the enactment of laws, the relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition is that the majority proposes proposals and the Opposition either opposes them and suggests alternative proposals or asks for modifications or extends support in case they do not have anything against it. Wise ministers often consider the merit
of the criticisms coming from the side of the Opposition while trying to get a proposed legislation passed by the legislature. The views of the Opposition are usually not rejected outright by the Ruling party unless they are quite inconsistent with the plans to which the government is committed. The Opposition, on its part, also considers fairly the arguments put forward by the government. Indeed, enactment of laws with cooperation from both sides and not merely on the basis of force of the majority is the ideal thing in the working of parliamentary democracy for such matters. In other words, in a parliamentary democracy, the Opposition generally opposes the government when there is something to oppose; it supports the government when there is nothing to oppose; it proposes alternative proposals different from those of the party in power and expresses the weaknesses of the government.

In actual practice, however, the working of parliamentary democracies is on many occasions far from being conducted on the ideal lines. The Opposition fights the government to achieve its objectives and the
government, on its part, develops an attitude of smugness as it feels sure that its measures would be adopted. The government tends to regard the Opposition as the brake on a car going uphill; whereas the Opposition thinks that the car is going downhill. Besides, the Ruling party is as aware as the Opposition that its authority rests only on the electorate and that to keep its hold on the government it has to depend on the approval of the electorate and not on the approval of the Opposition.

2. Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition:

2.1. Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition during the United Legislature Party (ULP) ministry (23.3.72 – 28.3.73):

The first State Legislative Assembly Elections in Manipur since her becoming a full fledged state were held in March 1972. It was held in three phases. The elections were projected as a contest between the MPP and the Congress. When the final results were announced the party positions were as follows:
1. Congress (R)    -  17
2. MPP            -  15
3. SSP            -   3
4. CPI            -   5
5. Congress (O)   -   1
6. Independents   -  19
   Total          -  60

Evidently no party won the majority to form the ministry. Once the results were out there were hectic campaigns by both the MPP and the Congress to form a ministry with the help of other parties and Independents. However, both failed to muster up the required majority for about fourteen days. In fact, concerned with the situation, the All Manipur Student's Union (AMSU) appealed the Independents who won the maximum number of seats on the elections to intervene in a positive manner with a view to expedite the matter as early as possible.¹

¹ Prajatantra, dated 19 March 1972.
As the campaigns started, the MPP in spite of its winning only 15 seats against 17 of the Congress got an upper hand and succeeded in forming a United Legislature Party (ULP) with the SSP, Congress (O) and some Independents. They were camped at Md. Alimuddin’s place at Lilong. With the Prospects of forming a ministry led by them, the Congress started expressing their voice in favor of President’s Rule on the ground that no party has won majority of the seats during the elections. 2 It also alleged that some MLAs were forcibly confined in the camp. 3 However as the concerned MLAs told the police that they were there of their own free will the police could not do anything.

Ultimately, a ULP government led by Md. Alimuddin of MPP was sworn in on 23 March 1972. The Congress which was the single largest party after the elections, decided to seat in the Opposition after having outsmarted by the MPP. 4

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2 Prajatantra, dated 18 March 1972.
3 Prajatantra, dated 23 March 1972.
The position of the Ruling and Opposition in the House as on 23 March 1972 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruling Parties</th>
<th>Opposition Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. MPP - 15</td>
<td>1. Congress (R) 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SSP - 3</td>
<td>2. CPI - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Congress (O) - 1</td>
<td>3. Independents 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Independents -13</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the first things taken up by the ULP ministry was that of looking into the faults of the actions taken up by the Congress in the closing years of the previous Territorial Assembly when the latter was in power. It cancelled the grant of pattas to 18 persons in the Purana Bazar.\(^5\) Such an act of the government was furiously condemned by the Congress which was the leading party in the Opposition. It said that instead of being vindictive, the ULP ministry should give more attention to taking up welfare programs to benefit the people.\(^6\) This meant that the relationship between them started on a bitter note. The Congress also added that both the Chief Minister and the other ministers

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\(^5\) Prajatantra, dated 27 March 1972.

