During the agitational period, several rounds of talks were held between the government of India and the movement leaders. A separate details about rounds of talks gives an idea of various demands placed and the stand taken up by each negotiating party.

Sometimes failure of the talks often led people to agitate against the government. In the process, demands on AASU's agenda increased considerably. Negotiations carried out reveal that the rate of bargain was high and the positions taken up by each party confused the original list of demands. Even when not under estimating the inexperience, they (AASU and AAGSP leaders) skillfully carried out the negotiations quite confidently. "In any conflict situation, negotiations which are carried out for arriving at a solution, both the parties decide their minimum optimum line and each round of talks come down to a bargain. Both the parties took for their respective gain. In due course, it becomes a perfect game theory." Thus, the negotiations, were no less than a bargain.

DETAILS OF THE ROUND OF TALKS BETWEEN THE AASU, AAGSP AND THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA:

The official level negotiations between the AASU
and the Central government began in 1980. Before Mrs. Gandhi's government which took office in January 1980, there were unofficial discussions with the leaders of the movement. Mr. K.M.L Chhabra, officer on special duty, who was dealing with election matters, in the Union Home Ministry held discussions on 23 September, 1979 with PLF, AJD, ASS, CPI and other political parties.

AASU and AAGSP had meeting with C.M. of Assam on 18 November, 1979, to solve the aliens issue. Mr. Y.B. Chavan, the then H.M. and several representatives had visited Assam for, the study of the issue.

The 8 - member AASU delegation led by the president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta met the PM and urged her to stop the influx of, foreign nationals from Bangladesh and their names be deleted from the voters' list with their detection and deportation. Identity card should be issued to Indian citizens and the government of Assam should be empowered to reject any doubtful citizenship certificates issued, by governments of West Bengal and Tripura.

The PM and the HM put 1971 (25 March) as cut-off year, but the leaders put 1951 NRC. There was an additional necessity of constitutional safeguards to be provided to the people of North-East region for next fifteen to twenty years by making necessary constitutional provisions for the protection of the identity of the indigenous people of the region.
AASU'S INSISTENCE:

The importance of NRC-1951 lies in the fact that it is the first enumeration of the citizens after the constitution of India came into force.

"The National Register of citizens will maintain intercensal continuity, will be useful for electoral and various other administrative purposes and also serve as a suitable frame for socio-economic surveys based on random samples." The NRC is a good record of each person, resident in India at the time of 1951 census and it can be very conveniently considered as a record of all Indian citizens, so any one whose name does not figure in the NRC can be subjected to enquiry within the meaning section 2(a) of the Foreigners' Act 1946, (Amended in 1957). It covered the people coming under Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact of 1950, on the minority question.

"Rights of ownership in or occupancy of immovable property of a migrant shall not be disturbed. If during his absence, such property is occupied by another person, it shall be returned to him, provided that he comes back by 31 December, 1950." The movement leaders had interpreted that persons under Nehru-Liaquat agreement were covered and therefore the
detection done on Nehru-Liaquat agreement did not violate
the agreement. Even the superintendent of Census operation
for Assam, Manipur and Tripura Sri R. B. Vaghaiwalla had
noted in his introduction to volume XII part IA, page XXXIII,
para IX, regarding objective of NRC as follows:-

"Thus, the NRC will maintain continuity will be
useful for electoral and various other administrative
purposes."\(^3\)

It was clear that the AASU leaders did not desire
to bear the foreigners burden of post-1952 period.

In a follow up round, the then Home Minister,
Giani Zail Singh met the students in Gauhati on 23 February,
1980. The crackdown came over cut-off year. "According to
national press, the impression got by the government in
23-24 February 1980 meeting was that, some sections of AASU,
AAGSP and ASS were agreeable to 1961 as base year."\(^9\) The
agreement to 1961 by some sections of AASU and AAGSP was a
little hypothetical on part of the press because the leaders
were not in any mood to bargain at that stage. They strictly
insisted on NRC 1951 as the base year for detection and
deletion. In a letter to the Home Minister of 22 February,
1980, Prafulla Mahanta and Bhrigu Kumar Phukan stated that
"We firmly believe that basis of any revision must again be
NRC of 1951. This is the only authentic document of Indian
citizens. We suggest that Electoral roll of 1952 would be
useful in revising the existing unconstitutional Electoral rolls. Voting right must be a privilege of only Indian. Decision to fix any other basis for revision. Of the electoral Rolls would be unconstitutional."\(^{10}\) This verifies the argument. They categorically said that,

"... If 1971 is taken as base year, the problem remains substantially unsolved and a significant number of foreigners would remain undetected forever."\(^{11}\) The talks failed. Invitation from the PM was received by the AASU and it was extended to the AAGSP also. On government's insistence the statewide picketing was suspended. AAGSP sent an eight member delegation. They had talks with PM on 7 March, 1980. The Home Minister's first meeting with the joint team of AASU and AAGSP on 10 February, 1980. The government side was aided by the two ministers of state in Home-Minister. The HM said that there were legal, constitutional and international difficulties standing in the way of accepting the demand of 1951 as the cut off year.\(^{12}\)

The talks broke down on 12 March on the dispute over the cut off year.

The AASU always distrusted the political parties. In even tried to keep a safe distance from them, "Regional parties want to capture power. The AASU is a non political organization. Our one and only aim is the fulfilment of demand for expulsion of foreigners,"\(^{13}\) said Prafulla Kumar Mahanta.
Economic blockade (West Bengal) of March 1980 came up for discussion in Lok Sabha. Mrs. Gandhi criticised RSS as partly responsible for what was happening in Assam and Bengal. Its official rejection came from Prof. Rajinder Singh at Nagpur. But the RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras said that a few persons in their individual capacity might have done it. He believed that the Bengali Hindu refugees' settlement was the responsibility not only of Assam but also the Central Government.

On 25 March, Mr. M. L. Kampani, and Mr. KML Chhabra of Union Home Ministry had an informal meeting with the AASU and AAGSP leaders at Gauhati. There was a request from government's side to call off the agitation. There was a discussion with governor L. P. Singh. The students were offered 1967 as the cut-off year for the detection and deletion of foreigners' names from the voters' list, and 1971 as a year for deportation. The AASU leader Mr. P.K. Mahanta felt that if the proposal had been kept in AASU executive, then, 1961 could be agreeable. Finally on 3 April, Prafulla Mahanta rejected 1967 as the cut-off year.

1967 - REJECTION BY AASU: A MISTAKE.

It was certainly a mistake on part of leadership to reject that offer. In the accord, they had agreed to 1967 as
the cut off year for detection and deletion of foreign names. In 1980, they were not in the mood to come down but they were also not in a position to discuss the change of year for detection and deletion. The calculation of the leaders crossed their limits of decision of political game. Apart from their fight for a genuine cause, negotiations were highly politicised and the other side (government) comprised of party conscious veterans.

