

The evolution of party politics in Mizoram is an interesting subject of study for the people of the Hill Areas of North East India in particular and the people of the whole country in general. It is still in process. It is necessary to go into a bit of the History of administrative set-up and political life of the Mizos in order to understand the process.

In 1889-90 the Chin Lushai Expedition was conducted simultaneously from Chittagong, Cachar and Burma and as a result the British had for the first time, control over the entire Chin-Lushai Hills. In the beginning, different tribes and clans of these Mountainous ranges were in the habit of raiding on the plain people of the plain bordering areas. Secondly Lushai Chiefs, sometimes, defied the British Administration. So these two reasons often compelled the British to send Military expeditions into Lushai territory.

The History of administration in the Mizo really begins in the year 1890, when the territory was divided into two administrative wings, viz:— North Lushai Hills, a part of Assam and South Lushai Hills District, a part of Bengal. The political officer was in-charge of North Lushai Hills with administrative control and instruction not to interfere much with the internal affairs of the tribes. The South Lushai Hills District was under the charge of a Superintendent. Alexander Mackenzie, then Chief Commissioner of Burma, opposed the unification of the Chin-Lushai Hills and on the other hand, persuaded the Government of India not to have maximum administrative control over the Mizos. As a result, the Chin Hills Regulation was enacted in 1896 which imposed restrictions on the movements of outsiders in these areas. It is still in force. But the British, in 1898, decided to merge the two areas into a District, a part of Assam under a Superintendent. The same year also marked the beginning of settled administration in the District. Thus, before the Indian Independence, Mizo Hills was administered by the Superintendent as a representative of the Viceroy of India with the village Chiefs. He was directed by the Government not to interfere in the internal affairs of the people, so the administration of the internal affairs of the people was entirely left to the Chiefs and their Cabinets, who used to rule the District in accordance

Evolution Of Party Politics In Mizoram

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with the customary laws of the land. The Chiefs had council of Elders to assist and advise them in the discharge of their duties. The Elders were men of their individual choice, nominated without considering the consent, option and opinion of the people. As a matter of fact, it was usually the opportunists, who had favour of the Chiefs. Thus, the Chiefs in the villages, had wide powers in the village administration, apart from executing the orders and directions of the Superintendents.

The Superintendent was the real authority, having a maximum powers even in the matters of taxation and administration of justice. In a nut shell, one can say that the Superintendent combined in his person the offices of Governor, Chief Minister and Judge of the Judicial Courts. The Chiefs, in their turn, had supreme powers in the village administration. Thus, both the Superintendents and the Chiefs used to rule over the people of this Mountainous land as virtual dictators. As hardly any act

or law was enforced, the opinion of the Superintendent became law. Every village was autonomous, ruled by the Village Chiefs. The political system was rigid. At that time, no one could dare to speak against their activities or criticise any act of theirs. Not only this much but there was no single political agency in the absence of political consciousness, which could voice the people's aspirations and grievances. As to quote an incident will prove the dictatorial behaviour of the Superintendent, some politically conscious men of KULIKAWN a part of Aizawl town demanded representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly and as a result, they were jailed, ending up their lives. This status of the Superintendent continued till the Indian constitution came into force. But there was a great change in the office of Superintendent in accordance with the gradual change of the law.

Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Hill Areas of Assam were divided into two categories— 'excluded areas' and 'partially excluded areas'. The Lushai Hills was under the Excluded Areas, over which the provincial ministry had no jurisdiction. The expenditure incurred in these Hill Areas was also not voted by the provincial Legislatures because there was no representative from the Lushai Hills. The British as per the 1935 constitution, did not want to give Local Self Government to the Mizos simply saying Lushai Hills as Excluded Areas. They wanted to keep the areas away from the popular rule or under the Governors and their political Agents. But the term Excluded Areas did not mean that the Areas were outside India.

Upto the end of Second World War, there was no political activity of any kind in the District. But the closeness of Japanese Troops in Burma and the Political Enslavement of the Mizo people at the hands of the Superintendents and the Chiefs brought a lot of political consciousness and awakening in the District as well as influenced the educated Mizo Youth politically, who never desired for the handing over of powers to the Mizo Chiefs by the British. Due to these political events, the Mizo youth wanted to organise themselves into a political party. As a result, a political party named MIZO UNION was formed in 1946 to voice the people's aspirations and various demands

by Mr. R. Vanlawma. Mr. Pacchunga was elected as the first President of the party. In 1947, when the Indian Independence Act came into existence, the Mizo Union was told about the remaining of the Mizo Hills with the State of Assam, since the District was a part of the State. Later, the Mizo Union also decided to remain with Assam as one of its parts and send its assent to the Governor of Assam.

Post-Independence Period

A new scheme of Administration of the Hill District based on the recommendations of the North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the constituent Assembly, known as the Bardoloi Committee was incorporated in the Part 'A' of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution. As a result, the Mizo District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council for Pawi, Lakher and Chakma tribes has been set up in 1952 and 1953 respectively with 24 members, of whom three-fourths to be elected in order to have autonomous administration over the traditional ways and affairs of the tribes and such changes as they themselves might like to introduce. With the introduction of the District Council, the post of high powered Superintendent was abolished and the whole area was put under a Deputy Commissioner with much curtailed powers and the Chief Executive Members of the District and Regional Councils.

