Chapter XVI

The All-Party Hill Leaders Conference: Its Birth and Its Role:

In 1947, the late Gopinath Bardoloi, then premier of Assam declared "The new accepted policy of his government was - Assam for the Assamese". Mahatma Gandhi, who was always the champion of the oppressed felt very sorry at that time for the victims of a policy that would go against the very basic principle of the Constitution of India. Not a voice was raised in reply when the Mahatma asked - "to whom would India belong?" Regardless of the Mahatma's advice G.N. Bardoloi said in the same year at Golaghat: "Undoubtedly, Assam is for the Assamese. By Assam is meant the entire territory within the geographical limit of the State of Assam and by Assamese is meant only those who mother tongue is Assamese".

From that time onwards, there had been a strong demand in the plains districts of Assam that Assamese should be declared as the official language. This cause was championed by many organisations in the plains and also by the Press. But the aim of the Assamese people could not be materialised due to vehement opposition from the hills people who in turn had to fight for a separate Hill State. Inspite of the delay, the people of the plain districts did not rest. Time and again, the demand to declare Assamese language as the State language had been constantly urged, right from Nilmoni Phukan upto Hareswar Goswami.

The agitation in the plains districts was so great that Hareswar Goswami and Gaurisankar Bhattacharjee had to make a demand on the floor of the Assam Legislative Assembly during its Budget Session 1960 that Assamese should be made the official language of...
the State. But Chief Minister B.P. Chaliha calmly replied on 3rd April, 1960 thus: "The Government have not taken any decision on the subject yet. I would, however, mention that the Government have not underestimated its importance or the request that has been made by the Assam Sahitya Sabha and other institutions for the declaration of Assamese as the State language. Perhaps there are two important reasons which warrant an enactment on the State language. The first is to make the official communications easily understandable to the common man and the second is to break the barrier of language which now separates the diverse population of Assam........ The Government feels that this question should be judged, more from the point of view of majority and minority. If this issue is decided only on the basis of majority and minority, Government is afraid that is object would be defeated. Government would prefer to wait till they get the demand from the non-Assamese speaking population for the declaration of Assamese as State language".

This statement made by B.P. Chaliha on the floor of the House was received with a mixed feeling. The moderate leaders of the plains and the Congress leaders in the hills considered the statement as a real show of statesmanship. But the militant group thought that B.P. Chaliha was pro-Bengali if not anti-Assamese because the Bengalees would never demand Assamese to be the official language of the State. A sharp reaction to this statement was a widespread agitation all over the Brahmaputra valley. Therefore, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee which met on 22nd April, 1960 decided to direct the Chief Minister to declare Assamese as the official language of Assam. The immediate reaction to this decision of the APCC was the meeting of the All Assam Hill Leaders' Conference held at Tura on 28th April 1960 which decided to vehemently oppose the
decision of the APCC but to heartily welcome the statement of the Chief Minister which he made on 3rd April, 1960. But this Conference did not say a word about the formation of a separate Hill State. It only demanded the suitable amendments of the Sixth Schedule.

The hill leaders had full faith in the statement made by the Chief Minister. But pressure mounted to such an extent that made Chief Minister Chaliha to announce on the floor of the House on 3rd June 1960 that the official language Bill would be introduced in the current Session on the lines suggested by the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee. This statement was enthusiastically welcomed by the people of the Brahmaputra valley. But the people of Cachar District resented it while the people of the autonomous hills districts were bewildered. When the leaders from the hill areas and Cachar district sought clarification from the Chief Minister, B.P. Chaliha replied that in the prevailing circumstances, it was no longer possible to postpone the decision on this question. He explained that emotions had been roused and sentiments had been played up and the State had passed through some unfortunate happenings which brought shame and disgrace to the fair name of the State. He further said that the amount of damage caused by the language movement was enormous. In fact the cause itself had suffered. Development works were held up and all attention was concentrated on the maintenance of law and order. Thus the process of disintegration of Assam started. The immediate result was the birth of the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

Immediately after the Chief Minister had made his statement to declare Assamese as the State language, Capt. W.A.Sangma expressed his sense of sorrow and unhappiness at the decision of the Government in this matter. When Capt. Sangma discussed this unhappy decision with B.P. Chaliha, the latter advised him to call a Conference
of all the Hill Leaders and to ascertain from them whether they were also opposed to Assamese as official language. Perhaps, Chaliha might have got wrong reports about the fact that the Hill people were opposed to Assamese as official language. He thought that the majority of the hill leaders were indifferent to this issue. Capt. Sangma accepted the advice and, characterising it as a matter of "National importance", sent out invitations to all the hill leaders irrespective of their party affiliations and all hill leaders of all shades of public opinion to foregather in his official residence known as "Good Wood" in Shillong on the 6th July 1960, to discuss the grave situation arising out of the impending official language legislation by the Government of Assam.

On the 6th July 1960 as many as 106 delegates attended the Conference. Rev. B.M.Pugh was unanimously elected to the chair and R.S.Lyngdoh and M.N.Majaw were elected as Recording Secretaries. The number of delegates was increased on the 7th July when the delegates from the Mizo Hills and the North Cachar Hills arrived. All the political parties in the autonomous hill districts including the Congress and the Swatantra were well represented in the Conference. When the Conference was called to order, and the reasons and purpose of the Conference having been explained in detail, a lively discussion ensued and all those who took part were unanimous in their resolve to oppose the official language Bill to the last. But C.S.Teron was of the opinion that Assamese should be declared only for the Assamese people, with no imposition upon the other people of Assam. He suggested that in the meantime a status quo should be maintained. He urged the conference to pass only one resolution condemning the act of lawlessness in the plains. S.S. Terang also was of the same opinion with C.S.Teron. After they had
spoken, both of them left the Conference, never to participate again in future Conferences. The Conference was marked by rhetorical eloquence. One delegate from the Mizoram declared with emotion that "even if all the Khasis and Garos were to abandon the struggle in midstream, we the Mizoos will go it all alone". But this same leader was among those who did not resign the Assembly seat when called upon by the party and later became Minister for Soil Conservation in the Assam Cabinet for a short while. Nevertheless, the Conference resolved to constitute itself into a political entity to be known as the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

After having considered the move to declare Assamese as a language for all or any of the official purposes in the State of Assam, and after having been informed that a Bill to that effect would be introduced in the ensuing session of the State Assembly, the APHLC "unanimously and unequivocally expresses its strong and determined opposition to such a move" for various reasons. First, the acceptance of Assamese at any time would place the Assamese in a more dominant position and it would lead to the assimilation of all the Hills peoples into the Assamese community. Secondly, the imposition of Assamese language would overburden the hills' people with too many languages - Hindi, the vernaculars, English and Assamese - in different scripts. Thirdly, notwithstanding any amount of safeguards which could always be circumvented, the adoption of Assamese as the official language would adversely affect the employment opportunities of the Hills people in the Government offices and other avocations. Fourthly, there was no justification for declaring Assamese as the official language because less than fifty percent of the population of the State had Assamese as their mother tongue. Fifthly, the move had already created discord,

disruption and violence among the different language groups of the State, thereby defeating the very purpose which the official language was intended to serve. Sixthly, the imposition of the language by law would create more chaos and insecurity in such a frontier state, which would be catastrophic especially in view of the Chinese aggression. Lastly, "Assam being India-in-ministure, inhabited by people of diverse races, culture and languages, the proper official language should be Hindi - Meanwhile, English should continue as the official language until such time as the people of the State are ready to adopt Hindi as the official language."

