Chapter II

THE PATTERN OF POLITICAL GROWTH

1. Urge for Freedom

The urge for freedom among the people of Himachal Pradesh is the result of a number of factors - indigenous and exogenous - working over a number of years. Among the exogenous factors which indirectly helped growth of awareness among the intelligentsia may be included a series of progressive steps taken by the British Government in the Indian Provinces, more particularly the Government of India Act, 1919, the Government of India Act, 1935, and the grant of Indian independence in 1947. The indigenous factors, on the other hand, included the Praja Mandal Movement in the erstwhile states of Himachal Pradesh (1937-1948), shift in the policy of the British Government towards the small principalities from 1939 onwards and the formation of Himachal Pradesh in 1948. The cumulative effect of all these factors helped the growth of political consciousness among the people and produced a desire for freedom which manifested itself in diverse forms, sporadic in nature in the beginning. Bold and imaginative individuals helped this process considerably by crystallising and articulating the 'vague longings' of the people.
The process of political growth in the erstwhile states of Himachal Pradesh (as in the rest of the Indian States) has been rather slow. This may be attributed to two factors: variation in the duration of the British rule and the attitudinal behaviour of the feudal lords, the Rajas and Danas. Whereas the Indian Provinces were under the influence of the British rule right from the beginning of the seventeenth century, the erstwhile states of Himachal Pradesh came in contact with the British rulers in the nineteenth century as late as 1815.1 Again, whereas the British Indian Provinces were granted a measure of responsible government under the Government of India Act, 1919, it was not until 1937 that the modern ideas of liberty and political equality had touched a small number of intelligentia in this Pradesh. The feudal lords, the Rajas and Danas, remained wedded to the age-old tradition of authoritarian dynastic rule and emphasised the preservation of traditional values and customs. However, the progressive changes in the formal structure of government in the British Indian Provinces

could not but produce their effect, even though mild, in the neighbouring states. They tended to introduce radically new standards for the behaviour of authority so that the people began to adopt quite new images as to the proper role of those in power. Conscious indoctrination as well as unconscious imitation stimulated political interest among the educated elite, confined the nationalist aspirations and gradually led to a substantial erosion of old values and institutions. "It is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people", it was declared¹, "to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. ... If any government deprives a people of these rights and oppressess them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it".

The demand for 'INDIAN STATE' in the early thirties of this century created a general upsurge in the country. As a direct consequence thereof, a common organisation for the people of the Indian states, known as the All-India States Peoples' Conference, emerged in July 1934. This organisation, writes P.K. Panikkar, involved the fundamental implication that the states were not separate sovereignties but a part of the Indian Empire governed by their own rulers but effectively under the common authority of a supreme government. It was on this assumption that the organisers of the movement proceeded; and it was this assumption that the rulers viciously contested.

1. The people of the states met in an all-India Conference at Karachi in July 1934. The Conference is known as the All-India States Peoples' Conference. (See Shagat, K.P., A Decade of Indo-British Relations, 1927-47, Popular Press (Bom.) Private Ltd., Bombay, 1959, p.52).

The emergence of the all-India States Peoples' Conference with its ancillary branches, viz., the Regional Councils and the Praja Kendals, and the development of the freedom movement in the states resulted in the ever-increasing identification of the Indian National Congress with the states' people. The Congress which had hitherto watched rather passively "the political drama of arrogance and authority" in the native states modified its policy so as to permit the participation of the Congress by means of advice and guidance in the freedom struggle in the states and more active assistance by individual congressmen. This line of action was formulated in the Waverton Resolution (1938) which reads: "The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the states as in the rest of India and considers the states as integral parts of India which cannot be separated. The 'PUNA SHASTHYA' or Complete Independence,

which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India, inclusive of the states, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection. ..."¹

The objective of the Indian National Congress - attainment of 'Purna Swarajya' for the whole of India, inclusive of the states - having been stated in clear and unambiguous terms, the British authorities found themselves in a rather embarrassing situation on account of the two sets of wholly dissimilar commitments made to the people of British India and the Princes of the Indian States. Whereas the British Government was pledged to foster parliamentary democracy in the British Indian Provinces, they were committed -

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¹ The Resolution was introduced by Gandhiji. Details in Gandhi, M.K., The Indian States' Problem, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, 1941, pp.401-403; Also Vitesen, W.T., The Indian Annual Register, January to June 1936, published by the Annual Register Office, Calcutta, Vol.I, pp.299-300.
as the custodians of the Crown's obligations to the princes - to defend the rulers against subversive movement even if these were aimed at extending the blessings of parliamentary democracy to their subjects. ¹

With the emergence of Praja Mandal in the erstwhile states of Himachal Pradesh and the growing nationalistic activities elsewhere in the country, especially in British India, nearer home, the Punjab, there was a shift in British attitude towards the rulers of this Prades. This becomes apparent from the pronouncements of the British Government from 1939 onwards. Lord Linlithgow, the then Governor-General of India, in his Presidential Address to the Annual Session of the Chamber of Princes on March 13, 1939, advised the rulers of the Simla Hill States to modernise and liberalise their administration. ² The

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British government also enunciated the principle that "nothing that was incapable of survival was to be artificially perpetuated" and made it known that it would not obstruct proposals for constitutional advance initiated by the rulers. Again, at the opening session of the Chamber of Princes on January 17, 1946, Lord Jellicoe, the then Governor-General of India, urged upon the Simla Hill States, along with the other small principalities, to pull their resources so as to form viable political entities and impressed upon the rulers to place their administration on modern lines for the welfare of


2. This point of view was made known by Lt. Col. Guirhead, Under Secretary of State for India, in an answer to a question raised in the House of Commons by Sir J. Gardlaw-Ellis: 342 House of Commons Debates, C. 2392 quoted in Bhagat, K.P., op. cit., p.55, footnote.
their subjects by fulfilling three fundamental criteria of good governments, viz., political stability, adequate financial resources and effective association of the people with the administration.¹ These were revolutionary ideas — ideas of progress, dynamism and change — which were to move the people of this Prades, as would appear from the happenings that follow, on the road to democracy.