Since the establishment of the District Council, the Mizo Union holding the rein of the District Administration, abolished the special privileges of the Chiefs and their Elders. The Chiefs were compensated in cash for the loss of their Tributes and power. Thus, the bold action taken by the Mizo Union regarding the abolition of the special privileges of the Chiefs, was certainly an admirable and democratic socialistic step towards the establishment of social and economic equality among the down trodden masses of this backward cum-under-developed district, which, is in keeping with the provisions of the Directive-Principles of the state policy of the Indian constitution. But there was reaction against the decision of the Mizo Union to remain within India and consequently a new political party, "United Mizo Freedom Organisation"

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was formed in 1947 by Mr. Lalmawia, who was backed or supported by the Mizo Chiefs because they were hostiles to the Mizo Union. This party under Mr. Lalmawia was demanding the merging of Mizo Hills with Burma. But this party could not last long in the District due to lack of constructive programmes and economic policies in the interests of the people. Later, the party under Mr. Lalmawia merged with the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) under the Presidency of Capt. Williamson Sangma. The E.I.T.U. was born in the Khasi & Jaintia Hills, which demanded a separate Hill State, comprising of the Hill Districts of Assam in 1955. Mr. Lalmawia, at that time, also advocated or expressed his opinion that the Mizo District should join Meghalaya. The EITU also joined the Chaliha Cabinet in 1957. Mr. Lalmawia was made a Parliamentary Secretary. But even at that time, the Mizo Union held full power at District level and was busy with local problems and administration. The Mizo Union representative in the Assam Assembly was Mr. A. Thanglura, who was, later, appointed as Chief Parliamentary Secretary. In 1960, the Government of Assam introduced the official Language Bill in the Assembly to make Assamese the Official Language of the State, which was objected by the Hill Leaders. As a consequence, the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference, comprising the Hill District Congress Committee, the Tribal Union, the Mizo Union and other local parties came into existence in 1960 to forge effective instruments of negotiation with the Government of India for separate Hill State under the guidance of Mr. A. Thanglura as its Chairman, Mr. Saprang (Mizo Union leaders) Mr. J.B. Hagjer, Capt. Sangma, Mr. Nichols Roy and Mr. Maham Singh. Thus, it shows that the Mizo Union stood for Hill State in 1960. For effective demand, the Mizo Union representative Mr. A. Thanglura who was Chief Parliamentary Secretary in the Chaliha Government, resigned as demanded by the A.P.H.L.C. Later in 1963, the Mizo Union had a special General Assembly at Aizawl and demanded separate State for the Mizos within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Since the period, the Mizo Union has been demanding Statehood for the Mizo District.

Situation worsens

From 1955 onwards, the situation began to change quickly for the worse due to the breaking out of famine in the District as well as the influence of some extremists. As a consequence, a Mizo cultural Society by Sri John F. Manliana was formed in the same year, which, in the long run, converted itself into FAMINE FRONT. During the visits of the Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. B. P. Chaliha and Tribal Areas Minister Capt. Williamson Sangma to the District, the front staged demonstrations, and processions demanding food for Mizo Hills. The Front started publishing Daily Paper 'Mizo Aw' (Mizo Voice) whose Editor was Mr. Laldenga, an assistant in the District Council. Later, he also became the President of this Front. The Front, in the long run, turned itself into Mizo National Front on the 12th October 1962 with Mr. Laldenga and Mr. Lianzuala as its First President and General Secretary as well.

The Mizo National Front was the most vociferous of all, organised on Militarily outlook and secessionist tendencies. The party demanded sovereign Independent State for the Mizos. The same year, Mr. Laldenga, Mr. John F. Manliana and Mr. Vanlawma of the Front contested the election to the seats of the District Council but failed to get themselves elected. In spite of set back in the elections, Mr. Laldenga visited the entire Mizo hills for support and caught hold of some Mizo young men and Ex-service personnel in the district. Gradually, the Front took, far and wide ground, in the District and could be able to fight Mizo Union in the by-elections. In 1963, the Front set up two independent nominees namely Mr. John F. Manliana and Mr. Lalmawia to contest bye-elections, who defeated the Mizo Union candidates Mr. Saprang and Mr. Bawichhuaka from Aizawl west constituency and Lungleh constituency. Thus, out of the three seats in the Assembly, the two seats went to the MNF and the third seat went to the Mizo Union candidate Mr. R. Thanhlira, who being a member of the A.P.H.L.C. did not vacate it as per the APHLC's demand. Later, Mr. R. Thanhlira was appointed as Chairman of the Assam Public Service Commission, and as a result, the seat occupied by him fell vacant.