According to some of the intellectuals, this was the second occasion where the leadership could not penetrate into the repercussion. First was the oil blockade and the second was this rejection. Oil blockade by the agitationists not only inducted violence as the regular feature but made the GOI's attitude more stiff towards them. The offer of 1967 by the government proved one thing clear that there was a certain element in the movement leadership which wanted the agitation to go on. If after a great and thorough discussion, the cut-off year 1967 was rejected by the leader P.K. Mahanta then there were definitely different interests playing around. This lack of rationality and consensual approach proved costly to the future of Assam. There was no much mention and hue and cry about leaders' rejection from government's side. This then was the testimony of leaders' mistake.
Their argument was that in 1964-65 there was a heavy influx from Bangladesh therefore 1967 was not acceptable. For that influx, in the accord, there was a provision of disenfranchisement for them and later on they were to be regularised with proper registration. It meant that a chunk of foreigners remained in the State. It came to the same thing. Regarding preservation of cultural identity of Assam, there was already government's recognition. Implied in the rejection of 1967 as cut-off year was the message of confrontation.

On 12 April 1980, PM paid a visit to Assam (Gauhati and Nowgong) and Meghalaya (Shillong). A brief meeting was arranged between the AASU and AAGGP and the PM. It was not successful; the point of disagreement was the cut-off year.

(II)

Another important as well as favourable occurrence was the minorities backlash. Late in March, minorities' organizations led by the AAMSU organized a three day conference in Golpara. PTCA and ALL Assam Tribal protection Committee also expressed their support to it. On 15 May 1980, the HM Giani Zail Singh said in a parliamentary consultative
committee, attached to his ministry that the doors were open for talks. Separately the PM urged the Assam agitators not to press for 1951 or 1961 as the cut-off year but take into account, practical aspects of the situation.\footnote{16}

On 18 June 1980, Prafulla Mahanta and Bhrigu Phukan wrote to the PM for resuming the negotiations. The reply was positive. In her reply Mrs. Gandhi assured the movement leaders about the GOI's open mindedness. Meanwhile, there was a demand from student leaders to lift all the repressive measures from the agitating employees.

On 23 July, Rajkumar Dorendra Singh, Manipur Chief Minister held discussion with the student leaders at Guwahati. He tried his mediation efforts. Government had promised the withdrawal of repressive measures.\footnote{17} The agitation leaders had agreed to withdraw their blockade on forest products of timber, bamboo and plywood, but the oil blockade was to continue.\footnote{18}

Preliminary talks with agitation leaders and the Manipur chief minister R. K. Deondra Singh ended with a note of cogent atmosphere, at Imphal. The AASU, AAGSP leaders had sent their 7 member, delegation to attend the Shillong meeting with Central Government representatives for 19 August meeting. Mr. Yogendra Makwana, Minister of State for Home, was aided by Mr. M. L. Kampani and K. M. L. Chhabra. The
Governor, Mr. L. P. Singh, principal adviser Mr. H.C. Sarin, and adviser K. Rama Murthy also took part. AASU and AAGSP placed following demands.

1. Withdrawal of all repressive measures
2. Withdrawal of all paycut orders
3. Cancellation of transfer orders as penalty to government servants
4. Cancellation of PD Warrants
5. Waiving of collective fine
6. Reinstalment of all government employees including those in the central government
7. Cancellation of all cases under CRPC and IPC
8. Formal communication of government action to AASU and AAGSP.

After the conference, the minister said that the students had not kept up the promise to call off their agitation except in case of oil blockade, He did not want to show any consideration towards the cases of indiscipline in future.

Mediation by the Manipur Chief Minister, was obviously a government attempt to curb the agitational activities. The idea was to find out a midway, at least to provide a ground for the negotiations between the government and the student leaders. In fact this mediation learned both
the sides apart. It was the beginning of inclusion of many other demands with the issue of aliens in the state.

On 13 September, 1980, state government handed over the formal invitation of talks in New Delhi commencing on 17 September, 1980 to AASU and AAGSP. With union HM Giani Zail Singh. Both the sides agreed the possible solution under constitution of India, Foreigners' Act 1946 and citizenship act 1955.

AASU and AAGSP wanted NRC 1951 as the basis.

The Home Minister put forward a formula like constitution, citizenship Act and related laws, international agreements like Nehru Liaquat Ali part, and Indira-Mujib agreement, national obligations, international commitments, and human considerations, for determining the citizenship.

AASU and AAGSP pressed NRC 1951 and electoral roll of 1952 were their basic documents. Central Government was against NRC 1951 as basis. The Home Minister suggested that, 1951, 1961-1971, Census along with electoral rolls between 1952 and '72 as the basis for detection.

The AASU and AAGSP submitted two separate but identical drafts giving their views about 11 month old agitation.

Detection on Foreigners Act, citizenship act, NRC 1951 and voters' list 1952 and constitution of India.
2. Foreigners from Bangladesh, who were once deported and have re-entered should be deported. If deportation of detected foreigners was not possible then they should be distributed all over the country and it should not be Assam’s burden alone. Detection and deportation should be responsibility of the Central Government.

3. Registration of births and deaths and border between Assam and Bangladesh should be properly sealed. There was a general agreement for not deporting 1951-60 entrants, post '71 entrants were to be deported and the fate of 1961-71 entrants was to be decided.

Talks were adjourned till 11 October, 1980. Assam talks began on 11 October with 21 member AASU delegation, with home Minister Zail Singh. The Home Minister met separately the representatives of PICA and AAMSU. The second round on 13 October was brief. The Home Minister was aided by Mr. Venkat Subbaiah, minister of state. The controversy came over 1961-71 entrants. The third meeting took place on 14 October. Government of India wanted 1961-71 entrants to be granted the citizenship while the agitation leaders wanted them to dispensed in other states. Government of India wanted the citizenship to be given to those entitled or deserving while the leaders wanted the issue of identification of foreigners to be separated from that of who would be permitted to stay in India.
On 15 October, the controversy came over 1961-71 entrants. The talks were adjourned without any conclusion, and without fixing a future date of discussion.

At the end of October 1980 talks, one thing was clear that, the differences could not be narrowed down, there was only one way of compromise or mutual understanding. A victory or defeat was same for either side. The future discussions centered around the 1961-71 entrants.

On 5 January 1981, the agitators agreed for a tripartite talks. On 11 October 1980, A. B. Vajpayee, BJP leader, announced at Jaipur a 7 point plan for solving Assam problem. 26

1. Detection of foreigners should be done on the basis of relevant provisions of the constitution and existing laws making use of the 1951 NRC and other relevant documents. Appeal from the decision shall be with judicial tribunals.

2. Cases of all entrants upto 1961 should be regularised.

3. 1961-71 foreigners should be removed from electoral rolls. Their burden should be shared by Assam as well as other states.

4. Elections to the Lok Sabha and the assembly should be on the basis of revised electoral rolls.
5. Foreign nationals who came after 1971 should be deported. Cases of bonafide refugees should be considered on the basis of policy pronouncement so far.

6. Infiltration should be completely stopped.

7. All repressive measures and press censorship be withdrawn. All persons detained in connection with the movement should be released. All pending orders should be cancelled.

(III)

The governor Mr. L. P. Singh met the agitation leaders on 31 January 1981. Governor was convinced that AASU - AAGSP was ready for talks without pre-conditions.