The growing nationalistic activities in the country coupled with the change in the British attitude towards small principalties and the declaration of the British government to relinquish power latest by June 1948² (the actual date was later on advanced to August 15, 1947) had all their natural repercussions in the Simla Hills States also. The


socio-economic forces generated by the influx of western political ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity led to the stirrings of the mind and produced their mild effects on the people of this Pradesh, especially the educated elite. The waves of political consciousness starting somewhere in the great metropolitan centres of India, and nearer home, Simla, beat across the length and breadth of the country touching the remote hill people living at the periphery. Part of the same country and linked economically, socially and culturally with the rest of India, the stirrings of political life in British India reached out as an imponderable catalytic agent even in the rugged terrain of the Simla Hill States, and led to a demand for responsible government on March 10, 1946.¹

1. Resolution No. III passed at the Annual Conference of the Himalayan Hill States Regional Conference held at Kandi from March 8 to March 10, 1946, available in the office of the District Congress Committee, Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh): File No. 7 on the subject "Correspondence with the Himalayan Hill States' Regional and Sub-Regional Council, 1946-1948", p. 3.
2. Ferment and repression

The demand for responsible government could hardly find favour with the rulers wedded to the traditions of autocracy. On the other hand, they smelt a revolt against their thrones in the demand for responsible government and their heavy jackboot fell riding rough-shod on the legitimate rights and aspirations of the people. Protagonists and upholders of 'demos' were harassed and hounded, punished and victimised. Men suspected of any sympathy with the popular organisation like the Praja Mandal were threatened with dire consequences. Referring to the princely autocracy in the Punjab and the Sialkot States, a prominent newspaper\(^1\), in its editorial, commented that "quite often, its manner is cavalier and its method draconian" and that the 'state authorities' reply to the Praja Mandal's direct action is naked repression". Dealing with the Sialkot States

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1. The Tribune, Lahore, December 3, 1946.
in particular, it pointed out\(^1\), that "dynamic democratic ideas have percolated through the massive barriers even into the Simla Hills and created a tremendous stir" and that in some of the states "the resistance to the democratic movement is systematic and serious. ... The Praja Mandal is not permitted to thrive. Protagonists and upholders of democracy are either thrown into prison or thrown out of the state".

Referring to the victimisation of the Praja Mandal workers, a prominent political leader\(^2\) said that they encountered strong resistance and the reactionary rulers took very stringent measures to crush the rising spirit of the masses. False cases, imprisonment, forfeiture of property, beating and humiliation were all that the workers got. They had

\(^1\) The Tribune, Lahore, December 3, 1946.

\(^2\) Parinar, Y.B., President, Himalayan Hill States' Regional Council in his article entitled "Simla Hill States to seek Kashmir's Protection!" in the Free Press Journal, Bombay, July 30, 1947, p.3.
to face bullets in Balsean, Behri and Sirmoor. The Silsaupur ruler used gangster methods to smother the movement in the state and say to it that not even a sympathiser of the movement dared to live in the state. A few heart-rending instances reported in the newspapers will illustrate this fact. The petty Chief of Silsaupur, it was reported, let loose a reign of terror in his state. He let loose bands of goondas and hooligans against the political workers. He organised raids on the houses of innocent people and whipped and humiliated their leaders in public. Again, for raising their voice for the release of Praja Sandal workers in the state of Balsean, the Manager is reported to have opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators. In the state of Sirmur, the army is stated to have been sent round the countryside.

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1. Article entitled “Political Department and the State” in the National Herald, Lucknow, January 9, 1947.

to over-awe the people and to dissuade them from joining the Praja Mandal movement. 1 The other small states like Jhikar, Runihar, Baija and Bandotri were reported to have followed the example of their bigger brethren. 2

Meanwhile, India got independence. It inspired the people of the erstwhile states of Himachal Pradesh, where the process of democratisation of administration had been rather negligible as compared to the adjoining provinces, to have similar freedom. The urge for freedom among the people set in motion a process of conflict: Praja Mandal workers on the one hand and the rulers on the other. While the former organised agitation against the authoritarian rule in the states, the latter began to think in terms of confederation to meet their challenge. Popular movement for the attainment of democratic government erupted strongly in states bordering the neighbouring British

2. Ibid.
Indian Province of the Punjab (viz. Arki, Bilaspur, Chamba, Dhudi, Mandi, Kehlor, Buket and Simur) which provided a base, a training ground and a refuge when the ruler reacted too strongly. The native rulers and their minions used the 'jackboot' and 'danda' to suppress the aspirations of their subjects but the tyranny and repression fanned the flames of agitation and upsurge among the people. While the bigger states were temporarily able to deal with the popular movement, the smaller states were not able even to maintain law and order with limited resources and with the people in opposition to the administration. The freedom movement spread everywhere leaping across

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1. Based on author's interview with Chri Daulat Ram Sankhia, leader of the freedom movement in Bilaspur State and now Deputy Minister in the Himachal Government.
one state after the other. The princes harried and 
harassed by the popular forces thought of combining 
together in sheer self-defence. But this was not 
to be. The hand of the clock could not be set back. 
The freedom fighters advanced while the feudal lords 
receded. In this mounting atmosphere of conflict 
and coercion, each side tended to conclude that the 
other would respond not to reason but to force alone. 
This phenomenon was not peculiar to the princes and 
their subjects in Himašal Pradesh but seems to be 
a pattern of behaviour of authoritarian rulers in 
all the transitional societies as the studies made 
of the South west Asian and North african countries 
indicate.2