\(^6\) Simanta Patrika, dated 4 April 1972.
were all Congressmen at one time or the other in the past, and that their ministry which they claimed to be a new one was nothing but old wine in a new bottle.\textsuperscript{7} The Congress also raised a significant issue about this time. It sought certain clarifications from the Ruling ULP about latter's partner Naga Integration Council (NIC). It questioned whether the NIC was in the ULP as Independents or as NIC MLAs. It may be noted here that the NIC was not recognized by the Election Commission as a party and were known as Independents. Its MLAs had earlier made statements that they will continue as MLAs of the NIC. The important thing to be noted here is that the NIC was for the separation of Naga inhabited areas from Manipur. In the context, the Congress not only sought a clarification about the stand of the NIC from the ULP but also expressed its fear that accommodating the NIC may have disastrous consequences on the territorial integrity of the state in future.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Editorial, Simanta Patrika, dated 9 May 1972.
The Congress also criticized the ULP ministry by alleging that it was interfering with the judiciary as well. The CPI also condemned the propaganda of the ULP ministry about its being a harbinger of better things to come as nothing but a case of a snake shedding its old skin and acquiring a new one. The ULP on its part criticized the Opposition saying that the latter was trying to dislodge the government by encouraging defections from the Ruling side.

Interestingly enough, side by side with these criticisms coming from one side to the other, both were also fishing for defectors from another. For instance, it was alleged that the ULP was tempting the Congress Legislative Party members to come to their side with promises of reimbursing election expenses and ministerial berths.

By August 1972, a significant development took place affecting the status-quo of the relationship between the two sides drastically. The Tangkhullong, an Ukhurul based organization of the Nagas got divided into two factions. This

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9 Simanta Patrika, dated 23 April 1972.
10 Simanta Patrika, dated 20 April 1972.
also resulted in the division of the NIC into two factions with one led by Yangmaso Shaiza and another led by Rishang Keishing. As a result, the Rishang faction resigned from the Ruling ULP coalition ministry and joined the Opposition. Fortunately for the ULP it also succeeded in inducing defections from the Opposition side and survived the defection of the NIC faction led by Rishang Keishing.

It may also be noted that around this time there were also intra-Ruling and intra-Opposition defections. This made the composition of the both the Ruling and Opposition sides extremely fluid. This along with the defections from the Ruling to the Opposition and vice-versa made it difficult to put different parties and groups categorically into Ruling and Opposition categories for any significant period of time. However, the most extensive defections involving the Ruling and the Opposition sides took place on 15 March 1973 when nine MLAs from the ULP defected to the Opposition. The Opposition, by this time has already formed a Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) of its own since the

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12 Simanta Patrika, dated 16 May 1972.
13 Simanta Patrika, dated 23 August 1972.
coming of the Rishang led NIC faction to its side. The new
entrants this time were the following:¹⁴

1. I. Tompok Singh
2. O. Tomba Singh
3. L. Sarat Singh
4. T. Bira Singh
5. L. Amujou Songh
6. Atombra Ngairangbamcha
7. Ngurdinglien
8. Holkhomang Haokip
9. Thangkhanlal

With these defections, the ULP clearly lost its majority
support in the House and the PDF moved a motion of no-
confidence in the House on 22 March 1973. This ultimately
forced the resignation of the ULP ministry on 26 March
1973.¹⁵

Before one proceeds further, what Md. Alimuddin
wrote in the opening paragraph to his letter of resignation to
the Governor may be noted here. He wrote, “The Council of

Ministers of Manipur have painfully observed during the last few days the unfortunate political situation which had bedeviled this unhappy land owing to the defections and horse-trading indulged in by some power hungry and self-seeking politicians...". In another part of his report he further said, "Defections in all cases have been found to emanate from a desire of bargain and putting political pressure on the ruling party for advantages which are extremely difficult to entertain." He was of the opinion that, "In the counter-defections the support by some defectors to any Ministry is bound to be extremely fake and unreal".16

The above remark of the Chief Minister is a very significant indicator of the relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition. It clearly shows that the line dividing the Ruling and Opposition was a very thin one. Most of the MLAs were driven to defection from one side to another by their desire to gain positions of power. This made them cross over to the other side of the fence. In fact, over all, not less than 26 MLAs changed their political allegiance, many

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16 R. P. Singh, op.cit. p.177.
of them more than once, during the period of the ULP ministry. As a result, it was not possible to distinguish the Ruling and the Opposition on the basis of their ideological differences or their respective policies and programs.