So, the MNF candidate Mr. Rosanga contested it again in 1964 and lost it to Mr. Ch. Chhunga of the Mizo Union. Thus, the MNF had two seats in the Assam Assembly while the Mizo Union had complete control over the district Administration. Not only this much but the MNF also contested the Village Council seats but majority of seats, however, were captured by the Mizo Union. The MNF, largely because of its popularity and by-election results, demanded the dissolution of the District Council. But the party, later realised that dissolution of duly elected body in democracy was not possible at all by the Government. That is why, Mr. Laldenga adopted extreme step based on non-violence, opposing to the violent method as proposed by the dissident Mizo leader Mr. Vanlawma. But on the issue of sovereign state for the Mizos by non-violent method, Mr. Vanlawma had disagreement with Mr. Laldenga and consequently, he formed the Mizo National Council in 1964 with a few volunteers. But Mr. Vanlawma and Mr. Laldenga worked hard in close cooperation and coordination. While the MNF controlled the hostile operations, the MNC dealt with recruitment, propaganda and administration. In the early part of December, 1963, Mr. Laldenga with his Vice President Mr. Lalnunmawia and friend Mr. Sainghaka escaped to Pakistan and came in touch with the Pak agents and the Naga hostiles and drew up the plans for an insurrection. He was assured of all help by the Pak agents for training his volunteers to revolt against the established Govt. of India. But on their way back to India, Mr. Laldenga and Mr. Lalnunmawia were arrested by the police and kept in the Jail at Silchar. But a delegation of the MNF met the Chief Minister of Assam for their release. They promised, in black and white, the Chief Minister that they would continue their political activities within the Indian Constitutional jurisdictions. After having been released from the jail, Mr. Laldenga intensified his activities. He started raising many battalions of his volunteers with a blue uniform and sending out batches of volunteers to Pakistan for training in arms and guerilla war activities secretly so that they began to indulge in hostile activities. Meanwhile, the MNF began to defy all Government rules and regulations. Secondly, the volunteers

waited for an opportunity. The opportunity was provided by the Indo-Pak war of 1965, when the Indian Army had been deployed on the borders. So the Front volunteers during the war period also pressed him to start trouble or hostile activities in the District. As a result, he formed his own shadow Government and styled it "MIZORAM SAWRKAR" (Govt. of Mizoram) with the following office bearers:—

President: Mr. Laldenga.

Vice-President: Lalnunmawia.

Finance Secretary: Lalkhawliana.

Defence Secretary: R. Zamawia.

Home Secretary: Sainghaka.

Chief Justice of Mizo Hills:

John F. Manliana (appointed later on).

In December, 1965 and January 1966, the MNF with its volunteers started collecting funds from the people of towns and villages for the Party Office at Aizawl, its organizational activities and established its head quarters there.

In February, 1966, the MNF intensified its activities and the hard core of the party decided to start an armed revolt. Two days before the disturbance started, the MNF representative in the Assam Assembly, Mr. John F. Manliana was called back by Mr. Laldenga to Mizo Hills. On the 28th February, 1966, the MNF volunteers attacked the Aizawl and the Lunglei Treasuries simultaneously, Police and Security Forces posts at Aizawl, Lunglei, Demagiri, Champhai and Kolasib and held them till March 1966. But the Assam Rifles at Aizawl held out. Not only this much but the volunteers cut off telephone lines and all other communications were snapped. Even water supply to the towns was disrupted. The S.D.O., Lunglei with some officials of BRTT, Assam Rifles and other departments were captured by the volunteers and taken to East Pakistan and interior parts of the district. But they were released safely after a few months which was really a humane consideration of the MNF volunteers.

The Govt. of India came to know of the disturbances through a wireless message. Soon after the message was received, the troops landed at Aizawl. Since then, the district has been declared 'a disturbed area' under the Assam Disturbed areas Act, 1955.

This Act of 1955 along with the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) a special power Act, 1958 had been also applied in the area. In the meantime, the Govt. of India also made the same declaration under article 352 of the Constitution. Seeing numerous instances of loot, intimidation, murders, attacks on police posts, and deterioration of law and order, the Govt. entrusted the responsibility of law and order in the hills to the Army and issued a strict instructions that the Army was not to function as in war time but strictly in aid of the civil power. So the troops have been using the minimum force and rendering the maximum protection to the villagers, since the trouble started.

The evolution of party-politics in Mizoram is a fascinating phenomena, which is still in working stage. For instance, a branch of the Indian National Congress was set up by Mr. A. Thanglura at Aizawl in 1961. The party later became completely defunct due to certain reasons mentioned below. Due to lack of leadership and its hierarchical organisation, the average people of this area were not made aware of its policies and programmes. Mr. A. Thanglura, being the President of the District Congress Committee was, all the time, living in Shillong. He frequently visited the district and exerted his energies on the party organisation and making its policies in vogue among the people. So the people in majority except a few politically conscious used to regard it an organisation of out-siders. Regionalism also took a deep root in party politics of the district especially in Mizo politics. For example, the Mizo Union and the MNF were hostiles to this party on the ground that it is not a party of the Mizos. Thus, their regional tendencies also made the people confused to accept it. The holds of the MNF and Mizo Union on the public were also great obstacles to the growth of Congress. Lastly, the disturbance created by the MNF volunteers in 1966 made it into an amorphous body.