1. For details; see pp. 65-72.
2. Masters, Shanker, "The Politics of 
the Near East: Southwest Asia and 
Northern Africa" in Almond & Coleman, 
The Politics of the Developing Areas, 
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 
New Jersey, 1960, p.333.
Referring to the reactionary attitude of one of the rulers of a bigger state of Himachal Pradesh, Dr. Fattabhi Sitaramayya, the then President of the All-India States Peoples' Conference declared, inter alia, that "the Prince's arbitrary administration, his dual policy of himself hoisting his own flag and causing the national flag being hoisted by an official ... his open hostility to Praja Mandal functioning or even existing, his personally manhandling the people, his exactions of money, his disregard to moral and legal obligations ... his open and avowed repression of all public activities in his state, his extermination of patriotic young workers from his state and harassment of their relations ... mark him out as a cruel and perverse prince who does more disservice to the Princely Order than all the politicians of the states and provinces put together".¹

The political situation in the Simla Hill States was reviewed at a meeting of the Himalayan Hill States Praja Sandal workers held at Simla on October 11, 1947, under the chairmanship of Dr. Y.S. Parmar. The resolutions passed at the meeting protested the high-handedness of the authorities in some of the Simla Hill States. Referring to the Suket State, one resolution condemned the high-handed action of the Suket State administration at the wholesale arrests of Praja Sandal workers and promulgation of Public Safety Ordinance and Section 144 Cr. P.C. in the state. ... The Praja Sandal workers arrested are being ill-tREATED in jail. ... The Suket State administration while completely ignoring the demands of the people is taking active steps to crush the people's movement in a most callous manner. ..." as regards the Dilsagur State, another resolution expressed 'shock' at the sad demise of a Praja Sandal worker in the

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1. Resolution No. I in File No. 7 on the subject "Correspondence with the Himalayan Hill States' Regional and Sub-Regional Council (1946-1948)", p.59. The file is available in the Office of the District Congress Committee, Dilsagur (Bisnachal Pradesh).

2. Resolution No. II.
Bilaspur jail and the deteriorating political situation in the state where the ruler was "using every method possible to crush the people's movement". The meeting further condemned the high-handed action of the Monenal State and the Sirmoor State authorities, demanded the release of the Praja Mandal workers and the declaration of responsible government.

Despite repression, the popular urge for freedom could not be held back. Progressive ideas had spread through the length and breadth of the country including the Simla Hill States inspiring the people to rise and revolt everywhere. What was spasmodic and sporadic earlier became a mass upheaval now. The popular urge for freedom in the Simla Hill States was in conformity with the general trend in the country. This trend, coupled with the rising tide of nationalism in the Simla Hill States, appears to have caused re-thinking among the rulers to unify their strength.

1. Resolutions III and IV in File No. 7 on the subject "Correspondence with the Himalayan Hill States' Regional and Sub-Regional Council (1946-1948)", op. cit., p. 59.
as a means to successfully meet the growing agitation for responsible government. The Princes of the Simla Hill States accordingly decided to organise a Confederation in collaboration with the States of Jammu and Kashmir and Tehri-Garhwal. The popular leaders appear to have realised that such a Confederation, if formed, would become a barrier in the realisation of responsible government and so they decided to prevent its formation as would appear from the happenings that follow. At a meeting of the Praja Mandal workers held at Simla on January 1, 1948, a demand for the absorption of the Simla Hill States in the Indian Union and the creation of a Himalayan Province comprising the territories between

1. The Free Press Journal, Bombay, November 15, 1947; Also the National Herald, Lucknow, December 1, 1947.
Imora to Chamba and Kalka to Tibet, was made. The resolution passed at the meeting reads as follows:

"This Conference is of the opinion that
a) since the Punjab Hill States cannot maintain modern and progressive standards of administration and have failed to keep pace with the progressive forces of independent India, these states should be absorbed into the Indian Union. This Conference, therefore, requests the Ministry of States to amalgamate these States with the Indian Union without any loss of time;

b) in view of the geographical continuity and cultural and linguistic affinity of the people of these hills and their educational and economic backwardness, a measure of autonomy be granted to them within the Union to enable them to come up to the standards of their neighbours;

c) in view of the declared policy of the Congress that territorial areas or provinces should be reconstituted as far as possible on a linguistic and cultural basis, this Conference requests the Indian Union to reconstitute on a linguistic and cultural basis, as soon as possible, a "Himalayan Province comprising the territories between Imora to Chamba and Kalka to Tibet"."

1. Resolution dated January 1, 1943, quoted in a statement issued by Dr. V. K. Panwar from Simla on February 21, 1945. The statement is to be found in File No. 7: Correspondence with the Himalayan Hill States Regional and Sub-National Council, 1946-1948, op. cit., pp. 63-64.
In opposition to the people's demand for responsible government, the princes and their supporters held a meeting at Solan on January 26, 1948, under the Presidentship of the Raja of Baghat and put forward a counter proposal\(^1\) for the creation of the Simla Hill States Union. The idea behind the Union sponsored by the rulers was to maintain the status quo by creating a facade of democratic institutions and, as transpired later on\(^2\), to "resist any scheme of merger of the Simla Hill States with either a province or to become a centrally-administered area". The Praja Mandal workers could easily see through this game. They could not be hoodwinked any more.

1. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, January 30, 1948.

2. Proceedings of a Joint Meeting of the rulers of the Simla Hill States, members of the Negotiating Committee, the Drafting Committee and such other members of the Constitution-making body of Himachal Pradesh, who were present in Delhi on Sunday, the 29th February, 1948, at the Imperial Hotel, New Delhi. These proceedings are available in the Office of the District Congress Committee, Bilaspur, in File No.7, op. cit., p.76.
At a secret meeting of the Praja Mandal workers held at Buni (capital of the then Bhajji State) on February 8, 1948, it was resolved to launch a Sarvottaman with a view to securing the merger of the Himalayan States with the Indian Union and setting up a full-fledged province under the centre with all the appurtenances of a modern democratic state. With this object in view, a Provisional Interim Government of the Himalayan States was formed with a view to securing the merger of the Himalayan States with the Indian Union. It was planned to launch a struggle in each state and thus defeat the designs hatched at

1. Parmar, Y.S., "Seven Days that shook the Himalayan" in the Tribune, Ambala Cantt., March 7, 1948. Dr. Parmar was the Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh Government during 1952-1956. He is presently also the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh.