2.2. Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition during the United Legislature Party (ULP) ministry (4.3.74–8.7.74):

The Second State Legislative Assembly Elections were held in 1974. It was held in three phases – 19, 23 and 25 February. The party positions immediately after the results were out were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. MPP</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Congress</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CPI</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. SSP</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. KNA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. MHU</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Independents</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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18 Prajatantra, dated 20 February 1974.
For the second time, no party won a majority of the seats. However, there was a significant change in the individual strength of the parties this time as compared to the First State Assembly Elections. The MPP could significantly increase its seats from 15 to 20. The CPI also won 6 seats as compared to the 5 it won in the previous elections. On the other hand, the Congress which won maximum number of seats among parties in the last elections with 17 won only 12 this time. There was also a significant decrease in the number of Independents as they won only 7 seats as compared to 19 during the 1972 elections. Ultimately, a ULP ministry led by the MPP was sworn in on 4 March with Md. Alimuddin as the Chief Minister for the second time.\textsuperscript{19} The composition of the Ruling and Opposition sides then was as follows:

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{llll}
\textbf{Ruling parties} & \textbf{Opposition parties} \\
1. MPP & 1. Congress & - & 12 \\
2. MHU (Kiulengpao) & 2. CPI & - & 6 \\
3. SSP & 3. MHU (Shaiza faction) & - & 5 \\
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{19} Manipur Gazette Extraordinary No. 10, dated 4 March 1974.
4. Independents  7*  4. Independents  2

* Including two KNA MLAs who were considered as Independents.

One interesting thing about the composition of the Ruling and the Opposition at this time was that of the Manipur Hill Union (MHU). It was a newly established hill based party which succeeded in winning 11 out of the 20 ACs in the hills. This was a huge success. However, as the endeavors to form a ministry started, the party got divided into two. One was led by Kiulengpao known as MHU (K) and the other was led by Yangmaso Shaiza known as MHU (Shaiza). This was a clear indicative of the lack of cohesiveness within a party and how it failed to sustain itself in the face of the pulls and pushes that accompanied the frenzied manipulations by different groups to form a coalition ministry.

Within a very short period of time, defections once again started. The first one to start this was Md. Habibur

20 Gokul Singh: Defection in Manipur, op. cit., p. 53.
Rahman of the Congress.\textsuperscript{21} He was also the General Secretary of the Congress in Manipur. He was followed by more defections from the side of the Opposition like that of S. Ibomcha, Independent, and Jangamlung, MHU (Shaiza).\textsuperscript{22} This meant the failure of the Opposition to maintain solidarity even though they have formed a Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) with a view to rally together.

Soon, these defections from the side of the Opposition were followed by defections from the side of the Ruling to the Opposition. For instance, four MLAs from the Ruling ULP defected to the Opposition side by joining the Congress. They were T.P. Kiulengpao of the MHU who himself was leading the MHU faction in the Ruling side; Ngulkhohao of the KNA; K. Borthakur Sharma of SSP and H.T. Thungam of the KNA.\textsuperscript{23} These developments further consolidated the trend of looking for defection by one side from the other. It also hints to the obvious encouragement which one side gave to prospective defectors on the other side. What was more significant was the fact that while crossing the fence

\textsuperscript{21} Khollao, 1.4.74.
\textsuperscript{22} Gokul Singh: Defection in Manipur, op. cit., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 54.
the legislators were motivated by concerns for personal benefits like ministerial berths and other positions of power, and not by differences with their respective groups regarding ideology, policies and programs, etc.

The next important development in the relationship between the two was that of the reports of the Speaker breaking away from the Ruling group. The Speaker, R.K. Dorendra Singh, along with S. Tombi who was the Finance Minister then, were alleged to be willing to support the PDF though they have not formally left the Ruling side and went over to the Opposition side. Following these events, the ULP ministry led by Md. Alimuddin became a minority government and had to resign on 8 July 1974.

The above mentioned developments once again prove the fact that the Ruling and the Opposition sides were not divided on the basis of differences over ideological commitments or policies or programs. Members of both sides came together or parted ways whenever opportunities for personal benefit came and both sides failed to maintain

\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) Prajatantra, dated 9 July 1978.
their distinctive features both in terms of their composition and things they stood for as their respective compositions changed all too frequently.