When the troops moved in the district during the disturbance, the MNF volunteers went underground. Mr. Laldenga along with his family and other friends escaped to Pakistan. The Army cleared the town of hostiles and relieved the beleaguered posts. In spite of the tightened security measures, the rebels from underground continued laying ambushes, whenever

opportunity came their way. On April 18, 1966, they kidnapped a Dy. Supdt. of Police (BMP). After a few days, they caught hold of vehicle carrying jawans of the Bihar Military Police and burnt every one of them alive. After that, the Army and the Police became cautious in tackling the rebels. The Govt. launched the first phase of 'Operation Security' in 1967. The party (MNF) has been declared illegal. A population of fifty thousand from hundred villages was resettled in 18 group centres styled Progressive Protected Village along the Silchar-Aizawl-Lunglei Road so that the rebels could not get opportunity or forced help. In 1969, more than half the population was shifted to regrouped villages. Due to tightened security measures, confusion among the hostiles and continued unsettled condition, the liberal group of the MNF, wanted peace and to lead a civilised life. So the Government of Assam offered amnesty to the rebels for their return to home and families and as a result of which, a large number of hostiles started surrendering to the Govt. for better and normal life within the framework of the Indian Constitution. In April 1970, there was a serious rift among the rebel leaders in various camps, a seed of which had already planted in the hearts and minds of some liberal-cum-intelligent rebel leaders of the MNF since 1968. As a result, the hostiles had different groups such as liberal or intelligent groups headed by Mr. Lalnunmawia and Mr. R. Zamawia (A my Chief) and radical groups headed by Mr. Laldenga and Mr. Lianzuala for independent state outside India. The Government also in August, liberalised the terms of amnesty for those, who wanted to surrender and to lead a peaceful and civilised life. After the creation of Bangladesh, the hideouts of the rebels or hostiles in Bangladesh have been over run or cleared by the joint troops of Bangladesh and India. They have no hope of getting any kind of help either from Bangladesh and Pakistan or China. That is why, they were in a desperate position. Most of the rebel leaders like Mr. John F. Manliana, Mr. Lalnunmawia, Sainghaka, Thangkima, Lalhmingthanga and Bualhranga except a few belonging to hard-core, who held key positions in the "MIZORAM SAWRKAR" had started surrendering to the Government after December,

1971 and joined either the Congress party or the newly formed M.I.P. and the Mizo Labour Party. Besides, a serious rift among the rebels, other forces were also at work. A liberal group had also emerged among the Mizos and it asserted its identity. They did not subscribe to Mr. Laldenga's cult of violence, repudiated the programme chalked out by him and worked for the restoration of peace, normalcy and a satisfactory political settlement within the Indian Union.

Root cause of disturbances

The Mizo disturbances are quite similar to the Naga disturbances. They are unique in having an almost entirely political foundation. There was no economic exploitation of the Mizos, no interference with their religious practices, or any attempt to change their social structure. Even then, the disturbance broke out, for which, I would like to trace the origin of the present Mizo trouble from 1947. In 1947, the rebel Naga leader Mr. A. Z. Phizo visited the Mizo Hills and aroused hopes among the people for better life after independence. Secondly, Mr. Laldenga with his followers before the present trouble visited the entire Mizo Hills to have support for his demand of independence for Mizo Hills. He also twisted the meaning of the words 'Excluded Areas' and made the people understand that Mizo Hills was under the excluded areas in the British days and so it could not be converted into District by the framers of the Indian Constitution. This twisted meaning of the excluded area went home with a section of the simple Mizo people, who rose in arms and led to protracted strife for about eight years.

Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited the district and assured the people of a bright future. Likewise, Bordoloi Sub-committee made several suggestions for the development of the district. Unfortunately, no constructive steps were taken. The Mizos were tired of wishes and empty dreams. The birth of Pakistan also cut off the main supply line to the territory.

Besides, there were other numerous causes like long neglected poverty, acute scarcity of water supply in towns, lack of electricity, bad communications, lack of contact of

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the Government with the people, problem of urban and rural unemployment, other amenities, regional economic imbalances, corruption, nepotism prevalent in the administration of the Autonomous District and Regional Councils and failure of the Mizo District Council in evoking the local initiative and people's participation in the development activities to the desired extent, worked together and wounded the sentiments of the people very badly, which led some of the extremists elements to stake even the life of the community for the cause of self-determination. Thus the trouble broke out in the district, largely because it was totally neglected and so long left. We never took initiative to bring the Mizos to the mainstream of Indian life. Here we cannot blame any section of people in particular because we all are responsible for it and such divisive forces prevalent in the country, are nothing but a product of socio-economic defective system or pent-up energy of our country which has already been accepted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that "Indian poverty is greater enemy than China or external disturbances".

Growth of New Political Forces

Mizoram is the land of many tribal groups and clans such as Lushais, Raltes, Hmars, Paites, Lakhers, Pawis, and Chakmas. Since the British rule over the district, there were often inter-clan clashes and inter-tribal clashes with the tribes like Kukis, Lushais, Lakhers and Pawis. As a result, inter-tribal feelings rooted in the hearts and minds of each dominant tribe deeply (Mizos, Lakhers and Pawis) of the region which have been, later, responsible for the growth of the Lushai, the Lakhers and the Pawi oriented politics to free themselves against the domination of each other. But the Chakmas, who have been socially, politically, economically and educationally backward, have not been able to have of their own organised politics till today. Thus there have been three clan oriented political parties such as the Mizo Union mainly a party of the Lushais, Mara Freedom party entirely a party of the Lakhers and the Chin National Front a party of the Pawis (existed for the time being). Let me now trace the origin of the MFP and the CNF.