On 6 May 1981, a formal invitation was extended to AASU - AAGSP for talks on 16 May 1981, with HM. 20 Member delegation of AASU and AAGSP, and four others led by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta went to Delhi. The first meeting between the Home Minister and the agitation leaders took place on 16 May 1981. The Home Ministry was aided by the two ministers of the state, JNHH Burney, Home Secretary, M.L. Kampani, additional Secretary and Ramesh Chandra, Chief Secretary of Assam. The first round was of preliminary nature only. On the next day, Prafulla Mahanta and B.K.Phukan
had shown willingness about 1961 as cut-off year only if the subsequent arrivals were dispersed or distributed among other states of India. On HM's suggestion, a committee consisting of representatives of the union government, the state government, and the agitation leaders was set up to narrow down area of the disagreement.

On 19 May, 1981, the HM met the representatives of AAMSU and the Citizens' Right Preservation Committee. Minority leaders too had meeting with Home Minister and the Cabinet Secretary. The AAMSU was said to have threatened to launch a counter agitation, if the cut-off date for solving of foreign nationals issue in Assam was earlier than 25 March 1975.

The newly set up committee of officers and agitation leaders held first meeting on the 19 May. From the government's side, cabinet Secretary Krishna Swamy Rao Saheb, Law Secretary, P. S. Venkat Subramanium, M. L. Kampani and K. M. L. Chhabra were present. AASU was represented by P. K. Mahanta, B. K. Phukan, and J. N. Sarma. The AAGSP was represented by Jatin Goswami, Biraj Sarma and Atul Bora. On 20 May, 1981, they met again and the main issue was 1961-71 entrants. The talks proceeded on the basis of an understanding that the government agreed in principle to detect the foreigners and disperse them outside the state, if they could not be deported. Stalemate continued on the following day. Movement leaders modified
their earlier stand for persons entering during 1951-61 staying in Assam and those arriving during 1962-72 taken out of Assam. On 22 May 1981, the leaders insisted on Innerline system to prevent expelled foreigners, re-entering Assam after their detection and deportation. This was rejected by the government. 27

On 25 May 1981, Centre proposed to disperse unauthorised entrants for '61-'71 period but state had to retain the authorised refugees so registered for 1961-71 period. 28

Stalemate continued for the following two days. Government clarified authorised immigrants, as refugees from East Pakistan belonging to minority community. The leaders had demanded the clarification. "Eligibility for citizenship certificates" would be determined on the basis of Sec. 5(1)(a) of the Citizenship Act. The official sources also clarified that the total number of authorised foreigners entering Assam during the period as six to seven lakhs. Out of these unauthorised foreigners belonging to the period 1961-71 300,000 had already been sent back, and about 400,000 could be sent back. 29

The talks were adjourned till mid-June. On 29 June, 1981, negotiations resumed. No substantive discussion on the first day. On 30 June 1981, they resumed and appointed an
official level committee to go into details of various matters. From the government's side, S.M.H. Burney Home Secretary, K.M.L. Chhabra, joint Secretary (Home); B.S.Sekhon, Joint Secretary (Law). The AAGSP was represented by Atul Bora and Biraj Sarma, while the AAU was represented by P.K. Mahanta, B.K. Phukan Narul Hussain and J.H. Sarma.

The Assam leaders had asked for the following clarifications from the government:

1. Definition of unauthorised foreigners
2. Acceptance or otherwise of demand that incentives should be given to immigrants sent out from Assam, only after they reached their location.
3. Ousting aliens from reserved forest areas.

There was no much happening till 14 July. Government accepted the following points:

1. Foreigners should be detected.
2. Their names should be deleted from electoral rolls.
3. No more foreigners should be entered into electoral rolls.
4. Photo identity cards should be issued to voters.
5. Border should be protected.
6. The cultural identity of the indigenous population should be safeguarded.
7. The authority to issue citizenship certificates should be shifted from state government to central government.

Assam talks were adjourned again for ten days, on 16 July 1981.

The next round began on 18 August 1981 at Delhi and were described as informal. From Government's side opening two days were short. On 20 August 1981, central government and movement leaders discussed the composition of machinery for detection of foreigners in Assam and a tribunal and an appellate Tribunal for setting the citizenship claims of 1961-71 entrants.

The movement leaders wanted the tribunals to be constituted according to a notification of mid 60's under foreigners Act and detection machinery to be entrusted on the state police. Central government wanted a new approach to associate Linguistic and religious minorities on Advisory Council.31

On 21 August, 1981, the main issue was the differentiation between refugees and illegal migrants. The government wanted to include all members of minority community, who had come from East Pakistan as refugees. The Assam leaders opposed this.32
On 23 August 1981, the detection formula on which there was consensus that provided the use of NRC, electoral rolls and public documents, admissible under evidence act for establishing entry date of foreign nationals. Another point of consensus was the activisation of statutory tribunals formed under the notification of mid 60's.33

On 24 September, 1981 AASU gave a new comprehensive formula to Mr. R.V. Subramanium, Adviser. They were officially released on 30 October, 1981. It reiterated that all foreigners should be detected on the basis of constitution and the relevant laws, i.e. citizenship act 1955 and electoral rolls of 1952, National Register of Citizens - 1951, Passport, Act 1952, and foreigners Act 1946. It suggested selling up of an official machinery under PIP, Scheme. AASU and AAGSP cleared that foreigners tribunals and F.T. Order 1964 would be acceptable by amending the A. 323-B. 1961 '71 entrants were to be detected their names to be deleted and government was to settle such foreigners along with the families in places outside Assam with a period of six years from detection. Border should be guarded by barbed wire fencing and wall should be constructed all along 270 K.M. border.34

A series of talks followed from 29 October to 3 November, 1981. On 30 October, there was an agreement in principle on measures for checking infiltration. A 270 K.M. road running parallel to Bangladesh - Assam border would be constructed. For a length of one to two K.M. there would be
no man's land between boundary proper and border. On 2 and 3 November, 1981 the discussion centred around the 1961-’71 entrants and possible amendment in citizenship act, the talks failed.

On 26 December 1981, AASU and AAGSP met the Chief Secretary Ramesh Chandra. They wanted the forth coming talks to be formal.

(M IV )

MIXED REACTIONS - 1981 :

The negotiations that were conducted between the Central government and the agitation leaders brought out quite a few constitutional test.

There were attempts at finding the foreigner's detection formula. The movement leaders wanted the foreigners of '61-’71 period to be dispersed out of Assam and agreed to retain 1951-60 entrants. Government wanted Assam to accept the refugees (Bengali Hindus) but it was not acceptable to the leaders.

Several acts were put for consideration but it only confused the proceedings. It was for sure that the government was not much sympathetic on sending all the entrants out of Assam. Therefore the government distinguished between authorised and unauthorised entrants.
The state of infiltration was grim but the checking machinery was not dealt with. There was a need for reshuffle and reactivisation of BSF personnel on the border. There was a general dissatisfaction mounting against the BSF working among Assamese people.