2.3. Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition during the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) Ministry (10.7.74-5.12.74):

The ULP ministry of Md. Alimuddin was followed by the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) which was sworn in on 10 July 1974. It was another coalition ministry formed by the Congress, MHU, CPI and Independents. The majority it enjoyed in the House was a marginal one with only 32 members in an assembly of 60 members. It may be noted that the Congress, in spite of being the largest party in the coalition, accepted Yangmaso Shaiza of MHU (Shaiza faction) as the Chief Minister. The Opposition on the other hand comprised the MPP, a faction of the MHU and the SSP. This meant that two factions of MHU were found in the opposite sides of the House.

Once again, before the two sides could evolve themselves as two contending blocks inside the legislature,

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27 Manipur Gazette Extra Ordinary No. 81, dated 10 July 1974.
defections started from one side to another. For instance, within less than two weeks of the formation of the PDF Ministry, as many as 14 MLAs from the Opposition ULP defected to the Ruling side.\textsuperscript{28} This was followed by Md. Alimuddin of the MPP defecting to the Congress. It may be remembered here that Md. Alimuddin had serious differences with Shaiza earlier when the former was the Chief Minister. But now they are on the same side within no time at all. Yet, while the Ruling was swamped by defectors from the Opposition, the Congress which was the largest coalition partner was having serious trouble maintaining solidarity among its legislators. Two factions, one led by R. K. Dorendro Singh and another led by M. Koireng Singh emerged inside the party. The two factions got so irreconcilable that the former faction left the ministry to join the Opposition side. This faction was also in serious conflict with the Chief Minister who belonged to the MHU.

Soon the Opposition came to have a total strength of 34 and it demanded the resignation of the Shaiza ministry,

\textsuperscript{28} Th. Gokul Singh: op. cit., p.57.
and staked its own claim to form the government. This was followed by the resignation of Shaiza ministry on 5 December 1974.\textsuperscript{29} Once again, the relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition was to be defined by the numerous flows of defections from one side to the other. Both sides could not sustain their distinctive existence due to the numerous floor crossings involving legislators belonging to both the sides.

\textbf{2.4 Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition during the Democratic Legislature Party (DLP) Ministry (6.12.74 – 23.7.75):}

History repeated itself once again during the DLP Ministry led by R. K. Dorendro Singh of the Congress. The ministry was sworn in on 6 December 1974 following the resignation of PDF Ministry led by Yangmaso Shaiza of MHU.\textsuperscript{30}

The DLP Ministry was a coalition comprising the Congress, SSP, a faction of the MHU and Independents. The Opposition on the other hand consisted of the Congress

\textsuperscript{29} Manipur Gazette Extra Ordinary No. 175, dated 6 December 1974.
\textsuperscript{30} Manipur Gazette Extra Ordinary No. 177, dated 7 December 1974.
(Koireng faction), MHU (Shaiza faction) and CPI, and had 26 members altogether.

It is significant to note here that both the Congress and the MHU are to be found on both sides of the House. This further indicates the fragmented nature of political parties both national and local in Manipur. Earlier also, there were the two factions of the Naga Integration Council (NIC) sitting on the opposite sides of the House. All these have further contributed to the failure of the Ruling and the Opposition sides to evolve their own distinctive identities. It almost meant that the relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition was like a relationship of different factions of same parties. Lacking ideological commitment, the legislators indulged in defections from one side to other time and again. It may also be noted that while one of the primary concerns of the Ruling was to consolidate and strengthen its own position of power, the Opposition side remained pre-occupied with either opportunities to cross over to the Ruling side or dislodge the government and form an alternative ministry of its own. These facts were evident
from the defections that followed from the Ruling to the
Opposition and vice-versa. Added to these were the efforts of
the Congress to form a ministry of its own by absorbing
MLAs from among the coalition partners as well as the
Opposition. All these were the factors which decided the
course of relationship between the Ruling and the
Opposition most of the time. For instance, on 20 July 1975,
the following MLAs defected to the Congress. They were:

1. Kh. Pishak Singh  -  MPP
2. H. Shyama Singh  -  MPP
3. T. Sanajao Singh  -  MPP
4. Md. Chaoba  -  MPP
5. H. T. Thungam  -  MHU
6. T. Gougin  -  MHU
7. Saheni Adani  -  MHU

Driven by their desire to cross over to the Ruling side
at the earliest possible opportunity, the factions of both the
Congress and the MHU which were in Opposition again
defected and joined the other Congress faction which was in

31 Th. Goku Singh: op. cit., p.60.
the Ruling side. Soon the strength of the Congress in the House rose to 34. This meant that now the party can stake its claim to form a ministry on its own. Thus, with a view to form a Congress ministry, R. K. Dorendro Singh resigned his DLP government on 23 July 1975.\(^\text{32}\)