Mara Freedom Party

The Maras, (popularly known as

the Lakhers) are one of the tribes with their distinctive language, customs and traditions different from the Lusais and the Pawis, who inhabit the South Eastern Region of Mizoram. The Maras could never be mixed up with the Lushai people because of their sheer distinction. So the first demand for the creation of a separate Lakher Hills district administration was made in 1945 by the Mara Chiefs to the then Additional Supt., South Lushai Hills, Lungleh. The third demand was also effected again in 1947 to the Governor of Assam. In the memorandum the Lakher Chiefs have refused to join in with the Mizo Union nor do they wish to be under the rule of Lushais. So prior to the MIZO DISTRICT COUNCIL and the PAWI-LAKHER REGIONAL COUNCIL, the Government of India formed the ADVISORY COMMITTEE in 1948 in the Lushai Hills District in which one seat was also allotted to the Lakhers. But they were not satisfied with this arrangements. They kept their struggle continuing and as a consequence, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council along with the Mizo District Council was set up in 1953, recognising the Maras as one of the Scheduled tribes of India. The Regional Council was once well-liked by the Lakhers with the thought that the council would give an opportunity to preserve their tribes and develop their own culture and language along with other tribes of India. Later, the Lakhers began to realise that the council with its limited legislative power will never help the Maras to grow and develop according to their own taste and ability. Because the Mizo District Council has powers over the Regional Council on some matters like education, language, road, minerals and professional tax. So to the Maras, it is also the Mizo domination over their customs and language. Secondly the Pawis being more educated and politically conscious, have been holding responsible positions both in the Council and the Office since its establishment, which has later, led the Maras to think of their own separate existence out of the Pawis domination. Not only this much but they have charged the Pawis as parasites on them and never felt at home with the Pawis and Lushais. As a result they have started demanding the creation of a Mara or Lakher District Council to grow and developed according to their own genius and ability.

In order to make the demand effective and achieve the end, they organised themselves into political party known as the Mara Freedom Party. The party was formed in 1960 by Mr. Vanluai Hlychho and Mr. Mylai Hlychho as its first President and Secretary against the dominations of the Lushais and the Pawis. The main aim of the party was to get separate Lakher District Council. Since 1960 the party has been trying to unite the Mara tribe by preaching the gospel of regional politics as well as pressing the Government of Assam and India to create a separate Lakher District Council so that the Maras may be able to develop their customs, culture and language. For the same the party submitted a long memorandum to Mr. Pataskar, Chairman, Commission for Hill areas of Assam in June 1965, to pursue and press the demand. The party has always been at work for achieving the demand. As a consequence, the party has got the Lakher District Council under the Act of Union Territory of Mizoram. But since the last election to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the party appears to have been split into two groups headed by Mr. M. Hlychho and Mr. Hiphei. Mr. Hiphei being a member of the MFP contested against the party nominee Mr. M. Hlychoo and defeated him. He is now Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram.

Chin National Front

The Chin National Front may be described as a reaction against the regional politics of the Lakhers and the Lushais. The party was formed by Mr. L. Chinzah in 1965. He was the President of the party and Mr. A. Rohnuna was its Secretary. The main aim of the party was to counteract the Mizo National Front movement as well as to demand for the integration of the Pawis with Chin Hills in Burma. But the party could not maintain its strength because it was largely a one-man party (Mr. L. Chinzah). The founder himself decided to defect from the party. Later he with other leaders of the CNF had a special Assembly in 1970 and decided to merge with the Congress party. The party had some roots in the Pawi areas. But with the joining of its founder with the Congress, the party ended in itself or disappeared from

the political platform of the Pawis for ever.

Now I think better to trace the development of party politics in Mizoram since 1966 onwards which is really interesting. The functioning of the Congress party was almost stopped upto 1966 due to the present disturbances. From 1960 to early part of 1967, Mr. A. Thanglura was the President of the District Congress Committee and Mr. Zalawma was Secretary. But Mr. A. Thanglura was all the time living in Shillong. He made frequent visit to the district which was not at all enough for the party organisation. So in order to revitalise and make it popular, the party leaders like Mr. Zalawma, Mr. Dengthuama and others decided to change its leadership. As a consequence, they held a party election in 1967 in the absence of Mr. A. Thanglura and elected Mr. Dengthuama as the President of the District Congress Committee, which certainly wounded the sentiment of Mr. A. Thanglura. Mr. Zalawma continued as its Secretary, and Mr. Hrangchhuana was made Treasurer. After that, Mr. Thanglura became the main cause of split in the Congress party. Later, he persuaded Mr. Hrangchhuana to participate in the Congress politics actively and formed another group against Mr. Dengthuama. He, however, persuaded the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee to intervene for reconciliation and as a result, he got Mr. Hrangchhuana's leadership and Mr. Dengthuama as Vice-President recognised by the A.P.C.C. without party election. Despite, the Congress party in the district was completely split into two groups headed by Mr. Hrangchhuana and Mr. Dengthuama. But the split was not mainly because of its policies and programmes, as it has ideological division such as Congress(R) and Congress(O) in the other parts of the country. Here in Mizoram, there was a split only for power and leadership and nothing else. In Mizoram there was no division of Congress such as Congress(R) and Congress(O). Because Congress in the Mizo Hills, does not consist of young Turks. It consists only of old Turks. So the split continues.