Thus, the Conference urged upon the Government of Assam to drop the proposed Bill in fairness to the just claims of the people of the Autonomous Districts, and in the interests of the Unity and security of India.

The Conference deplored the deterioration in the law and order situation of the State over the question of the official language of the State. It expressed its grief at the various unfortunate incidents that had taken place in different parts of the State. It also expressed sympathy to those who were affected by such act of lawlessness. The Conference, therefore, was of the opinion that "notwithstanding the merits and demerits of the official language issue, peace and order should be maintained at all cost". It called upon all people of the State irrespective of communities and languages to fully co-operate with the authorities for the maintenance of law and order, and in particular it appealed to the people of the Autonomous Districts to continue maintaining peace and order as they had been doing all along.

The Conference also resolved to constitute a Council of Action to take all necessary steps for the realisation of the
objectives of the Conference. Excepting Mikir Hills, all the Autonomous Districts were represented in the Council of Action.

The first meeting of the Council of Action met at "Mountain View" Shillong on 8th July 1960 and elected Pu.A.Thanglura and S.D.D.Nichols-Roy as Chairman and General-Secretary respectively. Then the Council of Action prepared an elaborate memorandum and submitted it to the President of India. The memorandum was drafted in the spirit of the resolutions passed by the Conference on 7th July 1960.

The fear of imposition of Assamese and assimilation, as the memorandum pointed out, was so great that it cut across party lines and for the first time in history, brought about a completely united party of the tribal political leaders in North-Eastern Region. The fate of the plain tribals such as the Baros, the Miris, the Rabhas, the Lalungs, the Deweris and other tribes was not to be repeated in the case of the other Hill Tribes, said the memorandum. Further, although Assamese is one of the fourteen languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, yet the Assamese did not constitute seventy percent of the population of the State. Therefore, the APHLC pointed out that even the States Reorganisation Commission had admitted that "Assam is not unilingual because Assamese do not constitute seventy percent of the population". Therefore, the memorandum concluded that the Hills People would not learn Assamese.

On 21st August 1960, the APHLC leaders met the Parliamentary Delegation to discuss over the Assamese language tangle. The APHLC leaders had only one last word to tell the Delegation. They only said that they would not accept Assamese as the official language of the State.

The second APHLC was held in Shillong on 22nd and 23rd
August 1960 to discuss the language policy of the Government once again. The second Conference approved the memorandum submitted by the Council of Action to the President of India. Since the Government of Assam did not listen to the demand of the APHLC to drop the official language Bill, the second APHLC, for the first time resolved that if Assamese was going to be declared as the official language of the State, the Hills people would have no other alternative than to demand separation from Assam. Once again, the APHLC appealed to all concerned to see that peace and order should be maintained at all cost. Further, the Conference gave its assurance that the non-tribal residents in the autonomous Hill Districts and their legitimate interests would be fully safeguarded in the proposed State.

The Government of India was watching the course of events with great concern. The Chief Minister of Assam was the most worried man. Chaliha along with the President of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee organised a Conference of all political parties in which Pandit Pant, the Union Home Minister was also invited to participate. In this Conference, the representatives of the Brahmaputra Valley expressed the view that Assamese should be made the only official language of the State. The representatives from the Cachar district expressed the view that both Assamese and Bengali should be declared the official languages of Assam. The APHLC pleaded that English should continue for an indefinite period until it was replaced by Hindi, and that they would never accept Assamese as the official language. There were some others who suggested that English should be the official language. But Pandit Pant brought forward the bilingual formula. According to the Pant formula, Assamese and Hindi should be made the official languages. At the secretariat level only English should be used until replaced by Hindi. The Government
of Assam instantly accepted the Pant formula. But the Assamese people strongly protested and hence the bilingual formula was thrown to the wind.

Thus, the Government of Assam decided to go ahead with the original Official Language Bill. On 10th October 1960, the Chief Minister sought leave of the House to introduce the Assam Official Language Bill. But, at the leave stage, Capt. W.A. Sangma, Joymanick Syiem, A. Thanglura and Biswanath Upadhyya strongly opposed against the leave. A. Thanglura pleaded that Hindi should be the official language because the national language would bring unity to all the races and communities. Capt. W.A. Sangma prophetically said that the declaration of Assamese as the official language would bring about the disintegration of the State. This view was shared by Biswanath Upadhyya. Both Jormanick Syiem and Maham Singh supported the view of A. Thanglura. As a protest against this action, all the tribal members of the Chaliha Ministry resigned enbloc.

There was widespread opposition to the Assam official language Bill in all the Autonomous Districts excepting Mikir Hills. The Council of Action of the APHLC which met on 14th October 1960 decided to hold procession, a public meeting and a hartal at Shillong, Tura and Aizawl and if possible at Haflong. The Council of Action also decided to send a delegation to Delhi to protest against the Assam Official Language Bill. When this Bill was introduced in the Assam Legislative Assembly on 18th October 1960, all the members representing the autonomous Hill Districts excluding Mikir Hills staged a walk out. On the evening of the same day, the Council of Action of the APHLC met to discuss about the future course of action. After Capt. W.A. Sangma had explained about what had happened in the Assembly, it decided that the different district branches of the
APHLC should observe 24th October 1960 as a Protest Day and they should try to make it successful, peaceful and dignified. It also selected the members to constitute a delegation, to be sent to New Delhi. The delegation was a representative one. The Delegation was authorised to go to Delhi as soon as possible, to negotiate with the Central Government regarding the principle of the separation of the autonomous Hill Districts from Assam.

On the 24th October 1960, Shillong witnessed the biggest procession and a public meeting ever seen so far. The hartal, procession and public meeting in Shillong, Tura and Aizawl were successful, peaceful and orderly. There was no untoward incident anywhere. But such function could not be held at Haflong due to the fact that the time at the disposal was too short. The Council of Action met again on 25th October, on 29th October and on 2nd November 1960. On 2nd November 1960, the Council of Action unanimously adopted a resolution reiterating its firm determination to follow peaceful and constitutional methods for the realization of the objectives of the Conference, that is the formation of a separate State for the hill areas. By another resolution, the Council of Action decided to set up a youth volunteer organisation. The Council of Action which met on 5th November 1960, decided that the draft memorandum to be submitted to the Prime Minister be distributed to all members of the Council. The draft memorandum was discussed in extenso on 9th November 1960 and it was finally approved by the Council of Action in the meeting held on 11th November 1960.

The historic Conference: The third APHLC which was held on 16th, 17th and 18th November 1960, at Haflong with Joy Bhadra Hagjer in the Chair was a milestone in the history of the APHLC in particular and in the Hill State movement in general. For the first time in its
history, the APHLC, in clear and unambiguous language demanded the creation of a separate state for the Hill areas to be known as the Eastern Frontier State.