2.5 Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition during the Democratic Legislature Party (DLP) Ministry (23.7.75 - 13.5.77):

The aspiration of the Congress to form a ministry of its own got thwarted when the Governor advised R. K. Dorendro Singh to co-opt the CPI legislators as its partners. The Governor suggested this in view of the unpredictability of the MLAs who had defected time and again from one side to the other.\(^\text{33}\) The Governor was fully aware of the fact that CPI was the only party so far which MLAs have never joined the deplorable game of defections. He felt that with the inclusion of six MLAs of the CPI, the new ministry which will come into existence will have a better chance to last longer.\(^\text{34}\) Accordingly, the DLP Ministry comprising the

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\(^{32}\) ibid. p.60.  
\(^{33}\) Prajatantra, dated 24 July 1975.  
\(^{34}\) ibid.
Congress and the CPI was sworn on 23 July 1975 with R. K. Dorendro Singh of the Congress as the Chief Minister. It had a total strength of 40 MLAs, 34 Congress and 6 CPI, at the time of swearing.

For the first time since 1972, for the next two months or so since the formation of a new ministry, there were no cases of defections. Perhaps the intervention of the Governor discouraged the legislators from indulging in defections. The Congress was also somewhat secured with its own position in that it already had 34 MLAs in the House. However, it was not to last. Old habits hardly die. The Congress once again resumed its designs to absorb MLAs from other parties in the Opposition. There was also no dearth of MLAs on the Opposition side who were all too ready to join the Ruling side. As a result, five MLAs from the MPP and three MLAs from the MHU defected to the Ruling side.35 One of them, N. Gouzagin, became a cabinet minister while two others, Kh. Thekho and M. Gouramani Singh, became Ministers of State. The fact that the

35 Prajatantra, dated 18 September 1975.
relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition got more or less reduced to only defections from one side to another is clearly evident from the fact that the following 16 MLAs from the side of the Opposition defected to the Ruling (Congress) side during the period from 17.9.75 to 2.7.76.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the MLA</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Date of defection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Dr. L. Chandramani</td>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>M. Gouramani Singh</td>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>K. Mangi Singh</td>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>W. Komol Singh</td>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Md. Abdul Wahid</td>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>N. Gouzagin</td>
<td>MHU</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Kh. Thekho</td>
<td>MHU</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>K. S. Benjamin</td>
<td>MHU</td>
<td>17.9.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>L. Rongman</td>
<td>MHU</td>
<td>16.1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Md. Abdul Latif</td>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>28.1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Th. Chaoba Singh</td>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>26.3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>N. Paoheu</td>
<td>MHU</td>
<td>2.7.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Haokholal Thangjom</td>
<td>MHU</td>
<td>2.7.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Jangamlung</td>
<td>MHU</td>
<td>2.7.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Zampu Kipgen Independent 2.7.76
16. Ngulkhohao Independent 2.7.76

One more significant thing happened in the February 1976. It was the fact that, for the first time two MLAs of the CPI defected to the Congress on 17 February 1976. They were M. Meghachandra Singh and M. Hera Singh. All these together meant that the Congress by beginning of July 1976 came to have 52 MLAs.

It must be noted here that the defection of the two CPI MLAs had led to the withdrawal of the CPI from the DLP ministry and the party shifted to the Opposition side. And by 17 February, the position of the Ruling and the Opposition got changes to the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruling Party</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Congress</td>
<td>1. MPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. 04</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. CPI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1. 04</td>
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<td>3. IND</td>
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<td>1. 01</td>
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</tbody>
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The next few months sow the utter ineffectiveness of the Opposition to assert itself in any significant manner.