In 1967, by-elections took place to the Assam Legislative Assembly for three seats from Mizo Hills in a rather disturbed atmosphere, for, the hostiles had issued threats to the

parties, the candidates and the public. Hence the Mizo Union could not set up any candidate due to the threats of the hostiles. Secondly, its demand was to get statehood and so it boycotted the election. There were no party candidates contesting the election. But there were only five nominations filled by five candidates (four independents and one Congress from Lunglei constituency). In some constituencies (Aijal West and East) there was no contest. Mr. A. Thanglura and Mr. John F. Manliana from Aijal West and East were returned unopposed to the Assam Legislative Assembly. But there was contest in Lungleh constituency among Mr. L. Chinzah, Mr. Kristo Mohan Chakma (Independent) and Mr. Da hnawka (Congress) from where Mr. L. Chinzah was elected. During polling, there was firing here and there.

Again in order to bring reconciliation between the two groups, Mr. Hrangchhuana and Mr. Dengthuama agreed to hold the party election to elect the President in July 1970. But Mr. Dengthuama was again elected as its President. So Mr. Hrangchhuana handed over all charges to him. Again after a few months, Mr. Hrangchhuana started revitalising his own group with the support of Mr. Thanglura, who was a member of the Assam Legislative Assembly. Later he also became Minister in Mr. Choudhury's cabinet. By virtue of his hold or influence, he got again Mr. Hrangchhuana's Presidentship recognised by the A.P.C.C. After all, Mr. Hrangchhuana's leadership instead of ending split, aggravated it more. And Mr. Thanglura's attempt to revitalise the Congress party in Mizo Hills was of no use. Because the group led by Mr. Dengthuama could not accept Mr. Hrangchhuana's leadership. This group, however, was also at work. Thus, these two groups continued before the election of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly till March, 1972.

Besides, the **Mizo Democratic Party** was also formed by Mr. Lalhmingthanga and P. Lalhmingthanga as its President and Secretary in 1969 in Shillong. The main objective of the party was to pursue the Mizo leaders and the people as a whole to join Meghalaya. So the party, with a view to making its demand more effective and policies more popular, shifted its Headquarters to

Aijal in February, 1970. But the party was totally rejected by the people mainly because of its advocacies regarding the joining of Mizo Hills with Meghalaya were not in keeping with the Mizo peoples' aspirations for Statehood. The main reason for its failure was that it was also a one-man party without any socio-economic policy.

Since the establishment of the Mizo District Council, the Mizo Union had been in power till the fourth election of the District Council. But in the fourth election held in 1970, the Congress party after forging alliance with other parties initially emerged as a Ruling Party with the support of the nominated members, independents and two defected members of the Mizo Union with a strength of fifteen in the twenty four member Council and headed the District Council for the time being. But the party could not succeed to maintain its strength only because of its factious groups and of the pressure of the Mizo Union which also fought for the control of the Council. Later, three of the Congress members defected and joined the Mizo Union and as a result, the Mizo Union also could be able to control over the Council. But it could not also maintain its position. The Council had coalition rule due to non-attachment to principles by the members of the Congress and the Mizo Union.

On the other hand, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was also controlled and headed by the Pawi leaders since its formation. But in the fourth election of the Council, the Mara Freedom party with the support of the Congress members and Chakma leaders also emerged as a ruling party and headed the PLRC.

In addition, a **Mizo Integration Council** in November, 1970 was also formed by the Mizo leaders both surrendered rebels and overground under the leadership of Mr. Lalsawia in order to have contiguous mizo inhabited areas of Tripura and Manipur with Mizoram. It was formed along the lines of the Naga Integration Council. Similarly, the **Mizo Integration Party** with a view to getting all the mizos united under the single administrative unit was formed in 1970, by Mr. J. Kapthianga (President) and Rev. Sakhawlina (Secretary). Most of its members being rebels had

either surrendered or were captured by the security forces and were pardoned by the Government. But the party merged itself with the Mizo Labour Party in 1971.

In January 1971, the **Mizo Labour Party** came into existence at Lunglei formed by Mr. Kiautuma and Mr. Ellis Saidenga. Mr. Kiautuma was its first President and Mr. Ellis Saidenga was its first Secretary. It was formed at Lunglei no doubt but after a few months, its movement increased and took far and wide ground in the district. Because the party was in toto regional in Character, opposing the government proposal of making Mizo Hills as a Union Territory as well as campaigning among the people that "Mizoram is for the Mizos". Its demand was also in favour of Statehood within the frame-work of the Indian Constitution. But the party could not maintain its position due to its inherent political defects and it, later, merged with the Congress party in September 1972.

Besides, some leaders like Mr. Bawichhuaka and Mr. Dosanga of the Mizo Union left their party and recently formed the **Mizo National Union** in 1971 in against the Mizo Union. Its demand was also for Statehood, opposing a Union Territory status. But the party, later, merged with the Mizo Labour Party because it was also a one-man party without any socio-economic policy.