It was in this Conference that the APHLC framed the Constitution for the Hill State. The State would be known as "The Eastern Frontier State". It should comprise of all the Tribal areas of Assam and NEFA and the Municipality and Cantonment areas of Shillong. It might also include other geographically contiguous areas predominantly inhabited by tribal people and the tribal areas of Manipur and Tripura.

The State legislature should consist of the Governor and a unicameral legislature which should consist of 60 members to be elected directly on the basis of adult suffrage from single member constituencies. The Eastern Frontier State would be represented to the Lok Sabha by one member from each autonomous district and by two members from NEFA, and by three members from all the autonomous districts and NEFA to the Rajya Sabha.

The Constitution also provided that the Sixth Schedule should remain, but suitable amendments should be effected in order to increase the powers of the District Councils.

The Eastern Frontier State should have its own Governor and a Council of Ministers, a High Court, a University and a Public Service Commission with English as the official language until replaced by Hindi. But the Accountant General of Assam might be the Accountant General of this State.

The Constitution also promised protection of the legitimate interests of the minorities.

The Conference also decided to send a strong 12 man representative delegation to meet the Prime Minister and other Central leaders to press before them the demand for the formation of a
separate State according to the plan adopted by the Conference.

The APHLC Delegation and the Prime Minister: The APHLC delegation met the Prime Minister on 24th November 1960. But before receiving the delegation, the Prime Minister consulted the Chief Minister B.P. Chaliha. Chaliha gave a detailed reply to the points which were likely to be raised by the APHLC delegation. Before discussing the Hill State issue, Capt. Sangma first raised his strong objection against the Assam Official Language Act. Pandit Nehru also agreed with the delegation that the language Act should not have been passed at all. He told the delegation that the Act was passed against his advice. But, the Prime Minister assured the delegation that there was no need to fear that Assamese would be imposed on the hills people. He further said that knowledge of Assamese would not be necessary for the Secretariat works. Further, English, Hindi and Bengali could also be used in the Assam Legislative Assembly. Further, the Prime Minister said that letters, petitions and memorials could be in English, Hindi and Bengali apart from Assamese; that Assamese would not be made compulsory for the recruitment of officers for the Assam Civil Services. But the officers of the State Government should pass a departmental test in Assamese, Bengali or a Tribal language.

At this juncture, S.D.D. Nichols-Roy told the Prime Minister that recent events in Assam had convinced the Hills people that their progress, the preservation of their culture, their language and their area would be possible only if a separate state was created for the Hill Areas. He argued vehemently that the Assamese were making every effort to thrust their culture and their language on the hills people.
As explained by Chaliha, the Prime Minister told the delegation that Assamese would not be imposed on any non-Assamese district of the State. There would be no disability as regards employment. Further, Article 220 of the Constitution clearly states that the proceedings of the Assembly should be conducted in the official language or the languages of the State or in Hindi or English. With the permission of the Speaker, any member could express himself in any other language. Therefore, there would be no difficulty about the use of other language in the State Assembly.

He further pointed out that English would continue to be used as an associate language for the transaction of business at the secretariat level. Further, under Article 350 of the Constitution, petitions, memorials and appeals could be in any language used in the State. Ordinances, Acts, Bills, Amendments to be moved in the State Assembly and orders and regulations issued by the Government and bye-laws framed should be in English as envisaged under Article 348 of the Constitution.

After the Prime Minister had explained about the assurances given by B.P. Chaliha, Stanley Nichols-Roy said that those assurances given by Chaliha would not be useful or effective because the Language Act would affect the hills people at the State level. He further pointed out that even Chaliha had changed his mind many times over the language question because he had to act under the pressure of the Assamese people of the Brahmaputra valley.

Pandit Nehru who was always thinking that financial viability would be the most important criterion for the formation of any State could not agree to the demand put forward by the APHLC for the creation of a Hill State. He said that once such a State was created the whole financial burden would fall on the Government of India. He further pointed out that all development works could
thrive only when the Hills and Plains remained in the same State so that the resources of the Hills and the Plains could always be complimentary. The Prime Minister forgot the fact that even at that time none of the States in India was fully and financially self-supporting. They would always ask the Central Government to come forward with more funds for development programmes.

On 25th November 1960, the APHLC delegation met the Home Minister who was more stubborn than the Prime Minister in his resistance to concede the demand for Hill State. He pointed out that the resources of the Hills and the Plains were so interrelated and complimentary in such a manner that separation would only retard the progress at the expense both of the Hills and Plains. Then he posed a question - whether the Hill leaders were conscious of the problems that the proposed State might have to face. However, he assured the delegation that the Central Government were keenly interested in the economic development of the Hill Areas. He further assured that suitable amendments to the Sixth Schedule might be affected in order to endow the District Councils with more powers. The Home Minister who was at one time the Chief Minister of one of the biggest but the most populous State in India narrated about his experience in his own State and pointed out that there were great advantages in bigger States. Finally he advised the APHLC delegation that the Hills and Plains of Assam should live together like husband and wife in a happy married life.

On the other hand, the APHLC delegation strongly asserted that the relationship between the Hills and the Plains was an imposed marriage on the unwilling couple, and as such, it could not be expected that it would be a happy marriage. Hence, when one party wanted separation, divorce should be granted despite the fact that the other party did not want for such a course. The delegation gave
the note of warning that he should remember that the people of the hill areas had become restless. Unless the Government of India had faith in the liberal, patriotic and constitutional leadership of the APHLC, the extremist elements might capture the leadership and they might create unnecessary critical situations. Hence, the formation of a separate Hill State was an absolute necessity.

Again the Home Minister argued that there was a difficulty in creating such a state because the Hill Areas were not geographically contiguous. At this juncture a member of the delegation coming from Mizoram, Pu Saprawnga told the Home Minister that if geographically contiguity was an impediment to the creation of a Hill State, the Mizo Hills was prepared to be kept out of the proposed Hill State. This statement was significant inasmuch as the future course of events was concerned. It appeared that even at that time the leaders from the Mizo Hills were more in favour of getting a separate Mizoram State.

The APHLC delegation met the Prime Minister again on 26th November 1960. The whole dialogue was characterised by the repetition of the same arguments and counter arguments already advanced by both sides on previous occasion. However, the Prime Minister presented his own plan to the delegation as an alternative to Hill State. This plan came to be popularly known as the Scottish Pattern Plan. The Prime Minister explained that the only satisfactory solution to the problem was to grant the Hills people full authority in internal affairs of the hill areas and full control over expenditure and freedom to choose their own language for their own areas and in their own administration. The Prime Minister, probably thought that this plan would give the Hills people the main essence of what they had wanted. He also visualised the idea that the Hill areas would
continue to enjoy the same advantages of a common state. He assured the delegation that necessary funds would be placed at the disposal of the Tribal Areas Department which would invariably be handled by a Minister from a tribal area. Hence, the hills people might not have to depend on the goodwill of the State Government. He further assured that the representatives from the tribal areas should have the right of discussing their own development plans directly with the Planning Commission. He would also welcome the representatives from the hill areas to the meetings of the National Development Council in Delhi.