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36 Gokul Singh: Defection in Manipur, op. cit., p. 65.
This was obviously because of the lopsided ratio between the Ruling and the Opposition which stood at 52:8. The Congress, on the other hand, in spite of the numerical advantage it had, was also not to last long. This was due to the defeat of the Congress at the Centre and coming of the Janata Party into power after the Sixth Lok Sabha Elections held in March 1977. The Congress which had won only 12 seats in the 1974 Mid-term Assembly Elections, and came to had as many as 52 members by the middle of July 1976, became a victim of defections itself. It started with its newly elected MP Yangmaso Shaiza defecting to the Janata Party, and by the first week of May 1977 majority of its MLAs had defected to the same. As a result, by 6 May 1977, the number of Congress MLAs got reduced to 22 whereas the number of Janata Party MLAs rose to 33 in the House. This ultimately led to the resignation of R.K. Dorendro led DLP ministry on 13 May 1977.
2.6 Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition parties during the Janata Party ministry (29.6.1977 – 14.11.79):

After the resignation of Democratic Legislature Party (DLP) government, the Janata Party staked its claim to form a government. However, Manipur was put under the President’s Rule. It was lifted on 29 June 1977. During this period of about two and half months, all the Congress MLAs got defected to the Janata Party with the result that when the Janata ministry was sworn in on 29 June 1977, it had 55 MLAs leaving only 4 CPI MLAs in the Opposition with one seat remaining vacant. This also meant that for the first time there was no Congress MLA in the state legislature.

One significant thing about the two opposite blocs may be noted here. The Ruling became sort of an oversized group whereas the Opposition was too small compared to the ruling. Yet, the Opposition about this time was able to assert itself firmly and in a united manner. They stood in the House without anybody’s influence and expressed their opinions against the government’s policies and actions without any hesitation or fear. On the other hand, cracks
started within the ruling Janata Party by June 1978. This is not surprising at all considering the fact that the Janata Party in the state was a group of defectors who have changed their political affiliations time and again. It was an extremely heterogeneous group with MLAs who had defected from both national and local parties. These groups were also not properly integrated into one homogenous group when they became members of the Janata Party with the result that it remained faction ridden. There were also too many aspirants for the post of the Chief Minister within it. As a result, on 10 June 1978 as many as 8 Janata Party members headed by R.K. Dorendro Singh defected to the Opposition side as Congress MLAs.\(^{37}\) It was again followed by two more defections including Rishang Keishing on 21 June 1978 from the Ruling side to the Opposition. These two also joined the Congress (I). This meant that by 21 June, the number of the Janata MLAs got reduced to 45 whereas the number of the Opposition got increased to 14. Once they returned back to the Opposition as Congress

\(^{37}\) Prajatantra, dated 16 June 1978.
MLAs, the defectors lost no time in criticizing the Janata ministry as undemocratic and authoritarian and not promoting for the welfare of the people.\textsuperscript{38}

Consequently, there emerged a chaotic situation both in the Ruling and the Opposition. Many of the ruling MLAs defected to Congress (Opposition) side one after another and they demanded for the resignation of the Shaiza ministry on the ground that the term of the Third Legislative Assembly had already expired. Four CPI MLAs, namely Ph. Parijat Singh, Ksh. Irabot Singh, Th. Achouba Singh and Th. Jugeshower Singh resigned from their respective seats on 4 April 1979.\textsuperscript{39} It was followed by another two MLAs - Rishang Keishing and N. Gouzagin, both from Congress, resigning from the Assembly.\textsuperscript{40} Ultimately, the Janata Party government headed by Yangmasho Shaiza became minority by the first week of November 1979. As a result Shaiza went out of office on 13 November 1979 and the Assembly was

\textsuperscript{38} Resistance, vol. IV, No.1, 1978, p.11.

\textsuperscript{39} Vide Notification No. 1/2/79-LA (Part), (Assembly Secretariat, Manipur), dated 4 April 1979.

\textsuperscript{40} Vide Notification No. 1/2, (II) 79-LA (Part), dated 13 October 1979.
dissolved with the imposition of President’s Rule on 14 November 1979.\(^1\)

2.7 Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition during the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) ministry (14.1.1980 – 26.11.80):

The Third State Legislative Assembly Elections was held along with the Seventh Lok Sabha Elections in the early part of January, 1980. Out of the total of 60 Assembly seats only 59 were contested by the various national and regional political parties as elections in Keishambong Assembly was postponed due to the killing of the CPI candidate there. The elections were held into two phases on 6 and 9 January 1980 respectively.\(^2\) Details of parties which contested the elections and their respective performances are being given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats secured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Congress (I)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Congress (U)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Janata Party</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Vide Extra Gazette of India No./GSR/624 (E), dated 14 November 1979.

