Chapter XI

The formation of the Executive Committee

It is interesting to note that the Assam Autonomous District Council Rules made provision for a Cabinet system of Government. It is provided in the said Rules that in each Autonomous district, there shall be an Executive Committee with the Chief Executive Member as the head. He shall be elected by the District Council. He shall be assisted by two Executive Members who shall be appointed by the Governor on the recommendation submitted by him. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman are debarred to hold any office in the Executive Committee. When the C.E.M. dies, vacates his office or ceases to hold office, the other members of the Executive Committee also cease to be members of the Executive Committee automatically. But the Governor is empowered to authorise them to act as a caretaker Executive Committee and they shall hold office till a new Executive Committee is formed. The Executive Committee shall be collectively responsible to the District Council which may be removed at any time by the latter. It is further provided that each District Council shall elect a Chief Executive Member within forty eight hours from the date of the removal of the Committee. If it fails to do so, the Governor may appoint any member of the District Council to be C.E.M. and two other members of the Council to be the members of the Executive Committee.¹

¹. AAD. Rules, 1951. Chapter VII of Part II.
Garo Hills: The first Garo Hills Autonomous District Council met on 3rd May 1952 for the election of the Chief Executive Member. Capt. W.A. Sangma was unanimously elected to the post. Capt. Sangma wanted to take like-minded persons with ability and experience into his team, and naturally, the choice went to Mody K. Marak and Harrison W. Momin. At the expiry of his first term, Capt. Sangma was again elected as Chief Executive Member by a unanimous vote on 3rd May 1957. Once again, Capt. Sangma took the same persons as his colleagues.

In 1958, as a result of an understanding between the Eastern India Tribal Union and the Congress, Capt. Sangma joined the Chaliha Cabinet. But, in the meantime, Harrison W. Momin also died while in office. Therefore the natural successor to the office was Mody K. Marak, who was also elected by a unanimous vote. Mody K. Marak took Emerson Momin and Simison Sangma as his colleagues. But Mody K. Marak had to face some difficulties. There were some members who aspired very keenly to get a seat in the Executive Committee. In order to overcome this hurdle, Mody K. Marak created two posts of Deputy Executive Members and Mohan Sangma and Lohindra Sangma were selected for the posts.

Capt. W.A. Sangma resigned from the Chaliha Cabinet in 1960 on the issue of the Assam Official Language Bill and returned to Garo Hills politics, but he did not want to reshuffle the Executive Committee of the District Council. Mody K. Marak continued to lead the Executive Committee till 1964. After the general election 1964, on 1st May 1964, Capt. Sangma, the undisputed leader, was once again elected by a unanimous vote as C.E.M. for the third term but not consecutively. Since Mody K. Marak was dropped to the post of Chairman, he took Karnesh R. Marak and Lohindra N. Sangma as Executive
Members. Grohonsing Marak and Albinston Sangma were taken as Deputy Executive Members.

By a resolution of the District Council, the life of the Garo Hills District Council was extended from time to time till 1972. In the meantime, Capt. W.A. Sangma was sworn in as Chief Minister of Meghalaya on 2nd April 1970. History repeated itself. Once again, Mody K. Marak was called upon to take over as C.E.M. But Capt. Sangma resigned from the post of C.E.M. Garo Hills on 17th March 1970 so that he could devote himself fully for the politics of the new born state. On 18th March 1970, Mody K. Marak was unanimously elected as the C.E.M. This time, he took Albinston Sangma and Lohindra N. Sangma as Executive Members and dropped Karnesh K. Marak. Grohonsing Marak and Binsingh Marak were taken as Deputy Executive Member. But later, Grohonsingh Marak was elected as Deputy Speaker of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly, and as such, he had to resign from the post of Deputy Executive Member of the District Council. The vacancy created by him was filled up by Levinson Marak.

The APHLC again captured the majority in the 1972 election to the District Council. For the third time, Mody K. Marak was unanimously elected as the Chief Executive Member on 25th March 1972. This time, Lohindra N. Sangma was elected Chairman. Hence, Mody K. Marak had to promote Binsing Marak from Deputy Executive Member to Executive Member while he retained Albinston Sangma as Executive Member. Levinson Marak and Arshit Marak were taken as Deputy Executive Members.

During the last twenty four years commencing from 1952 to 1976, there were seven political offices. Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the District Council, one C.E.M., two Executive Members,
and two Deputy Executive Members. These offices were occupied only by sixteen persons, but not even one of them was a member of the fair sex. Mody K. Marak has a unique distinction of holding office, either as E.M. or C.E.M. or as Chairman, without any break since 1952. Capt. W.A. Sangma held office for 12 years and Lohindra Sangma for eighteen years.