So far as legislation was concerned, the Prime Minister gave the assurance that no legislation passed by the Assam Legislative Assembly could be enforced in the Hill Areas without the consent of the representatives of the hill areas. He suggested that there should be a Council of Representatives from the autonomous hills districts at the State level to which all bills passed by the Assam Assembly should be referred for consideration.

Lastly, the Prime Minister promised that he would seriously consider the measures necessary to ensure adequate delegation of powers in order to enable the hills people to undertake development programmes in the hill areas.

The members of the delegation gave an elaborate report at a meeting of the Council of Action which met in Shillong on 1st December 1960 about the talks that they had with the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. They also told the Council that they had also a dialogue with S.N. Sinha, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. They also informed the Council that they were surprised to hear from Mr. and Mrs. Kripalani when they met them that they were informed by Chaliha that everything was calm and peaceful in Assam.
The Council of Action directed the General Secretary to prepare a written report about the various interviews that the delegation had in Delhi. But at the meeting of the Council of Action which was held on 12th December 1960, it was decided that as many members of the delegation as were present in Shillong should submit an official report of the Delhi talks. The members of the delegation gave a full written report at a meeting of the Council of Action which was held in Shillong on 7th January 1961. After a long discussion on the subject, the council of action resolved as follows:

"The Council of Action of the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference which met on January 7, 1961, considered the official report of the Delegation of the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference which met the Prime Minister and Home Minister on the 24th, 25th and 26th November 1960 over the demand for a separate State and in the process seriously discussed the alternative proposals to a separate State made by the Prime Minister. The Council of Action, however, regretted that it could not accept the proposals and reiterated that the creation of a separate State for the hill areas would be the only solution acceptable to the hill people".

The Council of Action met again on 9th January 1961 to discuss about the future course of action to be adopted by the Party. The Council of Action came out with the following resolution:

"The Council of Action having rejected the alternative proposals to the creation of a separate State on the pattern approved by the 3rd All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference hereby resolves that steps be taken to persuade the Prime Minister, by further negotiation, to agree to the creation of a separate State and for this purpose request him to pay a visit to Shillong, early, for discussion with the members of the Council of Action regarding
Should the creation of the separate State be not achieved by negotiation, the Council further resolves that the movement be intensified and that all the hill leaders and the hill people be called upon to prepare for all eventualities for the achievement of the separate Eastern Frontier State.

The General Secretary then wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, informing him about the resolution of the Council of Action of the APHLC. In his reply, the Prime Minister expressed his inability to visit Shillong in the near foreseeable future and his conviction that his recent proposals would best serve the interests of the Hill people. The Council of Action then met on 15th March 1961 to consider the various steps to be taken for strengthening the Hill State movement. After considerable discussion, the Council of Action recommended to the All-Party Hill leaders' Conference the following steps to be taken towards the achievement of the goal. First, that a date be fixed for the resignation of all hill M.L.As. and other elected representatives. Secondly, that a complete boycott be carried out of all future elections. Thirdly, that a date be fixed for the withdrawal of all hill members from all boards and committees etc. under the Government of Assam. Fourthly, that further steps be considered and planned, if necessary, for the achievement of a separate State. Fifthly, that meanwhile, a delegation be sent to meet the Prime Minister again in order to explain why the hill people could not accept the Scottish Pattern plan as an alternative to a separate state, and to impress upon him the need for the creation of a separate State for the hill areas of Assam.

Meanwhile, the District Congress Committees in the hill areas had already decided to accept the Scottish Pattern plan. The Governor, Srimagesh also agreed with the general approach of the Prime Minister.
to the problem of the Hill Areas. It appears that B.I. Chaliha was also agreeable to the proposals. This is evident from a letter that the Prime Minister wrote to the Governor which was as follows:

"Whenever I have spoken to him on the subject and I have done so on two or three occasions - I have presumed his agreement on this broad approach. You might, if you like, put this to him". But when the Governor sent a copy of this letter to him, Chaliha did not say anything on the subject. Perhaps, Chaliha preferred not to say anything on such subject of high importance. He was inclined to watch the reaction to the proposals. His mind appeared to be working under the assumption that if the reaction was favourable he might accept the plan, but if it was not favourable he would prefer to stand by his own convictions and ideas which he had already expressed.

It may be recalled that the Prime Minister had offered his plan and had suggested also the means of implementing it. The Prime Minister had also expressed the desire to send C.P. Singh, former Governor of Punjab to study the local situation and then to make recommendation to the extent to which the Scottish Pattern plan was applicable to the Hill Areas of Assam. But when the Governor consulted B.I. Chaliha the latter was not in favour of C.P. Singh's visit to Assam. Therefore, the Governor informed the Prime Minister that the time was not yet opportune for the visit of C.P. Singh to Shillong. It appears that by this time, the reaction to the Scottish Pattern plan in the Assam Congress circles was not favourable.

The Scottish Pattern Plan: The Scottish Pattern Plan as visualised by the Prime Minister Nehru contained the following features.

First, the plan contemplated that there should be a Regional Committee consisting of all the elected members of the Assam Legislative Assembly representing the autonomous hill districts similar to the Committee constituted by the British House of Commons for
Secondly, special development programmes of the hill areas at the State level would be under the control of a high powered statutory State Council. This Council should consist of representatives from the Hill Areas. It would have all the functions including planning and execution, and it would not be interfered with by the Chief Minister or by any non-hill Minister of the Assam Ministry. This Council should have full authority to allocate funds for the development of all areas financed by the Government of India under Article 275 of the Constitution.

Thirdly, as regards legislation, the M.L.As. representing the Hill Areas should form a committee which was to be presided over by a Hill Minister. All legislation affecting the hill areas should not be applied to the hill areas without the consent of the Hill M.L.As.

Fourthly, there should be a minister of the Cabinet rank from any of the hill districts; one or more Deputy Ministers might be appointed in order that all the autonomous hill districts would be adequately represented. The Hill Minister would be the main executive authority so far as the hill areas were concerned.

Fifthly, in case of disagreement between the Regional Council and the Legislative Assembly, the matter should be referred to the Governor who would act in his own discretion and his decision would be final.

Sixthly, the funds required for the execution of plans and development schemes in the autonomous hill districts should be shown separately in the Budget and they would be administered separately.
Finally, the Sixth Schedule might be amended so as to enable the District Councils and the regional councils to get more autonomy.

The fourth All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference which was held in Shillong on 5th 6th and 7th April 1961, with Pu Saprawnga in the Chair considered the Scottish Pattern Plan in its fullest details. The Conference pointed out that such a plan had already been experimented during 1958 to 1960 and it was not found practicable. Since the Hill areas would still form part of Assam, there would be many occasions for friction and discord in future. In fact, it would bring about greater conflicts.