4. CPI 23 05
5. CPI (M) 02 01
6. MPP 40 03
7. KNA 07 02
8. Independents 159 19
Total 380 59

Once again, the failure of the parties to win a majority of the seats on their own individual capacity paved the way for a coalition ministry. Consequently, leaders of the Congress (I), Congress (U), MPP, KNA and with some Independents made a Coordinating Committee and a meeting was held on 13 January 1980 in order to form a government at the earliest. As a result, on the next day under the banner of the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF), a Congress (I) led government headed by R.K. Dorendro Singh was formed having the support of 43 members in the House. The composition of both the Ruling and the Opposition at the time of swearing in of the ministry was as follows:

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### Ruling Parties

1. Congress (I) - 13
2. Congress (U) - 06
3. MPP - 03
4. KNA - 02
5. Independents - 19
   **Total** - 43

### Opposition Parties

1. Janata - 10
2. CPI - 05
3. CPI (M) - 01
   **Total** - 16

Once again, within no time at all the relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition got manifested itself in the form of two way defections. It started as early as 17 January, i.e. only after three days of the installation of the new ministry. On this day, 18 out of the 19 Independent MLAs and the two MLAs of the KNA in the Ruling side defected to the Congress. The same day also witnessed the defection of four out of the ten MLAs of the Janata Party to the Congress again. As a result, within three days of the formation of the ministry, the Congress which led the Coalition with 13 MLAs of its own came to have 37 MLAs.

In the mean time, the Keishamthong AC by-elections were held. The result of this was to set into motion another series of defections between the Ruling and the Opposition.
It so happened that the MPP which was in the Ruling with three MLAs became faction ridden within its organization. As a result, when the MPP won the Keishamthong AC elections, the newly elected MPP MLA L. Manaobi opted to stay in the Opposition instead joining his party men in the Ruling side. It was not only the MPP which became faction ridden about this time. The Congress (I) and the Congress (U) also got faction ridden. As a result, on 23 November 1980 as many as 10 Congress (I) and one Congress (U) MLAs from the Ruling side crossed over to the Opposition side.\(^{44}\) They, along with four Janata MLAs in Opposition formed one Manipur Nationalist Democratic Party (MNDP) on 23 November 1980. This was followed by the MNDP's merger into the MPP in Opposition which had till then only one MLA in this side.\(^{45}\) This meant that the number of the MPP MLAs in the Opposition suddenly increased from one to 16. As a result of these developments, the R.K. Dorendro ministry became a minority government and the Opposition demanded the immediate resignation of the PDF Ministry.

\(^{44}\) Poknapham, dated 24 November 1980.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
This led to the resignation of R.K. Dorendro on 26 November 1980.46

2.8 Relation between the Ruling and the Opposition during the PDF ministry (27.11.1980 – 28.2.81):

During the last part of the Dorendro ministry, the major coalition partner in the PDF, i.e., the Congress (I) faced a major leadership crisis inside the party. Three persons - Rishang Keishing, Ngurdinglien and Y. Yaima had come out in the forefront of the race for Chief Ministership. One of the Chief Minister aspirants Y. Yaima Singh even sent a telegram to Mrs. Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, staking his claim to lead a ministry with the claim that he was supported by enough MLAs.47 But the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (I) (MPCCI) concluded that any person or leader as decided by the AICC President (Mrs. Gandhi) would be the final.48

Ultimately, Rishang Keishing was selected as the leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) after the All India Congress Committee (AICC) observer Satya Narayan

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46 Huiyen Lanoo, dated 27 November 1980.
came to Imphal to settle the leadership crisis within the Congress. Consequently, a PDF ministry comprising the Congress (I), Congress (U) and MPP under the leadership of Rishang Keishing was sworn in on 27 November 1980.\textsuperscript{49} It comprised the Congress (I), the MPP (Kumar faction) and the Congress (U) with 28, three and six MLAs respectively. The Opposition, on the other hand, comprised the MPP (Manaobi faction), CPI, CPI (M) and Janata. Together they had 23 MLAs with the MPP having 14 leading the Opposition.