"We have come to know of the proposal to employ more BSF personnel in the border areas to check infiltration. But, to overmind, the effectiveness of the BSF has been very disappointing." 

It showed their (BSF) "lack of zeal and criminal negligence in safeguarding our borders." 

Another vital factor was the threat to tribal existence. This factor was not featured properly in the negotiation. As it is, the FICRA was not sympathetic towards
Assam movement, it was all the more important to earn their attention if not sympathy.

CASE OF KARBI ANGLONG & N.C. HILLS

Percentage of Growth rate.

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<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
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<td>KARBI ANGLONG</td>
<td></td>
<td>30.06</td>
<td>79.21</td>
<td>63.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORTH CACHAR</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>36.95</td>
<td>40.00</td>
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As the above figures show, the situation was more frightening in the districts of Karbi-Anglong and North-Cachar.

"Large areas in the plains districts are inhabited by plains tribal people. Simple in nature these people were living in primitive conditions and due to lack of education and material advantages they could not look after their own welfare and were capable of protecting their own interest." To preserve and protect them. Tribal belts and blocks were made but still the invasion continued. This made the tribals to agitate against the influx. PTCA being not sympathetic to AASU due to some reasons, carried a large check of tribals with it, and they separately represented their own interest.

In the negotiations, minority communities were consulted separately by the government. This was a blow for
AASU and the government's intentions of politicising the problem and the attempts towards solving it. The need arose for a tripartite talk to check the attitudes of various political parties.

= 1982 =

The invitations to the tripartite meeting with the agitation leadership opposition parties and the union government had been issued by the government on 6 January. AASU and AAGSP team included P.K. Mahanta, B.K. Phukan, Narul Hussain, Lalit Rajkhowa, Nagin Sarma, Nibaran Bora, Atul Bora and Biraj Sarma. The two delegations of the citizens' Rights Preservation Committee of Assam and the PTCA also reached Delhi and met the Home Minister.

The tripartite talks started on 18 January. From the government's side, the ministers present were, Bhishma Narayan Singh, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs; the Union Law Minister, Union Home Minister and two other ministers of state in the Home Ministry. The opposition parties were represented by Ravindra Verma, Janata, Bhola Paswan Shastri Congress (U) A.B. Vajpayee BJP, H.K. Surjit Singh CPI(M) and Inderjit Gupta, CPI.

The agitation leaders wanted assurances on erection of a wall and a continuous barbed wire fence along the
international border but the government side declared to give a firm commitment. Mr. A.B. Vajpayee BJP wanted the withdrawal of repressive measures.

On 20 January, the government handed over a note on modalities for detection of foreigners. According to a text released by Times of India, the document said, "All foreigners shall be detected on the basis of constitution and the relevant laws as existing today including citizenship act 1955, Foreigners Act 1946 and Passport Act 1967. In doing so, all relevant documents including NRC-1951, electoral rolls including 1952 and land records maintained under Assam land and Revenue Regulation Act shall be made use of." The term 'relevant documents' was objectionable to the leaders, they also objected inclusion of electoral rolls except 1952, for 1961-71 entrants.

The talks were adjourned till 8 February. Meeting on 8 February, was brief to be mourn the death of Assam Revenue minister, R.C. Sharia.

The talks resumed on 9 February. It was attended by union Home Minister, law minister and two ministers of state in the Home Ministry. From the opposition side, Bhola Pawan Shastri, Ravindra Verma JP, Jashwant Singh BJP, M.K. Surjit Singh, and Yogendra Sharma (CPI). This meeting concentrated on modalities for indentification and detection of foreign nationals entering Assam during 1961-71.

The government gave a questionnaire for post-71 entrants. (See Appendix).
Agitation leaders objected to the non-inclusion of NRC in 15 point questionnaire. Student leaders feared that the government could come to policy instructions 1965, which facilitates the granting of citizenship to the Bengali-Hindu refugees, who crossed over after Indo-Pak war.

The movement leaders formulated their own questionnaire. (See Appendix)

The deadlock prevailed over the details of both the questionnaires.

No Tripartite talks were held on 11 and 12 February. The talks were scheduled for 1st week of April. The first session was held in New Delhi on 7 April '82 of tripartite talks. Home Minister Giani Zail Singh was accompanied by petroleum and chemicals Minister Mr. Shivshankar as well as two ministers of state in the Home Ministry. Opposition parties that represented were, JP, BJP, CPI, CPI(M) and the Cong.(U). AASU and AAGSP had a 21 member delegation. Movement leaders categorised as Vague, the provision that a person could submit all relevant documents. Government wanted to incorporate the clause in the questionnaire to state the reason for leaving the country of origin. Movement leaders raised objection that such unauthorised persons should be asked state evidence on which they seek to rely for their claim of citizenship. Government wanted detection on citizens Act 1955 but the movement leaders wanted on foreigners Act and Passport Act.
On 8 April 1982, there was no agreement on detection formula, cut-off date or how to deal with persons coming between 1961-71 without valid travel documents. There was also no agreement on the question of dispersal or deportation of 1961-71 entrants or on deletion of their names from Voters' list.

The talks ended in a deadlock. On 14 April, Union Home Minister expressed the view that elections would be held with in a year. On 30 April Mr. N. R. Laskar, Minister of State assured Lok Sabha that elections would be held in Assam in next 9 or 10 months. He was confident of finding an amicable solution to the foreigners issue in the state.

On 3 May 1982, AASU said that they would resist all attempts to hold elections in the state till the foreigners issue was solved. 46

On 30 May, CEC told the movement leaders in a meeting that elections could be held in congenial atmosphere, at Burnihat (Near Gauhati) in an un-scheduled meeting.

The AASU delegation led by P.K. Mahanta was in Delhi during 2 to 6 August, AASU also had the meeting with several other political leaders including A. B. Vajpayee, L. K. Advani, Inderjit Gupta, Subramaniam Swamy, Ravindra Verma and Jaswant Singh. Assam leaders submitted a memorandum to CEC, saying that
It was their constitutional obligation to oppose elections in Assam, if foreigners were allowed to participate in the elections. The memorandum signed by P. K. Mahanta and B.K. Phukan urged the EC not to make preparation for the elections, unless the government started firm and concrete measures to detect all foreigners in the state.

On 25 August, trípantite talks resumed. The union Home Minster was aided by law minister, finance minister and petroleum minister apart from two ministers of state in Home Ministry AASU and AAG3P had 3+ member delegation. Detection formula and questionnaire come up for discussion.

Ravindra Verma, Janata suggested the formula for detection which attracted serious notice in the national press.

1. National list should provide a basis for scrutiny in Assam, who are not citizens.

2. Any citizen can make a complaint to the authorities that a particular person of the national list is not a citizen. On receipt of complaint due inquiry should be conducted.

3. One month period should be given to the persons to prove that he is not a citizen. If a person was found not to be a citizen, the matter should be preferred to be a three man tribunal to be constituted in each Assam Constituency. The verdict of the tribunal should be guided by the law.
There will be an appellate authority at the state level but only one appeal should be allowed. The verdict of appellate authority would be final.