Further, the statutory State Council was only an extension of the existing Advisory Council which had been a failure. It was further pointed out that such a council would not be able to function effectively unless it had the authority to initiate and control all the normal work to be carried in the Hill areas by the different Departments of the Government of Assam. It should have full control of all the affairs in the Hills both over special development programmes and over the normal programmes under the State general plan, not only for planning and allocation of funds but also for super-vision and actual implementation of the plans. This, of course, would mean that there should be a separate secretariat as well as separate departments under its control. The APHLC stated that "If this is agreed to, then full administrative separation has been conceded and we see no reason why full political separation cannot be given". Further, the APHLC pointed out thus. "If the hill representatives could function independently of the representatives of the plains without any interference from the Chief Minister or any non-Hill Minister then why full separation should not be granted at legislative level also".
Finally, the APHLC said that the Scottish Pattern Plan was not of any practical solution to the real aspiration of the hill people because it merely suggested certain administrative arrangements. It did not indicate how the language issue would be solved.

Thus, the fourth All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference did not accept the Scottish Pattern plan but reiterated its demand of a separate state for the Hill areas. It also resolved to call upon the people of the autonomous Hills districts to boycott the next general election to the Assam Legislative Assembly. It also decided to send a delegation to Delhi once more to press the demand for Hill State.

The result of all these discussion was the disagreement between the Prime Minister and the APHLC.

The APHLC delegation proceeded to Delhi with a specific mandate from the party that it would explain the Prime Minister the reasons why the APHLC could not accept his proposals. The delegation met the Prime Minister on 17th May and the Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri on 18th May 1961. The Prime Minister assured the delegation that the details of his proposals were to be spelled out by a Commission to be appointed for the purpose. But the delegation said that unless the language question was included in the terms of reference the APHLC would not agree to the appointment of such a Commission. Thus, there was no progress in the talk, and the delegation returned disappointed. The Council of Action which met on 20th May 1961 approved the stand taken by the delegation.

The members of the Council of Action in a body met the Prime Minister at Raj Bhavan, Shillong at 5 P.M. on 21st May 1961. In this interview, neither the Prime Minister could convince the APHLC nor the APHLC could convince the Prime Minister, and thus the talk
ended in a stalemate. The Prime Minister also returned to Delhi disappointed. The Council of Action which met on 22nd May 1961 decided that the fifth Conference should be convened immediately.

Since the District Congress Committee had already expressed their willingness to accept the Scottish Pattern plan, they severed all their connections with the APKLC. But some of them remained with the APKLC. Leaders like G.G. Swell and others resigned from the Congress, while leaders like Bronson Nomin, Tamon Passah and others did not resign from the Congress but remained with the APKLC. Maham Singh a Congress Leader was appointed Minister for Tribal Areas Department. The Congress leaders in the Hill areas began to campaign vigorously in favour of the acceptance of the Scottish Pattern Plan.

The fifth All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference met at Tura on 29th and 30th June and 1st July 1961 with R.G. Nomin in the chair. This Conference finally decided to reject the Scottish Pattern Plan. It also resolved to call upon the people of the autonomous Hills Districts to launch a non-violent, non-cooperation satyagraha to show their determination to separate from Assam. Further, it called upon the hill M.L.As. to resign their membership from the Assam Assembly, it called upon all hill members to resign from the various Boards, Committees etc. constituted by the Government of Assam, it also called upon the M.P. to resign from the Parliament. All resignations should be tendered on or before 24th October 1961. It also took strong exceptions of the unilateral decisions by the Khasi, Garo and North Cachar District Congress Committees to accept the proposals without previously having a joint discussion.

It may be noted that while the majority of the APKLC members resigned from all the Boards, Committees and the like, some others refused to resign and joined hands with the protagonists of the
Scottish Pattern Plan. A. Thanglura and Larsingh Khryiem also refused to resign from the membership of the legislature and the Committees. Thus both of them severed their connection with the APHLC. Hoover Myniehsta hesitated to resign from the Lok Sabha, but after long process of persuasional, he resigned his seat from the Lok Sabha. However, the Council of Action which met on 2nd August 1961 declared that since A. Thanglura and Kistobin Rymbai had openly declared that they could not abide by the resolution of the 5th APHLC, and since they had tendered their resignation, both of them ceased to be members of the APHLC.

Meanwhile, the Hill Congress Convention was held in Shillong on 31st July 1961 where excepting the Jaintia District Congress Committee, all the Hill district Committees were represented. This Convention reiterated the decision made by the different District Congress Committees to accept the proposals of the Prime Minister as an alternative to the formation of the Eastern Frontier State.

The Council of Action of the APHLC held a series of meetings to plan for the future line of action. In its meeting held on 4th September 1961 it decided that 24th October should be observed as the Demand Day for the creation of the Eastern Frontier State, when processions, rallies and public meetings should be held in all the Hill districts. The call of the APHLC was responded to by the Hill people and the Demand Day was observed in the most peaceful and dignified manner.

After the Hills Congress Convention had made it clear that the Congress would contest the third general election on the issue of the Scottish Pattern Plan, the APHLC was compelled to revise its decision to boycott the general election to the State Assembly and Parliament. The APHLC leaders were and still are essentially,
pragmatists. They feared that their opponents would contest the elections and they might get elected both to the Assembly and Parliament and thereby demonstrate to the whole civilized world that the APHLC had no following in the Hill areas. Therefore, at its sixth meeting which was held at Aizawl from 14th to 16th September 1961, the APHLC authorised the Council of Action to re-examine the question. The Council of Action which met in Shillong on 6th October 1961 decided that the APHLC would contest the third general elections. It also decided that all the successful candidates should resign their membership of the State Assembly with effect from the date to be determined by the APHLC.

The 1962 elections to the State Assembly and to the Lok Sabha were characterised by the fact that the APHLC fought on the issue of a separate Hill State whereas the Congress fought on the issue of the Scottish Pattern Plan. The APHLC set up candidates from all the fifteen seats available for the autonomous districts and captured eleven seats. It polled an absolute majority of the votes polled in the autonomous Hill Districts. So also was the result of the election to the Lok Sabha.

After this spectacular victory at the polls, the 7th session of the APHLC which met in Shillong from 20th to 24th March 1962 decided to submit representations to the Government of India to further press its demand for Hill State upon the verdict of the elections. The Conference also decided to entrust to the Council of Action for fixing the date of the resignation of the M.L.As. from the Assam Assembly. But inspite of the astounding victory of the APHLC in the elections to the State Assembly and to the Lok Sabha, and inspite of the repeated representations to the Central Government, the Hill State demand was not conceded. The APHLC
became more determined than ever before because it fully realised the full support given by the people during the polls. It began to intensify the movement by making elaborate campaigns to educate the people. The leaders carried on agitation without any break. The Council of Action which met on 9th May 1962 directed all elected APHLC members of the State Assembly to resign on or before the 24th October 1962. On the 16th June 1962, eight of the eleven APHLC members of the State legislature tendered their resignation, but their resignation was to take effect from 24th October. The Honourable Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly expressed his inability to accept the resignation letters of the honourable members which were to take effect at a future date. Therefore, the council of Action directed its M.L.As. to resign on any date forthwith.