Quest for Peace

In 1960, the political development of the district (now Mizoram) was interrupted due to insurgents. Further due to the persistence of an insurgency, this mountainous land was the scene of pretty heavy fighting between insurgents and security forces until 1971. By that time, the security forces had controlled over the hostile activities largely because of the tightened security measures. The emergence of Bangladesh also crippled the hostile activities and compelled the rebel leaders living in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to return to their parents, families and homes. In the meantime, the government's liberalised amnesty offer also gave a number of hostiles a chance to surrender and a way to civilised and normal life. A liberal group, however, among the Mizos and the hostiles emerged which began to join in the

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great adventures of peace. The Mizo Union which is regional in character, has played the most important role in mobilising the forces of peace as well as in moulding the public opinion in favour of better status of Mizo Hills or statehood within the frame work of the Indian Constitution by rejecting a cult of violence. The Mara Freedom party also campaigned among the Lakhers not to join in with the hostile activities and instead advocated for peaceful political settlement. The MNF had no roots at all in the Chakmas areas. So, in a nutshell, it can be said that the initiative for peace came from the Church leaders, enlightened and politically conscious people. As a result of their efforts and forces of peace working together, normalcy began to return to the land of Mizoram.

In 1970, when Meghalaya was granted the status of "AN AUTONOMOUS STATE" within Assam, the Mizos, whose future was still hanging in balance, pressed the Government of India to accept the same status for their area. So with a view to making the demand for statehood more effective, the Mizo Union and the Congress party (Mr. Dengthuama group) formed the United Mizo Parliamentary party, whose aim was also to run the coalition administration of the Mizo District Council. Ultimately, due to the united efforts, continuous struggles, great sacrifices of the Mizos as a whole and political skill of the Mizo genius, the Government of India, however, in 1971, agreed for political settlement and came out with the proposal to constitute the Mizo Hills district into a Union Territory for the time being. However, the major political parties such as the Mizo Union and the Congress except a few parties of one-man and a liberal group among the Mizos agreed in toto with the government proposal. As a result, the Mizo Hills district has been elevated to the status of Union territory (Mizoram) on 21st January, 1972, under the provisions of the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation Act of 1971) with the thirty three member Legislative Assembly (thirty elected and three nominated) and one Lok Sabha seat, consisting of Council of Ministers and Lt. Governor as its Administrative head. In order to safeguard the interests of the minority tribes, three District Councils have been also created for the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas under

the Act. The legislature has legislative powers over the subjects enumerated in the state list of the Indian constitution. In order to elect candidates to the thirty member legislative assembly and for one Lok Sabha constituency, the date for polling was fixed by the Election Commission of India on 18th April, 1972. So there were mainly five political parties such as the Mizo Union, the Congress, the MLP, the Mara Freedom party and the Socialist party contesting the elections. In setting up the candidates, no party had a serious rift or confusion except the Congress which was completely splitted into two groups even before or during the polls. That is why, the party could not be able to finalise even the list of candidates till the end of March, 1972, which certainly created a great confusion among the voters.

Here I think better to state a few lines regarding the reconciliation between the two groups of the Congress. When the leaders of the two groups failed themselves to come to certain understanding, the matter was referred to the AICC and the AICC intervened and brought a reconciliation between the two groups by making Mr. Hrangchhuana and Mr. Dengthuama as its President and Senior Vice-President respectively. But this reconciliation brought by the AICC was rather physical and not academic at all and based on the non-attachment to principles, which led the Congress party to have set back in the elections. However, the date for the polling was at hand and hence the list of the Congress candidates on the recommendations of Mr. Hrangchhuana and Mr. Dengthuama was prepared by the AICC. So the Congress set up thirty candidates for thirty seats excluding Mr. A. Thanglura, a founder of the party in Mizo Hills. One out of the thirty candidates defected before the polls and contested as an independent candidate against the Mara Freedom Party candidate from Tui-pang constituency. The Mizo Union set up twenty five candidates only, among the Lushai dominated areas. The MLP also set up twenty eight candidates whereas the Socialist party set up seventeen candidates. The Mara Freedom Party set up one candidate. Thus, there were altogether 160 candidates including independents in the field to the 30 member assembly and for one Lok Sabha Constituency. More than 15 former Mizo rebel leaders including the Home Minister,

the Chief Justice and a Senator among the total of 160 candidates were contesting either on behalf of the Congress or the Mizo Labour party.

But in the elections, the Congress had complete set back, capturing only 6 seats out of 29 candidates and securing 31% of the total votes polled. Regarding its set back, it was experienced during the polls that the members were divided, disunited undisciplined and guided by factional alliances. There was no academic reconciliation among its members. Not only this much, but the political activities of the Congress party in Mizo Hills especially since 1967, have been characterised, by and large, by non-attachment to principles and divorce-ment from ideological orientation. So all these forces worked together against the Congress candidates during the polls. So if the Congress party in Mizoram thinks to maintain its balance between the parties, its members must give up factional and clan alliances, lust for leadership and conservative outlook and attach to its dynamic policies and programmes for socio-economic changes in Mizoram.

Besides, the Mizo Labour party, the Mara Freedom party and the Socialist party could not secure even a single seat in the 30 member assembly due to their inherent political defects. But the MLP and the Socialist party however managed to secure 15% and 3% of the total votes polled. The Mizo Union set up 25 candidates and captured 21 seats by securing 35% of the total votes polled. It lost only 4 seats to the Congress candidates. The Mizo Union candidate for the Lok Sabha seat was also returned. Thus the return of the Mizo Union to power with a thumping majority is significant. Here I would like to mention a few lines about its holds or popularity on the Mizos.