Soon, with a view to strengthen his own party, Rishang started fishing for MLAs from the Ruling as well as the Opposition who will be ready to join Congress. As a result, within four days two MLAs from the MPP faction in the Opposition side defected to the Congress on 1 December 1980.\textsuperscript{50} The remaining group of 21 MLAs in the house comprising four parties and Independents was also an utterly divided group with Kh. Chaoba being the leader of the Opposition only in name. Most of the members have already defected from one party to another at one time or

\textsuperscript{49} Pratatantra, dated 28 November 1980.
\textsuperscript{50} Pratatantra, dated 2 December 1980.
the other. This meant that the Opposition, as usual remained unable to evolve itself into a well united and coordinated group. This also made them all the more vulnerable to the divisive designs of the Congress. Indeed, two more MLAs from the MPP faction in the Opposition joined the Congress. In the meanwhile, two MLAs from the MPP faction in the Ruling side\textsuperscript{51} as well as five MLAs of the Congress (U) which was also in the Ruling side defected to the Congress (I)\textsuperscript{52}. Thus by 14 January, altogether 11 MLAS from both the Ruling and the Opposition defected to the Congress (I). The position of the House as on 14 January 1981 was as follows:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (M)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress (U)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janata</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>1 (Tamenglong AC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{51} Prajatantra, dated 8 January 1981.
\textsuperscript{52} Prajatantra, dated 15 January 1981.
The intra-party conflicts which often led to splits, the changing composition of parties in the House and also ever changing number of the MLAs in a party meant that defections and more defections remained a permanent feature of the party system in Manipur and the relationship between the Ruling and the Opposition was basically characterized by defections from the Opposition to the Ruling and vice-versa. This also meant that the two sides failed to establish themselves as two contending blocs within the House and discharge their respective functions as crucial institutions of parliamentary democracy. In fact, the Congress which could increase the number of its MLAs 13 to 39 at one time soon found itself a victim of defections and became a minority government by the end of February. This led to the resignation of the Rishang Keishing led PDF ministry on 29 February 1981 without daring to face a no-confidence motion moved by the Opposition.
3. Concluding remarks:

The Ruling and the Opposition in Manipur during the period from 1972 to 1985 had failed to consolidate themselves as two contending blocks for any significant length of time. The line that divided the Ruling and the Opposition was often a very thin one and at times it got so blurred so as to make it meaningless to make any distinction between the two. This was mainly on account of the continuous, non-stop two way flow of defections from one side to the other.

Intra-party and inter-party conflicts on both sides also often drove the factions in one side into joining hands with groups on the other side. It was true for the NIC, MHU, Congress, Congress (U), MPP, etc.

The Ruling and the Opposition was not at all identifiable in terms of ideological differences or the policies and programs the two contending blocs set forth to pursue. The Opposition hardly bothered to evolve its own specific policies and programs as different from the Ruling side. The same will be true for the Ruling side as well. It was basically
a matter of one group losing majority and another gaining it, not on the basis of the merit of their policies and programs but on the basis of one group or party's success in outsmartering the other group or the party. In other words, it was not so much ideological considerations or differences over policy matters that separated the Ruling from the Opposition or vice-versa. The legislators came together, or parted ways in conflict, solely driven by their all consuming passion to gain a position of power or personal benefit.

The election of large numbers of Independent candidates in the state legislative assembly after every elections also further worsened the fluid nature of relationship between the Ruling and Opposition. In 1972, 1974, 1980 and 1984 Independents got 19, 7, 19 and 21 seats respectively in the state legislative assembly. These Independents, in the absence of any stringent laws against defections then, were ready all the more to defect from one side to another. They were also constantly pursued by both the Ruling and the Opposition sides in their bid to strengthen their positions in the legislature.
There were constant efforts from the side of the Ruling to encourage defections from the Opposition side with a view to consolidate their majority in the legislature. Time and again, the leading parties in a coalition ministry would go on fishing for defectors in their bid to form a ministry of their own. The Opposition also never lagged behind so far as their scheming with a view to overthrow the existing government and form an alternative government is concerned. These realities contributed to the fact that the ministries starting with a marginal majority or starting with a marginal majority but gaining a huge one afterwards or starting with a huge ministry always failed to last for any significant period of time.

The failure of the Ruling and the Opposition to evolve a clear and meaningful relationship had serious consequences inside the state. The first casualty of this was that of the stability of government. None of the governments lasted a full term during this period though the Janata party government which came to power in the state in 1977 continued till the holding of the next general elections in
1980. At an average the governments lasted less then one year. This also obviously affected the pace of development inside the state.

The composition of both the Ruling and the Opposition also always remained in a very fluid state. It was not at all stable. As the phenomena of defections and more defections continued unabated, there was no such credible bloc as the Ruling bloc or the Opposition bloc. This also did not help in the meaningful evolution of parliamentary traditions inside the state and significantly reduced the peoples’ faith in parliamentary practices.