In the meantime something happened. Some members of the Assembly belonging to the APHLC weaned away from the Hill State Demand, perhaps due to some allurements offered by the Government of Assam. Nalindra Sangma, Emerson Momin, H.Enowell Pohshna and R. Thanhlira refrained themselves from attending any of the meetings of the Council of Action. By the month of August 1962, it became clear that the four gentlemen had fully associated themselves with the antagonists of Hill State. But by August 1962, seven out of the eleven M.L.As. had already resigned their membership from the State Assembly. But Nalindra Sangma, Emerson Momin and H.Enowell Pohshna made it clear in their public utterances that they would not resign from the Assembly. R. Thanhlira tried to play a safe game. He tendered his resignation from the post of Vice-Chairman and from his membership of the Council of Action of the APHLC which was accepted by the Council of Action on 24th August 1962. The Eighth APHLC which met in Shillong from 23rd to 25th August 1962, after
considering the acts of betrayal committed by the four gentlemen finally decided to condemn their action. It also resolved to start the non-violent satyagraha whenever called upon by the Council of Action for the achievement of a Hill State. This conference further decided to send a delegation to Delhi in response to the invitation of the Union Home Minister. It may be recalled that R. Thanhliira was allured by the Congress to be a member of the Assam Public Service Commission which he eventually became. All the other three honourable members: viz. E. Momin, N. Sangma and H. E. Pohshna who could not get any reward from the Government of Assam were to get a lesson from the electorate only in 1967 when they were miserably defeated at the polls. Nalindra Sangma forfeited his deposit, and both he and Emerson Momin were also beaten at the District Council election which was held in 1964 and they never recovered again in their political life.

G.G. Swell, M.P. wrote to the Prime Minister seeking for an interview of the APHLC delegation with him. But the Prime Minister and the Home Minister informed him that no useful purpose would be served by meeting to discuss "rigid demands". However, he indicated that he was willing to meet the delegation if they wanted any further clarification on his proposals.

The meeting of the Council of Action which met at Tura on 15th October 1962 considered the attitude of the Central Government in extenso. Finally, it passed a resolution thus: "The Council of Action considered the letters of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister addressed to our representative in Parliament in reply to his letters forwarding the letter of our General Secretary to the Home Minister regarding the resolution of the 8th APHLC Conference and the meeting of our delegation with the Prime Minister and Home
Minister. In view of the indication of the Prime Minister that there was little point in meeting him merely to present rigid demands (i.e. the demand for a separate State) and that he would be willing to meet our delegation only for elucidation of his proposals, it is hereby decided that it would not serve the objective of the APHLC in sending a delegation to Delhi at this stage and merely for that purpose.

However, should there be any opportunity given by the Prime Minister, the Council of Action expresses its desire and readiness to have discussions with him on the need for the creation of the Eastern Frontier State.

The Council of Action authorised G.G. Swell, Member of Parliament to convey its decision to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister.

Regarding the method and timing for the lunching of non-violent direct action the Council of Action passed the resolution as follows:— "In pursuance of the decision of the APHLC to lunch non-violent direct action for achieving separation from Assam and the creation of the Eastern Frontier State, the Council of Action having been entrusted to fix the time and the method of such non-violent direct action, hereby decides that in the first instance, the main method or form of non-violent direct action will be the dislocation of the functioning of the offices of the State Government of Assam particularly in the Hills Districts.

The Council of Action further decides that the non-violent direct action be lunching by each district in accordance to its own convenience not later than 31st March, 1963".

This action should not, however, affect the functioning of Medical Offices and Institutions, offices directly connected with conservancy and Educational Institutions.
The APHLC began to raise the Non-violent direct action volunteer organisation which should consist both men and women who were to be carefully selected by the leaders. All the volunteers were to pass through an intensive training. The training imparted was meant to build the spirit, the body, and the mind of the individual. The training programme consisted of prayer, physical exercise and education based on the concept of non-violent and peaceful struggle as taught by the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi and the great Negro leader, Martin Luther King (Jr). The training emphasised moral development and personal sacrifices in order to enable the volunteers to face any eventuality with fearlessness and love. Thousands of people, men and women, young and old responded to the call of the APHLC in all the Hill Districts, particularly in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills and the Hizo Hills districts. In order to counteract this gigantic movement, the Government of Assam began to play its game. It tried its best to persuade some people to oppose the Hill State movement. In the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills, it could get some leaders but it could not get the people. But in the Hizo Hills, it was successful. During the great famine which occurred in the Hizo Hills, during 1959-60, there were a number of young volunteers who were active in rendering yeoman service to the people. Chaliha took advantage of this situation and succeeded in getting Laldenga, Manliana and other young men. He made use of the good offices of J.D. Baveja who was then Programme Executive of the Shillong Station of the All India Radio, Shillong - Gauhati who was friendly with these Hizo Leaders. It was noticed that day-in and day-out, they were busy discussing the planning both at the M.L.A's Hostel, Shillong and at Rockside, the Official Residence of the Chief Minister. Eventually, these young men
formed an organisation known the Mizo National Front. Chaliha might have encouraged these young leaders to form a Party to counterpoise the Mizo Union which was a constituent unit of the APHLC. But Chaliha was wrong. From the beginning of the formation of the Mizo National Front, the goal aspired by it was for an independent Mizoram. This new party became stronger day by day so as to endanger the constitutional movement lunched by the Mizo Union.

In the midst of these new developments, the country was faced with a grave danger. In October 1962, the Chinese committed aggression against India. Thus the President of India declared the State of Emergency in the whole country. The Council of Action then met on 30th October, 1962 to reconsider its decision for the launching of the non-violent direct action. Some members from the Mizoram Hills felt that it was not necessary to postpone the direct action. But eventually, the constitutionalists succeeded in getting a resolution passed. But the leaders from the Mizoram Hills did not make a commitment. This resolution firmly asserted that the interest of the country was greater than the interest of any region. Hence, the non-violent resolution passed earlier was kept in obeyance. The APHLC then devoted itself to contribute all its resources towards defence efforts to defend the country against foreign aggression.

On 24th February, 1963, the bye-elections to fill up the vacancies caused by the resignation of seven APHLC members from the Assam Assembly was held. In two constituencies, the APHLC changed its candidates. This time, the APHLC set up Hoover Hynniewtia from the Shillong constituency in the place of Wilson Reade and Bawichuwaka in place of Chunga for the Aizawl West constituency. The APHLC captured 5 of the 7 seats. Both the seats from the Mizoram Hills were conceded to the Mizo National Front.
The 9th Session of the APHLC held in Shillong on 4th March, 1963 reaffirmed the decision of the Council of Action. It decided to suspend the launching of non-violent direct action in view of the pendency of Emergency. But some delegates from the Mizo Hills did not commit because they had to face the Mizo National Front in their own district. Again, the 10th Session of the APHLC which met in Shillong from 4th to 6th June 1963 decided to cooperate fully with the Government in defence efforts and permit its members to accept membership of Boards and Committees constituted by the State Government for defence purposes. It also decided to send a delegation to Delhi in connection with the Hill State. It further resolved to send delegates to the Mizo Union Assembly which might decide to leave the APHLC and demand the creation of a Mizoram State as had already been demanded by some leaders of the Mizo Union.