2. ibid. The Provisional Government was composed of Messrs. Shiva Nand Kamaul (President), Sada Nand Chandel, Padem Dev and Sukand Lal (members). These persons belonged to Sirmaur, Bilaspur, Bashahr and Suket states respectively. The Provisional Government was thus fairly representative of the various regions of Himachal Pradesh.

3. ibid.
Solan by the rulers and their supporters just to maintain their stranglehold for some time more. Suket - one of the bigger states of Himachal Pradesh - was chosen to be the first target of direct action. On February 16, 1948, a forty-eight hour notice was served on the rulers to hand over the administration to the people so that the state might be merged with the Indian Union.¹ Not hearing anything from the ruler, the 'Satyagrahis' marched into the state on February 18, 1948.² The ruler of Suket, finding himself unable to face the situation, handed over the administration to the Government of India.³ Writing on the success of the 'Satyagrahis', Dr. Y.S. Parmar said thus:

"What the comparatively backward and resourceless people of Suket have accomplished in just seven days in exploding a social order which had the sanction of centuries behind it, will always remain a source of inspiration to the toiling millions in India in their struggle against feudalism and autocracy".⁴

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1. Parmar, Y.S., "Seven days that shook the Himalayas", op. cit., March 7, 1948.
2. ibid.
4. Parmar, Y.S., loc. cit.
The Cuket episode encouraged the Praja Mandal workers and led to agitation elsewhere. The ruler of Balsean, finding himself unable to meet the rising tide of freedom also handed over the administration to the Government of India. The Chief of Mandi (neighbouring state of Suket) lost all hopes of maintaining his independent rule and yielded to the peoples' demand for responsible government by introducing reforms with the Like Sahib of Mandi as the Chief Minister and several Usman, Tej Singh, Kashmir Singh and Peter Singh as ministers. In Chamba, the ruler had to requisition police and military assistance from the Government of India to meet the situation.

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2. "The responsible government is stated to have functioned for a period of forty days only. (See "The States Reorganisation Commission's Report", Manager, Government of India Press, Simla, 1956, p.67).

3. Menon, V.P., loc. cit.
Finding themselves unable to stand up to popular agitation, the Princes of the Simla Hill States ultimately agreed to the integration of their states with the Indian Union. They accordingly signed a Covenant on March 8, 1948, ceding to the Dominion Government full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and power for and in relation to the governance of their states.¹ Thus ended the personal rule of the Rajas and Ranas in the Simla Hill States. The elimination of the centurier-old princely autocracies may be said to constitute a victory for the Himachal people not only because it swept away a tradition which was as old as the Himachal history itself but because it reflected a revolutionary urge for the establishment of responsible government.

¹ Text of the Agreement is given in Appendix III. The ruler of Sirmur signed the agreement on March 14, 1948; the ruler of Mandi, in the first week of April 1948; and the ruler of Palaspur on August 15, 1948. (See Senon, V.P., The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, op. cit., p.300; also White Paper on Indian States, 1950, op. cit., p.221).
3. Democratisation by stages

With the rulers' unconditional and absolute cession of jurisdiction and authority, the territories of the twenty-one Simla Hill States were integrated into a single centrally-administered unit, known as Himachal Pradesh. The formation of Himachal Pradesh gave the people a certain measure of exuberant, confident new youth and of youth's willingness to experiment, to change and to tackle seemingly impossible undertakings. Democratisation of administration, which had long been the keynote of the Congress policy, became a pressing demand of the people. The process of democratisation, it appears, was to trace the same course as was followed by the British Government in the case of the Indian Provinces from the year 1919 onwards. Just as the British Government granted responsible government to the Indian Provinces by

stages, the same pattern seems to be the policy of the Congress Government at the Centre in the case of Himachal Pradesh. Isn't it a paradox that the Congress leaders who were now manning the Central Government and who had earlier championed the cause of the hill people against the native rulers began to use the language and idiom of the erstwhile British rulers of the country? This way of thinking is reflected in the Covenant signed by the Government of India with the rulers of the Simla Hill States. The Covenant, inter alia, stipulated—

"And whereas it is the intention of the Government of India to unite and integrate the territories of the East Punjab Hill States in one centrally-administered unit and to provide as soon as practicable and subject to the provisions of the Constitution of India, for its administration through a Lieut.-Governor, with an Advisory Council consisting of three rulers of the East Punjab Hill States and a local legislature with such constitution, functions and powers as the Government of India may from time to time specify."  

It is evident, the Covenant kept the future political set-up rather vague. It was to be determined and decided by the Government of India in accordance with its own appreciation of the situation, aspiration of the people and the experience of the small measure of self-government to be introduced. Perhaps, the Central Government had certain apprehensions which account for the vagueness of the Covenant. A sudden change from an autocratic rule to a democratic set-up, especially in the context of appalling illiteracy, low level of political consciousness and the underdeveloped nature of economy, involved an element of risk which the Government of India did not perhaps want to take. Again, the strategic position of Himachal Pradesh (the extreme borders of this Pradesh adjoin Tibet and are thus exposed to infiltration) and the hobnobbing of some of the rulers with Mr. Jinnah (the ruler of Bilaspur, for instance, wanted integration of his state with Pakistan) seem to be other important factors accounting