The HM received separate letters from AAMU and, All Assam Minority Yuva Parishad and Citizens Rights Preservation Committee. They wanted the government to hear minorities views. The next round of talks was held on 27 August, 1982. The discussion centred on whether apart from citizens government should also file objection to the tribunals.

Government clarified that it had power to reject any foreigner without reference to tribunal. It was agreed that the tribunal should work on the basis of constitution and various laws in force. The appellate tribunal could be headed by a High Court Judge. Detection of 1961-1971 list would be considered as national list from which any citizen or group of citizens can apply to their tribunal for their detection on the ground that he/she is not a citizen. Talks were adjourned till 1 September, 1982.

The AASU and the AAGP leaders wanted that their representatives be associated with the tribunals in each of the assembly constituency. AASU wanted the dispersal of the deleted persons before the Assembly polls, because they could resort to violence.
The March 1977 rolls for parliamentary elections had total of 7.229 million. November '77 rolls for assembly polls had 7.974 million. The 1979 electoral rolls showed an increase of 1.208 million over March '77 rolls.\(^{50}\)

The tripartite talks resumed on 1 September, 1982. From the government's side Union Home Minister, Law Minister, parliamentary Affairs and two ministers of state for Home. The question of identification of foreign nationals, who came between 1961-’71 occupied the whole proceedings. Mr. Ravindra Verma promised to formulate another paper and talks were adjourned till 3 September, 1982.\(^{51}\)

On 3 September, 1982, the talks started once again. Mr. Ravindra Verma's modified formula provided that even those who were found eligible to become citizens would not be granted citizenship until the assembly elections in the state were over. The government found it difficult to accept.\(^{51}\)

The informal talks between Mr. R. Venkat Raman and agitation leaders took place on 4 September, 1982. During the discussion, the movement leaders refused the government to implement 1965 policy instructions of 1965 with regard to grant of citizenship to 1961-71, entrants. They also urged the government to lift up all the repressive measures from the agitating employees. The government showed reluctance to accept it. On 5th September the informal meeting continued. The
discussion centred around the question of how to deal with immigrants, to whom citizenship was already granted and the composition of tribunal to detect foreigners. The agitation leaders also wanted disenfranchisement of detected foreigners and then they could be settled in other states of India.  

On 6 September, 82, the tripartite talks resumed. It was presided over by the HM P.C.Sethi. Points dealt were, (i) who should be given citizenship among immigrants (ii) Composition of tribunal (iii) Machinery for detection.

It was agreed that 1961-71 immigrants would not be divided into eligible and non-eligible for grant of citizenship. Those who have been granted citizenship would remain so; but those who had not been granted such certificates would not be entitled to get citizenship. Their cases would be dealt later on.

In the informal talks on 6 September '82 movement leaders wanted scrapping of citizenship certificates granted by W. B. and Tripura governments. Government assured to intervene.

Informal meeting of 7 September, included Mr. Ravindra Verma of Janata.

(1) Formulation of Tribunals -

Government wanted two tribunals to deal with 1961-71 entrants and post 1971 entrants separately. AASU and AAGSF wanted only one.
AASU leaders wanted it to detect foreigners. They wanted official machinery to be involved in detection of foreigners. Government wanted to ascertain whether a person is a citizen and whether he is eligible to be a citizen. It will not go for detection of foreigners.54

Informal talks resumed on 27 September 1982, in presence of Mr. Ravinder Verma Janata. The government wanted those eligible to citizenship be allowed to vote in 1983 assembly polls. AASU and AAGSP insisted that tribunals should pronounce whether a person was foreigner or not. If he was described as a foreigner, his name should be struck off from the rolls.55

On 28 September, formal tripartite talks began. From the government's side HM, P.C. Sethi, and defence minister R. Venkat Raman participated. From other parties, L.K. Advani BJP, Mr. H.K.S. Surjiet CPI(M), Yogendra Sharma (CPI) Ravinder Verma (JF), and Unnikrishnan (Cong.U). The government did not accept the demand of disenfranchisement of foreigners before assembly polls.

In the informal talks of 28 September '82 Assam leaders were opposed to the idea of granting voting right to the foreigners. Government did not want disenfranchisement of all who were eligible.

Movement leaders made it clear that foreigners' names should be deleted from rolls. Detection could be done
by election officers on the basis of objections filed. But government made it clear that it should not apply to those eligible. 56

Assam leaders were against election oriented solution and the talks were adjourned.

Assam talks continued to be dead locked. On 6 November, tripartite talks resumed. The Home Minister started with confirming 1971 as cut-off year. All the foreigners of 1961-71 who had obtained citizenship certificates from Tripura or West Bengal government would be entitled to vote.

The movement leaders were prepared to compromise on the certificates issued by the Assam government. 57

Mr. Bavindra Verma urged a new formula for 1961-71 entrants. 58 (Appendix)

The tripartite talks resumed on 4 January 1983. The names of all the foreigners who had entered Assam after 30 September, were to be deleted from electoral rolls, by the competent authority. The government in doing so would make use of electoral rolls of 1952, 1957, 1962 shall be made use of. Cases of dispute were to be referred to the foreign tribunals specially set up for the purpose. There shall be only appeal against decision of foreign tribunals. No further appeal shall be except to the supreme court. Foreigners
who entered the state by 30 September, 1985, would be allowed to stay in Assam and would be regularised as an Indian citizen. In regularised the date of entry of foreigners, the guidelines were to be.\(^5^9\)

\((1)\) NRC-1951
\((2)\) Proof of purchase of lands.
\((3)\) Inclusion in electoral rolls for the first time.
\((4)\) Date of appointment in government service.

\((5)\) Date of registration with the appropriate border out-post authority immediately after entering Assam.

Resettlement outside Assam for 1966 to March 25, '71 foreigners. Elections would be held in Assam only after the deletion of names of foreigners. I cards with photographs would be issued to the voters.

(VI)

Then the talks that followed stressed on disenfranchisement of '61-'71 detected entrants and dissolution of the assembly.

The All Assam Elected students Representative Union submitted a memorandum to the Union Home Minister Mr. S.B. Chavan at Shillong on 29 March 1985; Its formation was obviously against some leaders of AASU. AAESRU blamed AASU for not arriving at any conclusion after so many years of
"Government's inability to correctly appreciate the sentiments of the people and the students of Assam on the one hand and continued rigidity of outlook and irrational behaviour of self-styled of the AASU."

"We are however constrained to reiterate that negotiations without correct representation of students community of Assam are not likely to throw up any solution worth the name and it has therefore become essential for us to insist on our participation in future rounds of discussions on the issue."

The AAJSRU stressed for a quick solution to the foreigners' struggle in Assam. People who carried on the struggle were tired, students had lost the academic years and above all it revolted against the autocratic leadership of AASU.

AAJSRU placed some demands on 2 May 1985.