Secondly, the Executive Committee was at all times a competent body, consisting of persons belonging to the same party and therefore there were no deadlocks in the administration. Although Mody K. Marak is over seventy and he is always sick, yet the confidence that the party reposes in him is still great. It is true that on two occasions some party members demanded the resignation of Mody Babu on the ground that he could not attend office regularly and as such there was an accumulation of business. But as soon as Capt. W.A. Sangma spoke a word, everybody became silent. Mody K. Marak is likely to continue as Chief Executive Members till his present term is over.

Thirdly, for the last twenty four years, the post of C.E.M. was held only by two persons, Capt. W.A. Sangma, and Mody K. Marak. Further, there was no attempt to move a no-confidence motion against the Chief Executive Member.

Fourthly, another most interesting and pleasing feature is that elections to the posts of C.E.M. Chairman and Deputy Chairman were uncontested. Struggle for power was conspicuously absent. Practically, there was no horse trading or defection. Of course, there were very few who left the party when they did not get what they wanted. But such persons were disowned by the electorate. Loyalty to the party was scrupulously observed. Differences of opinion were always subordinated to party loyalty.
Fifthly, the Garo National Council in particular and the APHLC in general has been fortunate to have only one undisputed leader in the Garo Hills politics. It was Captain W.A. Sangma, a great democrat who could discipline the party at all times. His experience as Captain of the army, his great reasoning power, his forceful persuasive eloquence, his tact in handling delicate situations, his patience to listen attentively, his good balance of mind, his power to assess any situation, his diplomacy and his sound judgement - all these qualities of head and heart contributed a great deal towards building up effective traditions in the Garo Hills politics.

Lastly, it may be said that there was political stability in the Garo Hills because there was only one party at all times which commanded an absolute majority in the District Council. This was possible because the ruling party always had a recognised leader who commanded the confidence of the people and who had the sterling qualities of leadership.

United Khasi Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council: It must be admitted that of all the autonomous Districts in North-East India, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District is the most advanced in political education. Hence, there was always a contest for political offices. The first District Council met on 3rd July 1952 to elect a Chief Executive Member. There were two candidates who aspired the post, Josingh Rynjah and B.M. Roy. Josingh Rynjah was a nominated member. It was really an unhealthy convention that a nominated member should aspire a political post. Nevertheless, both the candidates were retired Civil Servants. Both of them had vast administrative experience with no political background and political education. However, Josingh Rynjah was
the personal choice of Rev. J.J.M.Nichols-Roys. In the contest, Rynjah polled 16 votes whereas B.M.Roy polled only 5 votes. Josingh Rynjah took one Executive Member from the Shillong Sub-division Rostanwell War and one from Jowai Sub-division, H.Enowell Pohshna. But both of them were elected by the constituencies in the Border Area. Perhaps, Josingh Rynjah wanted to tackle the problems faced by the people living in the border area, whose trade had been cut off with Sylhet after Partition in 1947. After six months Josingh Rynjah had to face a no-confidence motion which was tabled on 4th December 1952 and which was supported by nine members. The motion was admitted by the Chairman and fixed 5th December for the consideration of the motion. But, when the Chairman called upon the mover to move the motion on 5th December he declined to do so.

After that event, Josingh Rynjah did no longer feel secure of his position, and as such, on 9th July 1953 he resigned from the post on health grounds. The District Council met on 13th July 1953 to elect a new Chief Executive Member. This time also there were two candidates, B.M.Roy and Hobell Rynjah. Hobell Rynjah was a former Deputy Inspector of School, but he retired as Assistant Headmaster of the Shillong Government High School. Inspite of his experience in the field of academic education, he had no political education whatsoever. B.M.Roy raised a point of order that the new C.E.M. should have been elected within forty-eight hours after the resignation of Josingh Rynjah, but the Chairman ruled out this point of order. Hence, B.M.Roy and his supporters walked out on that issue. Hobell Rynjah polled 17 votes whereas B.M.Roy polled no vote at all. Hobell Rynjah retained H. Enowell Pohshna but dropped Rostanwell War. In his place, Jerlie E.Tariang was taken as Executive Member.