1. "Bilaspur affords one typical example of palace intrigue. The ruler of this state ... is a potential danger not only to the security of his state but to the Indian Union also. ... It is believed that his mentor, Mr. Jinnah, advised him either to declare his state's independence or merge his state with Pakistan". (See The New Times, New Delhi, March 29, 1948).
for a certain amount of hesitancy on the part of the Central Government in introducing self-government at one stroke. However, on the insistent demand of the political leaders of Himachal Pradesh, the late Gardar Patel in reply to a letter from Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the then Vice-President of the All-India States Peoples' Conference, spelt out the future of Himachal Pradesh thus:

"... The ultimate object is to enable this area to attain the position of an autonomous province of India. ... This objective would be attained in two stages. The area will, in the first instance, be administered by an Administrator, probably an officer of the Chief Commissioner's status assisted by an Advisory Council consisting of rulers and representatives of the people appointed in such a manner and with such functions as the Central Government may decide. Subsequently subject to the decision of the Constituent Assembly, it is proposed that the administration should be put in charge of a Lieutenant-Governor assisted by an Advisory Council, representing the princes and a legislature in the province. In the final stage, after this area is sufficiently developed in its resources and administration, it is proposed that its constitution should be similar to that of any other province".

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This policy statement of the Government of India may be compared with the Montagu Declaration of August 20, 1917. Just as responsible government was the ultimate objective of the British Government, the same objective was postulated in the Patel declaration. The cardinal principles involved in the declaration included that responsible government was not to be given all once but in stages; that successive stages were to be determined on the progress made by Himachal Pradesh; and that the Government of India was to determine the time and measure of each advance. It will appear that the declaration did not stipulate the extent of progress to be made and the time limit for each subsequent stage of progress. This obviously evinced the vague and indefinite nature of the declaration. However, to allay the popular apprehensions, the Government of India clarified its policy on the floor of Parliament as would appear from the statement of the late Shri Kopallaswami Ayyenger, the then Union Minister of States. Speaking on the Government of Part C States Bill, 1951, he pointed out,

that the Covenant about Himachal Pradesh had made certain stipulations which the Government of India were trying to respect. He also made it clear that the Government of India, according to the judgement of facts, had come to the conclusion that Himachal Pradesh should continue as a 'separate unit'.¹

First Stage: In pursuance of this policy, the twenty-one erstwhile hill states were merged together to form a viable unit, known as Himachal Pradesh, and placed under the administrative charge of a Chief Commissioner. The integration of the state, though in itself an achievement of great importance, was more in the nature of an opportunity rather than a fulfilment. The abolition of feudalism and the establishment of Chief Commissioner's regime were an essential prelude to the creation of a new Himachal. An Advisory Council consisting of three princes and six popular leaders was set up² to assist the Chief Commissioner in the day to day administration of the

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The people were given representation in the Central legislature to which Himachal administration was made responsible.¹

The merger of the erstwhile hill states into one unit was no doubt an act of administrative integration but hardly of democratic progress. The territory was made the 'Special responsibility' of the Government of India and only a semblance of democratic government was introduced - a process reminiscent of the dyarchical system under the Government of India Act, 1919. The local autonomy in the case of Himachal Pradesh meant 'virtual dictation'² from the Centre. This political situation was not only at variance with the democratic set-up in the country but was also contrary to the demands and aspirations of the people as expressed from time to time. Hence, the Chief Commissioner's rule in Himachal Pradesh became unacceptable and the demand for a representative government, insistent.

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2. Article entitled "Democracy in the Hill States" in the Janata, New Delhi, April 18, 1948.
At a Convention of the representatives of Part B and Part C states in the Constituent Assembly held at New Delhi in November 1949, the policy of the Union Ministry of States in relation to states, their integration and democratisation was reviewed. While welcoming the policy of the States Ministry regarding the integration of the states, the Convention recommended¹ that the distinction between the states and the provinces should be completely abolished and that the constitutional position and status of the states should be the same as those of the provinces. The Convention also expressed its deep regret and resentment that democratisation in states like Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, East Punjab States and the State of Biharpur had not

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¹. The Proceedings of the Convention are available in the Office of the Himachal Pradesh Congress Committee, the Mall, Shimla.
proceeded in terms of their respective covenants or
other assurances" with the result that there was great
dissatisfaction among the people of those Unions and
states. The Convention, therefore, demanded that
the people of these states should immediately be
effectively associated with the administration of these
states either by providing legislatures and popular
ministries where they are governed as Chief Commissioner's
provinces or by associating their representatives in the
adjacent provincial legislatures respectively. The
Convention appointed a nine-member Committee with
Shri Bas Bahadur (Himachal Pradesh) as Chairman and
Dr. Y.S. Parmar (Himachal) as Secretary, to work for
the implementation of its decisions.

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1. The Proceedings of the Convention are
available in the Office of the Himachal
Pradesh Congress Committee, Simla.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Sustained efforts were thereafter made to urge upon the Central Government to concede democratic rights to the people of Himachal Pradesh. At a meeting of the Himachal Provincial Congress Committee held at Chamba from May 10, 1949 to May 12, 1949, under the chairmanship of Dr. Y.S. Parmar, the overall position of the Pradesh was considered, dissatisfaction expressed with the Chief Commissioner's regime and responsible government demanded. Again at another meeting held at Simla from December 8 to December 10, 1949, the Himachal Provincial Congress Committee strongly urged upon the Government of India to declare Himachal a Lieut.-Governor's province with a popular legislature and a ministry. It also made a demand for the inclusion of various enclaves and contiguous areas with linguistic affinity, cultural homogeneity and

2. Resolution No.II passed by the Himachal Provincial Congress Committee, Simla. Resolution available in the office of the Pradesh Congress Committee, the Hall, Simla.
similarity of economic and political interests in Himachal Pradesh. The Committee authorised a deputation consisting of Dr. Y.S. Parmar, Messrs. B.N. Sharma, Radam Dev, Daulat Ram Gupta and Vashmir Singh to acquaint the Government of India with the feelings of the people of Himachal Pradesh.