It is a fact that the Mizo Union unlike other political parties, is the oldest one with its roots in Aizawl and Lunglei districts, where the Lushais are in majority. Besides, the party has complete control over the District Council administration for more than 18 years and during this period, it worked, made its policies and programmes in vogue even among the average masses, concentrated in the areas of Aizawl and Lunglei district and moulded the public opinion in its

favour for achieving the end 'Statehood' by peaceful means within the framework of India. In this regard, I would like to add one thing that the Congress government in India could be able to abolish the special privileges of the Indian Princes after 24 years of independence, where as the Mizo Union just after coming to power (Mizo District Council) abolished the special privileges of the Village chiefs, which were, of course, the institutions of exploitation over the down trodden Mizos in majority. Such step taken by the Mizo Union was really democratic and progressive based on socialist appeal which, has, in the long run, made it mass party in Mizoram.

In addition, political party's success of stability generally depends on its leadership or dynamic policies. And the conscious leaders of MU, like Mr. Saprawnga, Mr. Ch.Chhunga, Mr. Vaivenga and others have been working for its stability, success and well organisation sincerely since its formation. They have holds on its members and Mizo community as well. That is why, they have been able to save the party from split and disintegration. Not only this, but its members are mostly united and disciplined and guided by attachment to principles. Hence only a few of its members have defected so far. The party today heads the Government of Mizoram. If the party continues to maintain its strength or position, it must have dynamic and left oriented policies and programmes to bring socio-economic changes in the most backward Union Territory of Mizoram.

Thus the polling was heavy, peaceful and enthusiastic. As a result, a total of 71.44% votes were polled for the first time to the elections of the 30 member assembly and for one Lok Sabha seat in an atmosphere of peace and friendliness. The election in Mizoram was very interesting in the sense that the people voted not only a particular party to power, they also voted for peace, stability and progress. They expressed their confidence in the parliamentary democratic machinery set up in a Union territory of Mizoram and set their seal of approval, by rejecting the cult of violence and politics of opportunism. Only because of the parliamentary apparatus, the Mizo people had begun to see more and more that after all, today, Mizos govern

Mizos. The Ministers, MLAs and most of the officials are Mizos. The non-Mizos in Mizoram are working in partnership with the Mizos for the constructive development and progress of Mizoram. There is now strong public opinion, developing day by day, in Mizoram in favour of peace and normalcy. One by one, the people of Mizoram have begun to realise that their welfare does not lie in violence or disturbance but in having peaceful conditions in which development can take place, in which the problems and the difficulties of the ordinary people can be solved. But sooner or later, one may also hope, all Mizo leaders will sit together on platform, pool their political wisdom and workout a solution that is in the best interests of the Mizos people. We have now reached the stage where the Mizos alone can solve the problems of Mizo. Besides, in dealing with the problems of the remote and peripheral area like Mizoram, the need is to strengthen a sense of belonging among the Mizos and to assure them that they will remain masters in their own house. For instance, excellent results have been obtained in Nagaland, since 1962, when it was made a State on its own.

The Chief Executive Member of the Mizo District Council Mr. Ch. Chhunga in his address of welcome to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, at the inauguration of the Mizoram Union Territory, expressed the hope that the Mizo Hills district, which had suffered a long period of isolation and neglect, will get the opportunity of complete participation in the mainstream of Indian Life. The opportunities are wide open for the Mizo people which they can utilise or enjoy by working together in close cooperation with the people of the rest of India and help the Mizo people to a better and a higher standard of living.

As regards the bringing of a separate status of Mizo Hills district out of Assam, credit goes to the Mizo National Front headed by Mr. Laldenga (now disbanded) no doubt, but now reason demands that the underground rebels should give up arms, abjure violence and join in the great adventures of peace for the social and economic uplift of Mizoram. But as for my thinking, it will be wise and humane step on the part of the Government to rehabilitate all

the surrendered rebels and volunteers so that they may be able to exert their energies in creative manner. Because man prefers economic advancement to political emancipation.

The evolution of party politics is really interesting and appears to be healthy after the election of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. After making a survey of the results of the elections the Mizo Labour Party and the Socialist party merged themselves in September, 1972 with the Congress party in order to fight the Mizo Union in the coming Election. As a result there are now two major political parties such as the Congress and the Mizo Union. This is certainly a healthy sign of political evolution, provided, reconciliation or unity among its members must be academic and based on attachment to principles. Its leaders will have to give up factional and clan alliances. Although, it is hazardous to prophesy the future, there may be divorcement or defection by its members at the time of the next general election. As for the prospect of this party in the next election, a clear picture will be available, only, when the selection of candidates will be made by the Congress High Command just before the next election of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly.

Lastly, I can add that party politics in Mizoram is in a process of evolution and so Indian Democracy must be permissive and accommodate its evolution. Besides, the growing economic and political crisis in Mizoram and mass movements must also compel the political groups to reorient their attitudes and change their patterns of behaviour, otherwise, the picture of Mizoram politics will be confused in the long run.

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