In the meantime, the Hills State movement was gaining
momentum in this District that more and more members of the District Council joined the group led by B.M. Roy who was a firm believer in the Hill State movement. Meanwhile, the Executive Committee suspended Jormanick Syiem from the office of Syiem of Mylliem. Thus, on 4th February, 1954, Bormanik Syiem tabled a no-confidence motion against the Executive Committee on the ground that the Executive Committee had hastily suspended his brother, Jormanick Syiem, and also on the ground that the Executive Committee had appointed 23 electors for the Mylliem Syiemship which was improper. Since seven members supported the motion, leave was granted. The motion was carried by 11 to 10 votes. Thus Hobell Rynjah was removed from office. On 27th February 1954, the District Council was summoned for the election of the Chief Executive Member. The two candidates who contested for the post were B.M. Roy and Rosaiah Nongrem, and B.M. Roy was elected by a majority of 12 to 10 votes. He selected Henry Cotton and Humphrey Hadem as his colleagues. Henry Cotton represented a Border Area constituency of the Shillong Sub-division whereas Humphrey Hadem belonged to the Jowai Sub-division. In the meantime, the same members who joined the group led by B.M. Roy to support the Hills State movement left the group after the States reorganisation Commission rejected the demand for the creation of a separate Hill State. Thus on 21st May 1956, B.M. Roy had to listen the same music with which he treated Hobell Rynjah in February 1954. Hobell Rynjah brought a non-confidence motion against the B.M. Roy Cabinet on four grounds. First, he charged the Executive Committee that it did not co-operate with the Government of Assam. Secondly, it did not utilise the housing loan scheme which was given at a low rate of interest. Thirdly, he further argued that the Executive Committee did not accept the amount of Rupees one lakh from the
State Government for distribution to the people living in the border areas for rehabilitation. Lastly, it did not take over primary education.

All these charges, judged in their face value, were no doubt true. But the real reasons for the no-confidence motion were to weaken the Hill State movement, personal revenge and greediness for power. When the motion was taken up for consideration, one of the Executive Members was absent because he was assured by the opposite side that he would get a seat in the new Executive Committee. Thus, B.M. Roy, was removed from office by a vote of no-confidence on 23rd May 1956.

The District Council then met on 25th May 1956 to elect a new Chief Executive Member. Once more, the old rivals, Josingh Rynjah and B.M. Roy contested for the post. Josingh Rynjah polled 15 votes. Since B.M. Roy, after he had assessed the situation, found that even those who had proposed and seconded his name would not vote for him, advised his supporters not to take part in the voting. Hence, B.M. Roy polled no vote. Josingh Rynjah thus became C.E.M. for the second time. As usual, while selecting his colleagues, each C.E.M. had always given undue importance to the Jowai Subdivision and to the Border Area, Josingh Rynjah had to take Jerlie E. Tariang and H.E. Poshna as his colleagues. But, within a short time, Rynjah dropped H.E. Poshna and took Humphrey Hadem in his place as a reward for his absence when the vote of no-confidence motion against B.M. Roy was taken up for consideration. Thus the Border Area was left, unrepresented. Rynjah remained in office till the next general election to the District Councils. Thus, the history of the formation of the Executive Committees during the period 1952 to 1958 was a story of musical chairs.
In the election of 1957, the Eastern India Tribal Union which had spearheaded the Hill State movement captured an overwhelming majority in the District Council. The Second District Council met on 7th January 1958 to elect a Chief Executive Member. For the first time, a Chief Executive Member was elected uncontested. Bransley Marpna Pugh was elected C.E.M. by a unanimous vote. Rev. B.M. Pugh refused to give importance to any area. He firmly believed in personal efficiency and able leadership. Thus, he took Theodore Cajee and Henry Cotton as Executive Members. Due to his differences of opinion with his colleagues and with party leaders over his policy of co-operation with the State Government in matters pertaining to the land acquisition policy of the Government of Assam Rev. B.M. Pugh was compelled to resign in 1960. Then the District Council elected Theodore Cajee as Chief Executive Member. In the meantime, a movement for a separate District Council for the Jowai Sub-division was gaining strength. T. Cajee, therefore, wanted to take one of the protagonists of this movement into his Executive Committee. Therefore, he inducted Edwingson Bareh as Executive Member. But since Henry Cotton was falling in line with with Rev. B.M. Pugh, he was not taken. Instead, T. Cajee took Rokendro Dkhar as a new Executive Member. Both Rev. B.M. Pugh and Henry Cotton left the Eastern India Tribal Union. Mr. T. Cajee died in September 1963. Edwingson Bareh was elected as Chief Executive member in a neck to neck contest. Both Edwingson Bareh and his opponent Humphrey polled equal number of votes, but Bareh was elected by the casting vote of the Chairman. Mr. Bareh set aside all considerations for the Border Area. Instead, he pleaded for the representation of the Western area of the Shillong Sub-division which had not been represented in all past Executive Committees. Hence, he took Hopingstone
Lyngdoh into his Cabinet, and, at the same time he retained Rokendro Dkhar. When a separate Jowai Autonomous District Council was formed in December 1964, Edwingson Bareh filed a suit in the High Court of Assam against the decision of the Government of Assam for the creation of such a separate District Council. But the suit was rejected by the Honourable High Court. An appeal preferred against it was also rejected by the Honourable Supreme Court. Hence in December 1965 Edwingson Bareh automatically ceased to be a member of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council. In January 1966, Wilson Reade was elected as the Chief Executive Member. Reade retained both Rokendro Dkhar and Hopingshine Lyngdoh as his colleagues.