With the inauguration of the new Constitution on January 26, 1950, India became a Sovereign Democratic Republic which guaranteed to all its citizens social, economic and political justice, equality of status and opportunity and the fullest freedom of thought and expression, belief, faith and worship.¹ This naturally re-kindled the hopes and aspirations of the people especially those who had hitherto been denied democratic rights of self-government. At a two-day political conference held at Mandi, discontent was expressed² at the continuance of Chief Commissioner's regime in Himachal Pradesh in the context of democratic

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2. The Indian News Chronicle, New Delhi, June 23, 1950, Editorial.
rule elsewhere in the country. If the backward people of a state like Rajasthan (uneconomic and sparsely populated) could be granted democratic institutions, the Conference observed, there appeared to be no reason to impose an autocratic civilian rule on Himachal Pradesh and other such centrally-administered areas.

Speaking on the President's Address in Parliament, Mr. Poonacha (Member of Parliament from Coorg) expressed disappointment of members from Part C States on the omission of those states from the address and advocated for the establishment of democratic government in these areas. He said that the ten million people of Part C States felt very much disappointed and disheartened that their share in the day to day administration of their state was negligible and a kind of bureaucratic official administration continued to 'reign' there. He pointed out that the

1. The Indian News Chronicle, New Delhi, June 23, 1950, Editorial.
Advisory Councils formed in some of the Part C states were not working satisfactorily. Giving examples, he said that all the members of the Advisory Council of Ajmer-Marwar had resigned and the Council there was not functioning. \(^1\) In Himachal Pradesh, he pointed out \(^2\), there was complete 'dissatisfaction' and a crisis was impending; and in other parts, the working of the Advisory Council had not been happy, because the Chief Commissioners there did not take the Councils seriously, disregarded their advice and always looked for directions to Delhi, thus totally ignoring the aspirations and wishes of the people.

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2. ibid.
Thus, it is obvious that the people of the centrally-administered areas were unhappy and dissatisfied with the type of administration imposed upon them by the Central Government. They continued their struggle for responsible government. The sentiments and aspirations of the people could no longer be ignored. The criticism of the Union Government's policy in denying responsible government to Part C States evoked an important policy statement from the late Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Intervening in the debate on the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, he assured\(^1\) the Parliament that it was the intention of the Government of India to go into the question of self-government for the centrally-administered areas very soon. "We shall first go into it ourselves

de novo and then, if it is necessary, we shall appoint a Committee for the purpose. In any event, Hon. Members who are directly concerned and others who are indirectly concerned will be consulted because any decision that we may arrive at can only be a proper decision if it is taken after full consultation", he pointed out.¹ The assurance was fulfilled with the passing of the Government of Part C States Act, 1951, providing for the establishment of Legislative Assemblies elected on adult franchise and the Council of Ministers responsible to such legislatures in the states of Ajmer, Bhopal, Coorg, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Vindhyā Pradesh.²


². The Government of Part C States Act, 1951 (No. XLIX of 1951), Section 3. The status of Chief Commissioner, Himachal Pradesh, was raised to that of the Lieut-Governor.
Second Stage: The passing of the Government of Part C (1952–1956) States Act, 1951, constituted an important landmark in the progress of democracy in Himachal Pradesh. It was the first breach in the old system of bureaucratic rule and a beginning in representative government. It may thus be described as a political experiment calculated to meet, in some measure, the popular demand for responsible government in Himachal Pradesh. Its immediate objective, however, appears to be to train the leaders of this Pradesh in the art of self-government preliminary to "a progressive realization of responsible government". Broadly speaking, the provisions of the aforesaid Act as regards the legislature and the executive were more or less similar to those of Part A States but the powers given to Part C States were limited. Thus, whereas the legislative assemblies of Part A States had "exclusive power" over the subjects mentioned in the State List, the power of the Himachal legislative assembly were circumscribed, as discussed elsewhere.

1. The Constitution of India, 1951, Article 246(3) read with Articles 249-253, 246, 304 and 356.
As in the case of the State Legislature, the powers of the Council of Ministers were fettered. In fact, the principle of responsibility as understood in a parliamentary system of government was introduced only partially. Thus, the ministers were drawn from the majority party in the Legislative Assembly. They were individually and collectively responsible to the legislature but the most important principle of the primacy of the Chief Minister was absent. The meetings of the Council of Ministers were presided over by the lieut.-Governor (unlike the practice in a parliamentary system of government), who was a nominee of the Union Government rather than a constitutional head of a parliamentary government in a state. He was an integral part of the Council of Ministers and combined in himself the functions of the Head of a State and of the Chief Minister.

1. This practice was, however, stopped with the passing of the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963.
Both the Lieut.-Governor and the Council of Ministers were under the overall control of the President of India, who, in fact, was the executive head of Part C States (under powers specifically vested in him under Article 239 of the Constitution of India) and occupied in regard to such a State a position analogous to that of a Governor in a Part I State as would appear from the decision of the Supreme Court of India. "The President who is the executive head of the Part C States", the Supreme Court held, "does not function as the executive head of the Central Government but as the head of the State under powers specifically vested in him under Article 239. The authority conferred under Article 239 to administer Part C States has not the effect of converting those states into the Central Government. Under Article 239, the President occupies in regard to

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Part C states a position analogous to that of a Governor in Part A States and of a Rajpramukh in Part B States. Though the Part C States are centrally administered under the provisions of Article 239, they do not cease to be states and become merged with the Central Government.