1. 80% reservation for indigenous people who settled in the state before 1951.
2. 80% in legislative Assembly and LokSabha respectively.
3. 80% in field of employment and economic benefits.
4. Immediate barbed wire fencing along the Indo-Bangla border.
AAMU SU is against any disenfranchisement of infiltrators as they would have to be given citizenship rights after certain period and would thus frustrate the main objective of agitation that the indigenous people would be outnumbered by the infiltrators. 62

The centre was not in favour of disenfranchisement, because, it said, there would be constant threat of such disenfranchised persons acquiring voting rights elsewhere and eventually back to Assam thus rendering the whole exercise meaningless in long run. 63

The crucial Shillong talks (prelude to the Accord) began on 29 July, 1985, with Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan. The movement leaders' side was represented by P.K. Mahanta, B.K. Phukan, Nagen Sarma, Lalit Rajkhowa and Biraj Sarma.

AT expressed apprehension about government's acceptance of demand of outright dissolution of state assembly, demanded by the leadership. 64

It asserted that the solution could not be allowed to drift away, as the elections to the Lok sabha also could not be delayed.

Finally the much awaited accord was signed by the student leaders and the government of India.
Memorandum of Settlement

1. The government have all along been most anxious to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of foreigners in Assam. AASU and AAGSP have also expressed their keenness to find such a solution.

2. The AASU through their memorandum dated 2 February, 1980, presented to the late PM Mrs. Indira Gandhi conveyed their profound sense of apprehension regarding the influx of foreign nationals into Assam and fear about adverse effects on political, social cultural and economic life of the state.

3. Being fully alive to genuine apprehensions of people of Assam, the then PM initiated the dialogue with the AASU & AAGSP. Subsequently the talks were held at PM's and HM's levels during the period 1980-83. Several rounds of informal talks were held during 1984. Formal discussions resumed in 1985.

4. Keeping all prospects of the problem including constitutional and legal provisions, international agreements and national commitments and humanitarian consideration, it has been decided to proceed as follows:-
FOREIGNERS ISSUE

1. For the purpose of detection and delation of foreigners 1-1-1966 shall be the base year and date.

2. All persons who came to Assam prior to 1-1-66 including those amongst them whose names appeared in the electoral roll used in 1967 elections, shall be regularised.

3. Foreigners who came to Assam after 1-1-1966 (Inclusive upto 24-3-1971) shall be detected, in accordance with the provision of foreigners Act 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunals) order 1964.

4. Names of foreigners so detected from electoral rolls in force. Such persons will be regularised to register themselves before the registration officer in respective districts in accordance with registration of Foreigners' Act 1939 and registration of foreigners rules 1939.

5. For this purpose, the government of India will undertake suitable strengthening of government machinery.

6. On the expiry of ten years, following the date of detection, the names of all such persons which have been deleted from electoral rolls shall be restored.
7. All persons who were expelled earlier but have re-entered illegally into Assam shall be expelled.

8. Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall be continued to be deleted, detected and expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners.

9. The government will give due consideration to certain difficulties expressed by AASU/AAGSP regarding the implementation of illegal migrants (Determination by tribunals) 1983.

SAFEGUARDS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

6. Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards as may be appropriate shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural social and linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.

7. The government take the opportunity to renew their commitment for the speedy allround economic development of Assam. So as to improve the std. of living of people. Special emphasis will be placed on education and science and technology through establishments of national institutions.
OTHER ISSUES

8. (1) The government will arrange for the issue of citizenship certificates in future only by the authorities of central government.

(2) Specific complaints that may be made by AASU/AAGP about irregular issuance of Indian citizenship certificates (ICC) will be looked into.

9. (1) The international border shall be made secure against future infiltration by erection of physical barriers like walls, barbed wire fencing and other obstacles at appropriate places. Patrolling by security forces on land and rivence routes all along the international border shall be adequately intensified. In order to further strengthen the security arrangements to prevent effectively future infiltration, an adequate number of check posts shall be set up.

9. (2) Besides the arrangements mentioned above and keeping in view security consideration, a road all along the international border shall be constructed so as to facilitate patrolling by security forces. Land between border and road would be kept free of human habitation. Whenever possible, riverine patrolling all along the international border would be
intensified. All effective measures would be adopted to prevent infiltrators crossing or attempting to cross the international border.

10. It will be ensured that relevant laws for prevention of encroachment of government lands and lands in tribal belts and blocks are strictly enforced and unauthorised encroachers evicted as laid down under such laws.

11. It will be ensured that the relevant law restricting acquisition of immovable property by foreigners in Assam is strictly enforced.

12. It will be ensured that birth and death registers are duly maintained.

RESTORATION OF NORMALCY

13. The AASU and AAGSP call off the agitation, assure full co-operation and dedicate themselves towards the development of the country.

14. Central and state governments have agreed to

(a) review with sympathy and withdraw cases of disciplinary action against employees in the context of the agitation and to ensure that there is no victimization.
(b) frame a scheme for ex gratia payment to next of
kin of those who were killed in course of agitation.

(c) give sympathetic consideration of proposal for
relaxation of upper age limit for employment in
public services in Assam, having regard to academic
competitive examinations etc. in context of agitation
in Assam.

(d) Undertake review of detention cases if any as well as
cases against persons charged with criminal offences
in connection with the agitation, except those
charged with commission of benious offences.

(e) Consider the withdrawal of prohibitory orders/
notifications in force, if any.

THE FOLLOWING PART WAS SEPARATELY ATTACHED

1. Election Commission will be requested to ensure
   participation of fair electoral rolls.

2. Time for submission of claims and objections will be
   extended by 30 days, subject to this being consistent
   with election rules.

3. The Election Commission will be requested to send
   central observers.

1. Oil refinery will be established in Assam.
2. Central government will render full assistance to the state government in their efforts to reopen.

(a) Ashok paper mill
(b) Jute mill

3. Indian Institute of Technology would be set up in Assam.

SIGNED BY -

P.K. Mahanta - President AASU
B.K. Phukan - General Secretary AASU
Biraj Sarma - Convenor AAGSP
R.D. Pradhan - Home Secretary, Government of India.
Mrs. P.P. Trivedi - Chief Secretary, Government of Assam

IN PRESENCE OF RAJIV GANDHI - Prime Minister of India.

The negotiations conducted between the government of India and student leaders of Assam, were of interest to any struggle leaders. The nature of the problem was such that each time there was inclusion of a new demand. This characteristic of the proceedings was fully exploited by the government side. Each time the government refused to compromise and thereby deadlock the talks, the prospects of future negotiations looked dim. More true consumed, was significant achievement for the government.
Student leaders and their advisers failed to grasp the briefness of demands. It would not be wrong to say that they were themselves responsible for various compromises in the accord.

The vastness of representation in the participating delegation was another unfavourable factor. The discussions were comfortably created from one confusion to another, from cut off year to '51-'60 entrants, from 1961-'71 entrants to deportation of post '71 entrants from detection, deletion to their dispersal out of Assam and also, repressive measures, the prohibitory laws enforced in Assam, preservation of identity of Assamese people, dissolution of Saikia ministry revision of rolls, border protected and tribunals set up for foreigners detection.

Only three demands were important

1. Cut off year
2. Border protection
3. Detection, deletion and deportation.

With proper thinking had 1967 been accepted as the cut-off year, they would have avoided the next five gloomy and bloody years from Assam's future.

