

AASU & Parishad Talks: Need For Joint Front

From Our Special Representative

SHILLONG, Sept. 21.—The prolonged meetings of the All-Assam Students' Union and the Gana Sangram Parishad executives at Gauhati indicate the hurdles ahead and a measure of polarization. The group which favours "hawkism" is limited in number but can embarrass the moderates led by AASU; hence the urgency for a consensus to present a joint front when the talks are resumed in New Delhi. Yet another joint meeting at Gauhati is examining the report of the select committee, which apparently studied the draft of a possible solution or formula.

Differences between the Centre and the leaders of the movement have narrowed down to the 1961-71 segment. Divergence persists over the status of entrants, their resettlement and legal redress. The diehards want statutory powers for the proposed tribunals, whereas the Centre felt that the right of appeal was inherent in law and inviolable.

Deportation or resettlement of people outside Assam is another issue. The hawks are adamant on deportation or resettlement irrespective of the numbers involved and other considerations, whereas the less vocal will perhaps accept a plan to disenfranchise a specified category temporarily and render it ineligible for the next census. A "separate register" had been talked about in that context.

A small team of AASU and Parishad representatives are expected to go to New Delhi to resume informal discussions with the Central team led by the Cabinet Secretary who obviously will be preoccupied in the next few days till Mrs Gandhi leaves on her foreign tour.

Developments in Gauhati suggest that political parties, splinter groups and regional forces have an eye on a foreseeable election. The extreme Right would welcome an emotional atmosphere with regional overtones; so would communal forces. The Congress (I) would prefer to do business with the moderates, particularly those in AASU. The Socialist core of Janata sees little prospect of the Opposition forming a Ministry in Assam without Left support, which is not forthcoming. The two are repugnant to each other.

Political attitudes should cry-

talize in the months ahead. The AASU rank and file is meeting at Bongaigaon on October 2 and 3. Significant decisions bearing on its future are expected. The State Government, meanwhile, is gearing up the administration, recalling senior and experienced officers on deputation, ensuring judicious postings and identifying priority sectors for economic growth.

The two advisers, Mr Subramaniam and Mr Natarajan, and the Chief Secretary Mr Ramesh Chandra, had prolonged discussions with the Governor over the weekend. The Governor is in Gauhati now for an extended stay. He is in the picture regarding the discussions on the foreign nationals issue. Regarding the law and order situation in Assam the official assessment is that there is no "overt threat".

22-September-1987

The Statesman.