The said Conference drafted a memorandum which was submitted to the Prime Minister by the delegation which met him on 10th June 1963 at Borjhar Airport. The Memorandum pointed out that in 1962, the APHLC members of the Assam Assembly resigned their membership in order to draw attention to their determination and the intensity of the feelings of the Hills people for separation from Assam. It further pointed out that the four members who did not resign had betrayed their premises to the people. Further, it was pointed out that although the APHLC won 5 of the 7 seats in the bye-election, yet there was an increase in the percentage of the votes polled in all the five constituencies as compared to the 1962 General election. In Shillong the majority was increased from 49 percent to 62 percent; in Nongpoh from 72 percent to 87 percent; in Nengstein from 64 percent to 78 percent; in Cherra from 70 percent to 78 percent, and in Baghmara from 60 percent to 64 percent.
Again, the two seats that the APHLC lost in the Mizo Hills was very signifying. "But this less rather than signifying any warning in the strength of the demand of the APHLC signifies more than ever before the determination of the Mizo people to separate from Assam" the memorandum claimed. But it signified a dangerous trend. The Mizo National Front had clearly declared that its aim was secession from India. The memorandum further stated that "the Mizo National Front succeeded because of its secessionist appeal for independence and because the people in the Mizo Hills, 72 percent of whom supported the APHLC in the last general elections, became frustrated at the unresponsive policy of the Government in meeting their demand".

The memorandum also pointed out the patriotic and constitutional approach of the APHLC especially during the Chinese aggression. Therefore, the memorandum concluded: "May we hope for some positive response from you towards the creation of a separate State for the Hill areas."

The Prime Minister fully appreciated the contributions made by the APHLC towards defence efforts. He assured the APHLC that his earlier proposals might be modified so as to fulfill the aims of the hills people. But he did not commit to any total separation from Assam. His only assurance was that the hills people would have 100 percent internal autonomy within the State of Assam, but the details of the whole plan would be spelled out by a Commission to be appointed for the purpose. Further, the Prime Minister advised the delegation to meet the Governor for further discussion.

Meanwhile, there was a crack in the APHLC. Ever since the Council of Action suspended the non-violent direct action resolution, the Mizo Union adopted a rebellious attitude towards the
APHLC. The APHLC sent a delegation during the Session of the Mizo Union Assembly which was held from 10th to 12th August, 1965 to persuade the leaders of the Mizo Union to remain with the APHLC, but they did not listen to the advice. On the otherhand, the Mizo Union Assembly decided to demand a separate State of Mizoram within the Indian Union. Hence, it seceded from the APHLC. Thus only a few leaders from Mizoram belonging to the Eastern India Tribal Union like Lalmawia and others remained with the APHLC. The reason given by the Mizo Union for secession from the APHLC could be summarised thus. First, the indifference on the part of the Government of India towards the demands of the hill people for the creation of the Hill State. Secondly, the slowness of the APHLC in enforcing the tempo of the Hill State movement. Thirdly, the existence of local interests. These reasons were not convincing. The real reason was the existence of an extremist party in the Mizo Hills known as the Mizo National Front which demanded secession from India.

As advised by the Prime Minister, the APHLC delegation met the Governor at Government House, Shillong on 17th June 1963. But nothing substantial came out of the talk because the Governor also was talking in general terms. The delegation raised a number of pertinent points, but the Governor only assured the delegation that these points would be referred by him to the Prime Minister. Back came the reply which was again couched in general term.

The Council of Action which met on 17th August 1963 expressed great disappointment because the Prime Minister's letter did not reply to all the points raised by it. On 14th August 1963, the Council of Action decided to send instructions to its member of Parliament to support the No-confidence Motion tabled against the Government of India. The telegram sent was as follows: "Gilbert
Swell M.P. New Delhi. Council of Action decided you support
noconfidence motion against Central Government because delaying
settling problems Hills people and not conceding separate State
thus increasing frustration among Hills people". The Council of
Action also decided that clarification in black and white be
sought for from the Prime Minister on all the points that the
dlegation had raised through the Governor.

G.G.Swell, however did not act according to the instructions
sent to him by the Council of Action. He claimed that he was in a
better position to assess the situation in Delhi and then to act
accordingly. However, on 29th August 1963, he sought clarification
from the Prime Minister on the terms of reference to a Commission
to be appointed. But the Prime Minister's reply was well guarded.
He said that the basic terms of reference would be to give the
largest possible measure of autonomy to the hills people without
disturbing the unity of Assam. The contents of his reply may be
summed up as follows:

As regards the appointment of hill Ministers, the Prime
Minister said: "Ministers have to be appointed by the Chief
Minister but the representatives of the Hill Areas will no doubt
be consulted............ and as a matter of convention their views
should normally be accepted insofar as the hill areas are concerned".
The same general convention should apply to the departments dealing
with the hill areas, or with financial matters as well as matters
relating to legislation.

It is evident that by 10th June 1963, the Prime Minister
had liberalised his approach towards the problems of the Hill
people. He no longer insisted on the Scottish Pattern Plan but
promised 100 percent internal autonomy. The APHLC also realised the
fact that it has lost ground in the Mizo Hills, it had not gained ground in the Mikir Hills, and its position in the North-Cachar Hills was deteriorating. In this changed circumstances it appeared as if both the Prime Minister and the APHLC were about to find a meeting ground. However, the APHLC decided to send a delegation to Delhi to find out whether his proposal of 100 percent internal autonomy would mean an arrangement nearest to a full State.

The APHLC met the Prime Minister on 4th and 5th October 1963. The APHLC leaders appreciated the Prime Minister for the fact that he had understood the problems of the Hill Areas. But they pointed out that the best solution to the problem would be the formation of a Hill State. On the 5th October the Prime Minister produced the blue-print of his plan which he thought would be the best solution under the circumstances. The members of the delegation discussed the various difficulties involved in the scheme. But the Prime Minister pointed out that those difficulties would be removed when the Commission had spelled out the details. This plan came to be popularly known as the Nehru Plan. The fact that the members of the APHLC delegation had fully discussed the plan gave the Prime Minister the impression that they had agreed to the plan and to the appointment of the Commission. Therefore, he asked them if he could go ahead with the idea of the Commission. But the APHLC leaders replied that these proposals would be put before their Conference and that they would let the Prime Minister know if the plan was acceptable.

The Nehru Plan: Let us now examine the details of the Nehru Plan of the full internal autonomy. First, the Nehru Plan contemplated that the hill areas of Assam should remain within the State of Assam, enjoying ninety-nine percent autonomy of a State. The remaining one percent was complete separation from Assam. Secondly the Sixth
Schedule should be retained but should be amended on the lines recommended by the Hill Advisory Council. Thirdly, each Hill District should be represented by one member in the Lok Sabha, and that the M.L.A. constituency should be for every 40,000 population. Fourthly, the Autonomous District Councils and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council would be given wider powers and greater financial assistance. Fifthly, the M.L.A.s of the Autonomous Districts should form a Regional Committee of the Assam Legislative Assembly. All proposals relating to the legislation concerning the Hill areas would be referred by the State Assembly to the Regional Committee. The Regional Committee might also initiate legislative proposals. Normally, the recommendations of the Regional Committee would be accepted by the Legislature. In the event of disagreement between the Regional Council and the State Legislature, the matter would be referred to the Governor who acting in his discretion might take decisions, after obtaining directions of the President where necessary.