In spite of the decision of the Supreme Court and with due deference to the decision, it will have to be stated that the position of Himachal Pradesh was not, in any way, that of a federating unit because, in the final analysis, the legislative powers were vested in Parliament while the executive, in the President of India. The powers that the governmental institutions exercised in Himachal Pradesh were more or less delegated. The position of the executive and the legislature under the Government of Part C States Act, 1951, can at best be compared with the provincial executive and legislature under the Government of India Act, 1919, rather than the Government of India Act, 1935. Parliament continued to exercise legislative sovereignty while the President remained the executive head of the State.
The reforms under the Government of Part C States Act, 1951, may thus be said to constitute a half-way house between enlightened autocracy and responsible self-government. The aspirations aroused by the commitment of the Central Government to grant responsible government in successive stages sustained interest and the people hoped that the stage of "partial responsible government" would automatically lead to "complete responsible government" in due course. This hope was, however, belied when Himachal Pradesh suffered a set-back in status whereby it became a centrally-administered territory on November 1, 1956, resulting in the withdrawal of the democratic set-up and the substitution of a Territorial Council with more circumscribed powers and functions in place of a legislature and a Council of Ministers. The people began to be associated with the administration in an advisory rather than a directive capacity.

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1. See pp. 76-78 above.
2. The Territorial Councils Act, 1956, (No. 103 of 1956). This act was enforced with effect from August 15, 1957.
Third Stage: The Territorial Council was a body corporate subject to numerous limitations. It was under the overall control of the Central Government, acting through the Administrator, who had the power to give to the Territorial Council all such directions as he considered necessary and the Council had to comply with such directions. The Administrator was also empowered to suspend the execution of any resolution or order of the Territorial Council. The Central Government had the power to supersede the Territorial Council and to make rules in regard to subjects assigned to the Territorial Council. The Territorial Council could only make bye-laws in respect of limited subjects and those too were subject to modification by the Central Government.

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1. The Territorial Councils Act, 1956, Section 52(2).
2. ibid.
3. ibid., Section 52(3).
4. ibid., Section 53(1).
The Territorial Council consisted of 43 members, out of which 41 members were directly elected on the basis of adult suffrage and the remaining two, nominated by the Central Government from amongst persons not in service of the government.¹ It had its own Secretariat located in the Lodge (now the residence of the Chief Minister), at Simla. It consisted of five Departments, viz., General Department, Education Department, Medical Department, Engineering Department and the Veterinary Department. At the apex of the structure was an elected Chairman, aided and advised by the Chief Executive Officer who, in turn, was assisted by officers designated as Principal Officers. These Principal Officers, although they outwardly occupied the position of Heads of Departments, actually exercised far less powers than the Heads of Departments in a state or even their counterparts in the Himachal Administration.

¹ The Territorial Councils Act, 1956, Section 3(3).
The Territorial Council was thus a "glorified local body". It was a novel experiment in the constitutional history of India. It was worse than the dyarchical administration of 1919. Whereas dyarchy was a step forward, the Territorial Council was a step backward, especially in the context of democratic set-up in free India. It proceeded on the assumption that the various departments of government can be divided into two groups, responsible to two different authorities. This assumption ran counter to the elementary theory of political science that the government is an organic whole and cannot be divided into two irreconcilable halves, one elective and the other, non-elective or bureaucratic. The futility of this assumption had amply been demonstrated by the failure of dyarchy under the Government of India Act, 1919. The Territorial Council was thus unsound in theory - a cumbersome and confused political system having no logical basis.
The Territorial Council was entrusted with the administration of only the nation-building departments of Education, Public Health and a part of the Public Works Department. Even in these 'transferred' departments, the distribution of subjects between the Territorial Council and the Administration was haphazard rather than logical. Thus, while the Territorial Council was responsible for school education, the training of teachers as also the higher education was the concern of the Administration. In the Departments of Public Health and Public Works, the upper layers were the concern of the Administration. This ill-conceived distribution of subjects resulted not only in the creation of two parallel governments but also in additional expenditure without corresponding increase in efficiency. It also gave rise to unnecessary delay in the disposal of administrative work.
The Territorial Council had been given some ornate appearance but no real power. Though the representative principle of democracy had been recognised, yet at the same time, the undemocratic bureaucratic rule continued to balk it. The Council had almost the same strength of membership as the former legislature but it lacked the system of cabinet responsibility which is the very essence of a parliamentary system of government. The debates of the Council, therefore, were not always as realistic as they should have been because they could not affect the administration.

Finally, the Territorial Council was a political anachronism in a democratic set-up in the country. It was based on the distrust in the capacity of the popularly elected members to manage their own affairs. As such, even in the limited sphere of transferred subjects, there was no real transfer of power to the people and no genuine responsible government. The transferred subjects had been so elaborately fenced round by safeguards and other
ingenious devices that the Territorial Council could not pursue any plan freely or independently. The 'Special responsibility' of the Administrator paraded every Department of the Territorial Council and as such, the Council could be checkmated and controlled at every turn and its cherished plans, thwarted.

It is rather intriguing that instead of conceding responsible government, the Central Government took a retrograde step and withdrew the experiment of partial responsible government in Himachal Pradesh. Some blame the Council of Ministers for this step while others, the States Reorganisation Commission. The former feel that the Council of Ministers did not effectively advocate the case of Himachal Pradesh, while the latter hold that the members of the States Reorganisation Commission were not "familiar with the conditions of this place, the ideas of its people and its history" and hence the disappointing recommendations. It appears, however, that the majority of the members of the Commission

1. Based on author's interview with the dissidents in the Congress Party and the leaders of the Opposition Parties in Himachal Pradesh.
carried a rather poor impression of the working of popular government in this Pradesh. This impression is reflected in their wholesale condemnation of the working of Part C States. These States, the Commission observed\(^1\), were a financial liability on the Central Government; the extra cost of democratic administration in these States was not commensurate with more efficient and satisfactory administration; the administrative services in Part C States were not properly manned; the existing set-up of these States was unsatisfactory; these States were so small that they were economically unbalanced, financially weak and administratively and politically unstable and that the form of political activities in these States was limited resulting in the interplay of personal ambitions and jealousies. Making a pointed reference to Himachal Pradesh, the

Commission pointed out thus:

"Our own impression formed as a result of our tour of this area is that opposition to the integration of this unit in the Punjab is not so strong as is generally made out. While we undoubtedly noticed some sense of uneasiness in certain sections of the people about the merger of the state, it was clear to us that vested interests were actively fostering this. Taking this into account, we see no reason why all other important considerations should be subordinated to the alleged feeling of the hill people against amalgamation with the adjoining areas". 1.