In 1967 election, the APHLC captured 23 out of 24 seats of the District Council. But since the majority was so overwhelming, there were also many aspirants for the post. Hoover Hynniewta, a former MIP, and a great orator aspired the post. There was a strong lobbying within the party that he would take Sendrowell Moksha and Humphrey Nongrum into his Cabinet. The other aspirants were silent. Since the matter could not be decided upon by the APHLC Parliamentary Party, it was referred to the District Branch of the party. Through the process of consultation, negotiation and persuasion, Justman Swer was selected by the party and thus Justman Swer was elected as Chief Executive Member by a unanimous vote. Mr. Swer took Humphrey Nongrum and Darwin Diengdoh Pugh as Executive Members. But due to the pressure of party works, D.D.Pugh resigned and in his place, Snomick Kalwing was taken into the Executive Committee. Justman Swer continued in office till the expiry of his term in 1972.

In the 1972 general election to the District Council, none of the parties captured an absolute majority in the District Council.
The APHLC captured only 12 seats, the Hill State People's Democratic Party 11, the Congress 4 and the Independents 2. Since the APHLC could not capture an absolute majority, though it secured a plural majority, it refused to align itself with any party and group. The party also gave a directive that it should sit in the opposition. With the backing of the Congress members and Independents, the HSPDP was successful in getting one of its party members nominated by the Governor. With the same support, the HSPDP proceeded to form the Executive Committee. L.Gilbert Shullai, one of the organisers of the students demonstration on 27th June 1952, was elected as C.E.M. by a unanimous vote. Shullai took Syrtok Singh Nongrum as his colleague and for the first time a lady, Luisiana Brosila Lamin was taken into the Executive Committee. L.G.Shullai commanded the respect of the members by his amiable nature and gentle behaviour. It must be remembered that the Khasi Hills District Council is the first of the District Councils in the North-Eastern India to have included a lady member into the Executive Committee. But without assigning any reason L.Gilbert Shullai resigned the post on 14th June 1975. Later on, he expressed his view that he had to resign because he had to turn his eyes backward many times, before he could push anything ahead. In other words, he did not like to head an Executive Committee which had to depend on the support of other parties. He does not believe in any form of coalition or any semblance of a coalition.

Before he actually resigned from the post, L.G. Shullai, had already told his party of his intention. Therefore the party leaders decided that Bokstarwell Wanning should be elected as the new C.E.M. and that A.Blingstodar Diengdoh and Markus Lyngdoh should be taken as Executive Members. But Syrtok Singh Nongrum
became very active in his effort to be given a chance to remain as Executive Member. Eventually he had his way. Thus Bakstarwell Wanniang was unanimously elected as C.E.M. and he took A.B. Diengdoh and S.S. Nongrum as his colleagues. In complete disgust, both Markus Iyngdoh and L.B. Lamin resigned from the HSPDP. On two occasions, both of them tried to get the support of the APHLC members for a no-confidence motion, but on both the occasions they failed to enlist the support of the APHLC and hence the non-confidence motion against the Executive Committee could not be tabled.

Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council: The first election to the Jowai Autonomous District Council took place early in 1967 and the APHLC captured an absolute majority. Edwingson Bareh was elected as Chief Executive Member by a unanimous vote. Since Bareh came from the northern part, he decided to take one from the central area and one from the Border area. Therefore he selected S.K. Shilla and John Deng Pohrmen as Executive Members. But at the time when the election to the Assembly of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya took place, S.K. Shilla aspired also to be elected to the State Assembly. When he found that he could not be accommodated he resigned from the post of Executive Member. Bareh then took B.B. Shallam as the Executive Member. Bareh resigned the post of Chief Executive Member in March 1970 to join the Sangma Cabinet. In his place, John Deng Pohrmen was unanimously elected as C.E.M., though of course he had to face a contest in the APHLC parliamentary party with Chiwot Khonglah. Pohrmen retained B.B. Shallam and took C. Swer as the new Executive Member.
The election to the second District Council took place in 1973 and the APHLC, once again captured an absolute majority. John Deng Pohrmen was elected as C.E.M. for the second term by a unanimous vote. This time, Pohrmen retained C. Swer but dropped B. B. Shallam on the ground that B. B. Shallam was both an M.L.A. and an M.D.C. In his place, Pohrmen took Tylli Kyndiah as an Executive Member. But B. B. Shallam was very unhappy. Therefore, he created a number of critical situations in the party. Eventually, he became satisfied when he was taken as a Minister of State in the Sangma Ministry in February 1975.