Further, as regards planning for development, the representatives of the Hill areas should have direct access to the Planning Commission. The hill people should have complete control over certain departments such as development, agriculture, P.W.D. education and the like.

As regards common subjects not transferred for separate administration, the share of allocation of funds to be spent on the hill areas should also be separately indicated under the budget heads. Certain other subjects such as State Electricity Board, the High Court, etc., should remain as common subjects.

As regards appointments, postings, transfers of officers, the group of Hill Ministers should have full control in transferred subjects.
The hill people should have full control over grants given under Art 275 of the Constitution and over the revenues of the hill areas. But the State Legislature should have some say over the grants that might be given to the hill areas from the State revenue.

For the purpose of the administration of the Hill areas, English should be the official language until replaced by Hindi. But at the District level, the District or Regional Council would decide the language to be used.

Further, the Hill areas should have a separate University.

Provisions in the Constitution safeguarding the interests of the hill people should continue as long as the hill people themselves reasonably feel the need for such safeguards.

Further, at the beginning of each financial year, a separate complete budget allocation for the subjects allocated to the Hill areas would be made. This would take the form of an Area Budget under the subjects meant for separate administration. This Area Budget should be referred by the Assembly to the Regional Committee for consideration.

Lastly, if the hill people could agree to the proposals in principle, a Commission should be appointed to work out the details of the administrative set-up for the hill areas in consultation with the hill people.

The Nehru Plan contemplated that "The objective to be kept in view is full autonomy for the Hill Districts subject to the preservation of the unity of the State of Assam". It also contemplated the Cabinet Government of the accepted type. There should be collective and joint responsibility to the State Legislative Assembly. There should, however, be a Cabinet Minister in charge of the administration.
of the Hill Areas, assisted as far as might be necessary, by possibly a Minister of State and one or two Deputy Ministers. "In the appointment of the Ministers for the Hill areas, the Chief Minister will be guided by the recommendation of the M.L.A.s. of the Hill Areas."

A list of subjects such as education, Agriculture, Horticulture, Forests, Health and possibly roads would be transferred to the control of the Hill Ministers.

The Nehru Plan also contemplated that there would be a separate Wing or Department of the Secretariat for the Hill Areas to be divided into the necessary number of special departments for the administration of the subjects allocated for separate administration in the Hill Areas. Full executive power would be given to the group of Hill Ministers for the administration of those subjects in the Hill Areas. The Hill Ministers would have authority to determine the language or languages to be used in the separate Wing of the Secretariat dealing with the subjects allocated for separate administration. The Hill Wing of the Secretariat would have its own financial Adviser.

Objections to the Nehru Plan: The Nehru Plan was formulated after a long dialogue that the Prime Minister had with the APHLC leaders. Hence, the Chief Minister of Assam, the Assam Government and the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee opposed the plan. The State Government was of the opinion that the plan would seriously affect the functioning of the Parliamentary democratic form of Government, it would undermine the unity and integrity of the State, it would create deadlocks which would sow the seed for the disruption of the State. Chief Minister Chaliha wrote to the Prime Minister thus: "It is our considered view that unless the Chief Minister is unfettered in his choice of Cabinet colleagues........... the proper functioning
of the Cabinet system will not be possible. It would be natural
that the Chief Minister would, in the selection of his colleagues
take into account the views of the representatives from different
areas as is done at present but any proposal to impose on him,
either by statute or by convention, a person whom he may not
consider suitable or desirable or who do not subscribe to the
basic policies and programmes of the Government would not only
strike at the root of collective cabinet responsibility, but
would also create serious difficulties and deadlocks in day to
day administration. The relationship of trust
between the Cabinet colleagues is a basic pre-requisite which
must be ensured).

Chaliha pointed out that there would be serious difficulties
that would be raised by the rigid interpretation of the word "guide"
by the Hill M.L.As. The Chief Minister said that this word might
even mean that the Chief Minister should take even a person with
secessionist views or otherwise from among the hill M.L.As. as his
colleagues provided he had the support of the majority of the
members representing the hill areas.

Chaliha then passed a remarks that the tribals were
extremely individualistic. They had not developed the art of co-
operation for a common cause. "In case there are more than one
group with equal strength in the legislature, which group should
be represented in the Cabinet"?

The Prime Minister in his reply said that the word "guided"
should not be literably and rigidly interpreted as the Governor
Vishnu Sahay did in a note to Chaliha. The Prime Minister agreed
with Chaliha that the Chief Minister should have freedom in the
selection of his colleagues.
Chaliha also pointed out the difficulties which might arise in matters relating to the development of the hill areas where the Regional Committee should have a final voice. This provision might override the supremacy of the legislature. Therefore, Chaliha suggested that the Regional Committee should not be given such overriding powers in any sphere.

Chaliha further pointed out that the powers vested in the Governor to act in his own discretion after ascertaining the views of the President whenever there was a conflict between the State Legislature and the Regional Committee would be a retrograde step. Such a step would undermine the relationship between the Governor and the Chief Minister, and also between the Chief Minister and his colleagues. If a provision was made for arbitration, it would tend to disintegrate the authority of the Legislative Assembly and the Cabinet.

Lastly, it was pointed out that under the Nehru Plan, the people of the Brahmaputra valley would get the worst of both the areas. They would eventually have to submit to what would in effect be a separate hill state and yet would have no say in the administration of the hill areas. But the representatives of the hill areas would not only have full control over the administration of the hill areas, they would also have tremendous voice in the affairs of the plains.

Thus, Chaliha and all prominent leaders of the plains condemned the Nehru Plan. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee also strongly objected the Nehru Plan. On the other hand, the Nehru Plan was welcomed by the District Congress Committee of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and by the Assam Hill Peoples' Convention.

The APHLC realised that the Government of Assam had also
raised similar difficulties involved in the plan. Therefore, it preferred to watch the course of events and remain non-committal. In its eleventh session held in Shillong on 31st October and 1st November 1963, the APHLC merely recorded its high sense of appreciation of the Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru in his attempt to remove the difficulties of the Hill people as indicated in his plan for full autonomy. On 4th April 1964, G.G. Swell met the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to seek clarification on certain assurances. The Prime Minister assured that his plan of Full Autonomy and other assurances would be fully implemented both in letter and spirit; that maximum number of subjects would be transferred to the Hill Administration; and that the autonomous Hill Districts would be given greater representation both in the State Legislature and in the two Houses of Parliament. He further indicated that he would not appoint a Commission unless and until the APHLC accepted the principle of the plan.

The 12th APHLC Conference met at Tura on 17th and 18th April to finally discuss the Nehru Plan. While the Conference reiterated its view that "The creation of a separate State will be the simplest, the best and the final solution to the problems of the Hills people", it decided to give a "fair trial" to the Nehru Plan of full autonomy. It requested the Prime Minister to proceed with the appointment of a Commission to spell out the details for implementing his offer of full autonomy and other assurances. However, the APHLC expressed its reservation. It said that in case the Commissions' recommendations fell short of the assurances given by the Prime Minister, it would revise its decision.