Urgency of the problem was seen, out of centre's attempt to negotiate at top level of HM and Prime Minister. Thus the conflict of professionals and unprofessionals concluded very quietly. Its style was bargain like and its pulls were high, yet it (Negotiations) brought back the normally in Assam.
Assam Accord was widely hailed in the state initially but doubts on its implementation were raised. "The pragmatic approach by both, the prime minister and the Assam movement leadership has contributed in arriving at a solution in a spirit of give and take." 66

Even the intelligentsia recognized the Accord as a compromise. Such nature of Accord could be due to the varieties of experiences faced by the people during the agitation period.

"An agreement is always a compromise. Hence no question of who has won and who has lost arises. Evidently in a compromise no party can get all it wants. The Assam agreement is no exception. However it is no use crying over split milk. The past is relevant only as experience to guide future decisions and actions." 67

Certainly an accord or agreement cannot be always a compromise, but in Assam's case, it is relevant to a quite a lot extent. As the accord had to be satisfying to all the people, and there was a need to meet the economic and cultural aspects apart from political, its interpretation was a major mystery.
"The fact is, the accord can be and is being interpreted by different persons in different ways because, many people are trying to derive benefits out of it. That some of the aspects of the situation are still vague, is obvious and it is possible there will be differences of opinion at the time of its implementation." 68

"..."It has been admitted that considering different aspects - the time that has elapsed, the violence experienced and social tension generated, the solution should satisfy largest number of people." 69

This statement is obviously concerned with the state of relationship between the linguistic and religious communities. Most important is the Assamese and Bengali relationship. This crucial factor, though psychological in nature but war like as an issue depended for easing out, earlier on, signing the accord and later on its (Accord) implementation. The intellectuals called it on entire responsibility of the government for bridging a great loss of faith between the two communities. The polarisation was a bit tough to tackle for the government merely through signing the Accord. As evident from the text, the government had to be considerate towards the minority immigrants for political reasons.
"I sincerely desired a lasting solution to chronic threat to social tensions and occasional eruption of disharmony in Assam and I am disheartened that the memorandum has totally failed to achieve this end."  

This mutual loss of liking, in real life does not find place overtly but certainly has proved to be a successful divider of the two major sides in the states. It is a convenient issue on the paper to fight the political battle, which is a result of imperialist policy of divide and rule.

Each time the intellectuals tried to show the neutral gesture, and every time invariably they failed because there was a gap between the public writing and personal prejudices. This is applicable to both the communities (Assamese and Bengalis). The accord, if it all was believed to case the tension, then it should have been something of understanding and alteration but it proved a starting point of yet another phase of community tension.

A motion against Assam Accord was passed in West Bengal Assembly, by a majority vote after a long discussion in the house. Moving the motion, Sri Shyamal Chakravorty said, "Assam accord violated the principles of democracy and is against the solemn assurances given to minorities in Assam by the nation's leaders during partition of the country is a
serious departure from international agreement between Indira Gandhi and Mujibur Rehman in 1975. 71

In a mob violence in Sylhet about 100 persons were injured during a twenty four hour bandh which was called by 'AMRA BENGALI' organization in protest against Assam Accord.

The feelings grew deeper and there was no remedy for it. Not to rule out the validity of the accord, but it is still an open question itself which demands lots of attention to the referred terms.

The only solution needed in the movement was total seating of border (Indo-Bangladesh). Other issues of detection, deletion, deportation, polls, the electoral rolls etc. helped (i) the movement leaders to extend their support, (ii) the Central government to play and prolong the issues and (iii) the press to confuse the remaining population of the country. The propaganda should have been in the favour of border protection because rest of the issues were bound to get political solution and is proved in the accord.

Entrants prior to 1-1-1966 were to be regularised including those persons who had their names in 1967 electoral
list in Assam. Deletion and detection of entrants between 1-1-1966 to 24-3-1971 was followed by their 10 years disenfranchisement. They were required to register themselves in accordance with the law. Their names were to be restored in the rolls after 10 years from detection. Only post 1971 entrants were to be deported.

These provisions could mean that all the immigrants till 1971, were to be retained in Assam. This arrangement was offered to the movement leaders in early eighties by the government with 1967 as the cut-off year, but was turned down by the movement leaders. Regarding the economic package, it made quite a thick section feel that, the package, was not conducive to rapid socio-economic growth, as the agrarian folks were left out. "The entire economic package is welcome. There is nothing as such wrong in it. But this will not ensure rapid socio-economic growth in the state. It does not benefit the agrarian and its allied sectors. It has nothing to do with 75% Assam's population who are living below the poverty line. But it is this segment of population who have made the utmost sacrifice during the protracted movement without their participation the Historic congregation would not were forgotten during negotiations."

"Thus, the mass of Assamese people have been left out of the direct benefit that will grow from the economic package."
Determinant Factors for Reaching the Accord:

Time taken by the agitation was obviously a base factor in launching the agreement. In the whole proceedings till the conclusion, it (Time) has remained a constant variable. In the beginning, time proved productive but after a certain period more delay proved counter productive. This phase however was decisive. Two other determinants followed logically after 1983.

(i) Leadership Credibility.

(ii) Power motive.

Leadership credibility is directly proportionate factor to the passing time. More time taken reduced the credibility of the leadership. Since the inspiration for the movement came from the leadership, and virtually was hero-trust kind, periodic assurance of credibility was necessary. In the initial stages the leadership was an independent organization i.e., guided the agitation, but in later phase, the people influenced the leadership to act in a particular manner. With rise in public expectation in the demands the agenda, increased. In the negotiations, the placement of their demands made them (leaders) to review their own position and acceptability. The post-1983 phase, became power-based for them. They always considered the
Saikia Government as illegal and demanded its dissolution. Chief propaganda was Assembly dissolution and not just drive against foreigners. Border protection, did not feature in prominence.

Next to the assembly dismissal, was the capture of power, which was never overtly expressed but was implied. Total diversion in the attitude of problem solving was never expressed before. This was the most crucial deviation factor, which proved quite dominating, in the accord. After the accord signing the prime achievement considered was the dissolution of Assembly.

"Dissolution of Assembly is indeed a great moral victory of the movement leadership and the people who stood behind solidly during the last six years of the struggle."73

This statement is the testimony of the argument. The trend towards power was duo, i.e., cause and effect. It was an effect of the prolonged agitation which highlighted many issues and was a cause for accord signing or else the accord would have reached much earlier.

The drive against foreigners was to be achieved by expulsion of foreigners by detection, deletion and deportation and then by guarding the border but never by achieving
political power. Though border protection was paid due attention in the accord but is not adequate.

**GOVERNMENT'S ROLE**

If accord signing is considered as a compromise and advantageous to the government then the determinant factor was again 'time' and well supported by its slow dealing. Government capitalised on the overdelayed struggle and on the negotiations that were conducted between the two parties.

People's aversion to participate actively was clearly witnessed in the post '83 period. The Congress gained mostly in the bargain by just accepting the movement leaders demand of assembly dissolution. With the coming of Sri Rajiv Gandhi a psychological difference was witnessed due to his considerate personality. His attitude towards the burning issues was positive and soon invited the leaders for talks.