The Chairman of the Commission, however, did not subscribe to the recommendation of his colleagues. Recommending the continuance of Himachal Pradesh as a separate unit under the direct control of the Central Government as a Union Territory, Shri Pasl all said: "Himachal Pradesh is a typical instance where the arguments in favour of small units ... can be applied with advantage. As a separate unit, it may be able to provide an intensive programme of social welfare measures which would not be possible if it is merged in the Punjab. In so far as the need for such a programme is pressing in this backward area, the

case of Himachal Pradesh for separate existence need hardly be emphasized". The State Legislative Assembly, which debated the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission on November 30, 1955, also urged upon the Government of India to retain the separate entity of Himachal Pradesh. The resolution adopted by the Assembly reads:

"Having taken into consideration the Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, this House does hereby resolve as follows:

FIRSTLY, that Himachal Pradesh be retained as a state and not be merged in the Punjab;

SECONDLY, that the enclaves of the Pradesh be integrated; and

LASTLY, that the hilly areas contiguous to the Pradesh be merged therein at the will and option of the people of these areas".2


The States Reorganisation Bill, 1956, and the connected proposals for the amendment of the Constitution were considered by the Himachal Legislative Assembly on April 3-5, 1956, and the stand taken in its resolution of November 30, 1955, referred to above, reiterated. The Assembly also constituted a seven-member committee to negotiate with the Government of India for the retention of the democratic set-up in Himachal Pradesh in terms of the resolution along with the amendments adopted by the House. The views of the State Assembly, though not summarily brushed aside, were not, it seems, given the consideration they deserved. On the other hand, the Commission appears


to have been influenced by the practice prevalent in the Union Territories of the United States of America where the democratic rights are limited to sending 'delegates' to the lower House of the Congress with no votes. This seems to have prompted the Commission to propose that "democracy in these areas should take the form of the people being associated with the administration in an advisory rather than a directive capacity". While the recommendations of the Commission were accepted by the Government of India in principle, the decision in regard to the merger of Himachal Pradesh with the neighbouring state of the Punjab was put off.

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It may be pertinent to point out that the withdrawal of the legislature and the Council of Ministers was, by no means, inevitable in Himachal Pradesh on the reduction of its status from a Part C State to a "Union Territory". A Union Territory in the United States of America functions, with only a few exceptions, just as the other states do. The principal exceptions are that the United States Congress can determine the form of government for the Territory; that the Territory has no representative college which chooses the President of the United States; that the Territory does not elect its Governor and that the Territory is represented in the Congress by a delegate instead of by Senators and Representatives.

In other respects, the Territory enjoys the same privileges as are enjoyed by any other state. The government of the Territory consists of a Governor appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the Senate. Administrative Officers are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Territorial Senate; and a legislature of two Houses is elected by districts. The powers of the Territorial legislature are similar to those of the legislatures of the other states, except that such measures as those granting franchise privileges to public utilities are subject to the approval of the Congress and the President, and that the Congress can amend or abolish laws passed by the Territorial legislature - a power which is "not largely or often exercised". 1

In view of the above, it would not have been inappropriate to provide a legislature and a Council of Ministers to the Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh. This was not only in accord with the past assurances of the Government of India but was also in line with the democratic set-up in the rest of the country. It was also in keeping with the pattern of political arrangement that exists in the federal government of the United States of America. Besides, Himachal Pradesh and earlier also (1952-1953) enjoyed a measure of responsible government, so that it did not stand to reason materially to detach from such a set-up on the reorganisation of states merely by re-naming them as "Union Territories". The Territorial Council itself, the limited powers that it enjoyed and the greater authority of the administrator were steps which were resented and condemned as retrograde by

1. Political leaders belonging to different political parties voiced dissatisfaction with the circumscribed powers of the Council and pleaded for a more effective association of the people's representatives with the day to day administration of the Territory, i.e. a full-fledged state. (See the Tribune, 16.8.53, p.3, cols. 3-5; ibid., 19.8.53, p.8, cols.7-8; 23.8.53, p.4, cols.4-6; Himachal Pradesh Letter; 30.9.53, p.4, cols.6-7, "Our Himachal Pradesh Letter; ibid., 18.10.53,
the people of Himachal Pradesh. Their desire to have a full-fledged state received a serious setback. The administrator virtually became a 'heavenly' and at the Central Government, the old 'paramount power'. The people felt cheated of their goal and the fruits of the struggle for freedom. Nevertheless, the central leaders appear to have realized that their policy had misfired and they decided¹ to restore the democratic apparatus consisting of the popularly-elected legislature and a Council of Ministers responsible to the legislature, that picking up the old thread of parliamentary democracy which was snapped in the year 1956.

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p.4, cols. 4-6, "Our Himachal Pradesh letter"; See also article "Wither Himachal Pradesh" by Dr. Y.S. Parmar in the Tribune, Republic Day Supplement, 26.1.59, p.10, cols.7-8; Also The Tribune, 7.1.59, p.4, Editorial.
The pattern of political development in Himachal Pradesh, as is evident from the foregoing treatise, conforms neither to the British Model (followed in respect of the British Indian Provinces) nor to the American model (followed in respect of Union Territories). It also does not adhere to the pattern of political development as envisaged by the Government of India itself in terms of Sardar Patel's Declaration referred to above. Obviously, it is an expedient - slipshod and haphazard - political development following neither any model (British or American) nor any known precedent, pattern or practice.

1. See p. 76 above.