Nevertheless, Accord reached was a good will gesture from both the sides. For the development and peace, the formal end to the hostilities was essential. At of 17 August, 1985 said that Sri N. T. Rama Rao called it as "one more feather in prime minister's cap," and "It is an independence day gift to the nation." said Sri Bhajanlal.

"The trnana of last six years has entered a new era of peace."
Being a mixture of emotional participation and youthful approach, the movement leaders could get something but certainly won the hearts of people. Their political inexperience was instrumental in letting them go down several times. The Congressional leadership maintained their traditional approach and further divided the communities. Accord, by and large could keep the population quiet and became an official recognition for the new regional party.

FORMATION OF AGP : A DIFFERENT TREND

The formation of Assam Gana Parishad can be traced back as early as 1983, when the Assembly polls of 1983 were boycotted by the AAGSP, and the seeds of a regional party were sowed. Assam did not have any strong and well organized regional parties except PLP which were not sturdy enough to articulate the interest of the state.

Leadership in those parties was a little old and young workers of AAGSP made people to opt for a new and energetic pull.

People of the state did not trust the old stalwarts and a revolution was brought about in the political future of Assam. Regional parties such as PLP, AJD merged with the AGP. It was welcomed by and large by the Assamese people.

"As a party born out of pain and anguish, Suffering and sacrifice for six years, it is bound to have a deeper
impact on the people, than any other regional party formed earlier in Assam."

The party at the formation time had six presidents and three general secretaries. Its organizational set up was itself a challenge to the party. The presidium was a bit too wide but various mergers were to be satisfied, if not be pleased. Injured feelings of the left outs had to be looked into. Still, the response to the new regional party was overwhelming.

A TWIST IN PRE ELECTION SCENARIO

Diverse responses to the accord decided the fate of election and UMF convention posed a convincing opposition not just politically but to the harmonious Assamese society. So, socio-political existence of the state became a serious concern and its post election behaviour was polarised and destructive. The UMF convention was attended by Jamaat-Ulema-e-Hind., Citizen's Rights, Committee All Assam Minority Yuva Parishad, AAMSU, consisted largely of immigrant muslims.

The minority feelings were hurt with the accord provision of disenfranchisement of 1966-71 entrants to which not only they formed a different faction, But lost faith in Congress.
Rajiv Gandhi during his election campaign assured the minorities that retention of pre '71 entrants was a victory for them. The convention (UMF) called at HoJai (Near Gauhati) was crucial, for Bengali immigrant Muslims who felt orphaned. Hindu Bengali opted for the CPI(M), Soon, pro and anti accord forces became obvious. The prime motivating factor behind the formation of UMF was to publish the Congress (I) and not merely to unite the minority. One more factor was, a show of strength to the AGP, whose long history of movement became instrumental in UMF formation. It was certainly a disturbing factor, in the confusing political Scenerio of the state.

CONGRESS (I) POSITION AND WORKOUT :

Both the AGP and the UMF were against the Congress, of course in their own plea and claims. Congress (I) could not bear the shock of UMF formation. Only one consideration of pleasing minority could not hold the vote bank for the Congress. Different kinds of reactions were expressed regarding the position of the party.

"Even if the new party gets an absolute majority, it is advisable that the party should either merge or work as wing of the Congress(I) in order to strengthen the hands of Sri Rajiv Gandhi on whom the nation has pinned hope for a
better future. The Mizo Union in Mizoram merged with the Congress (I), even after it captured absolute majority in general elections. Assam has many problems to be solved and new party should be aware of these problems otherwise, future of Assam will never be away from instability, chaos and corruption."

Much less remains to be said that the complexities of the political scene and confused battle that was coming ahead, were not overlooked by the intellectuals. Congress as a major work force was recognized not because of its broad base but only due to its presence in the Central Government. Any other government at the state level amounts to gather some conflict in the working. Displeasing the Congress perhaps was thought a hindrance to a cordial working.

For Congress (I) the Assam elections were important on several grounds -

(A) Not to loose yet another state to a regional party which could have proved influential on other North-Eastern states -

(B) It was a test for the acceptability of Rajiv Gandhi's personal qualities as leader, whose personality could bring the Assam Accord.
It was also a vital time for the acceptability of the Accord itself, which was delayed by the Congress (I) for so long under the leadership of late prime minister Smt. Indira Gandhi.

Mr. Hiteshwar Saika, former C.M. of Assam, now Governor of Mizoram, held the view that the Congress remained secular as against the AGP, which was an Assamese caste Hindu party and the UMF, which was a minority and mostly Muslim based. He gratefully accepted his exit, "We will abide by people's verdict."

Result that event against the Congress(I) did not mean loss of credibility in Rajiv Gandhi's leadership but was a denial to the congress policies towards polls and electoral rolls in Assam.

Yet, Congress remains a determinant factor in Assam's political, development and Accord implementation. Congress(I)'s calculation of winning the power in the state went wrong and one more regional party took birth and shape in Assam.

ELECTIONS AND PEACE

Elections to the state assembly and parliament were fixed on 16 December 1985. Final rolls in Assam for all the 126 constituencies were published on November 8, 1985. Since 1937, Assam assembly came to be known as Legislative Assembly.
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Assembly polls in Assam - 1952-87 Dr. Venkat Rao.
## Contestants

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NOTES


2. AT, 3 February, 1980.


5. Why National Register of citizens of 1951 must be used to Detect Foreign Nationals in Assam? (Guwahati, AASU) p-13.


7. Ibid., p-5.


11. Ibid., p-35.


13. Ibid., p-40.


15. Ibid., PP-45,46.


17. AT, 26 June, 1980.


22. Ibid., 22 September, 1980.


25. Ibid., p-91.

26. Ibid., p-121.
27. Ibid., PP-128-130.
30. Ibid., p-141.
33. AT, 24 August, 1981.
34. Ibid., 31 October, 1981.
35. Save Assam Today, To Save India Tomorrow, (Guwahati, AASJ, AAGSP, 1980), p-3.
36. Ibid., p-3.
37. Ibid., p-3.
41. Ibid., p-151.


45. Ibid., 8 April, 1982.


47. Ibid., pp-186,187.


50. Ibid., p-195.

51. Ibid., p-198.

52. Ibid., p-199.


57. Ibid., 7 November, 1982.

58. Ibid., 8 November, 1982.

60. Konwar, Bhubeni in Memorandum Submitted to Sri S.B.Chavan, Union HM by All Assam Elected Students Representative Union at Shillong on 29 March 1985", quoted in AAERSU, Bulletin No.1. p-1.

61. Ibid., p-2.


63. Ibid., 9 April, 1985.

64. Ibid., 1 August, 1985.


68. AT, 30 August, 1985.

69. Ibid., 17 August, 1985.


71. The Motion was adopted by 12½ votes to 2½, with 2 Absenteations. AT, 4 September, 1985.

73. AT, 20 August, 1985.

74. Ibid., 17 August, 1985.

75. Ibid., 16 October, 1985.


77. Ibid., 12 January, 1986.