

THE NAGAS REBEL AND INSURGENCY IN THE NORTH-EAST



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KIRANSHANKAR MAITRA

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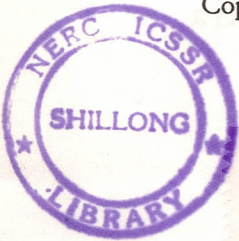
Distributors:

UBS Publisher's Distributors Ltd

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- Apeejay Chambers, 5 Wallace St., Mumbai-400001 Ph. 2070827, 2076971
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- 80, Noronha Road, Cantonment, Kanpur-208004 Ph. 369124, 362665

303.6250954165
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First Published, 1998



003098



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Printed at Kay Kay Printers, Delhi-110 007.

*To
My daughter, Jaya,
who was born
in Kohima*

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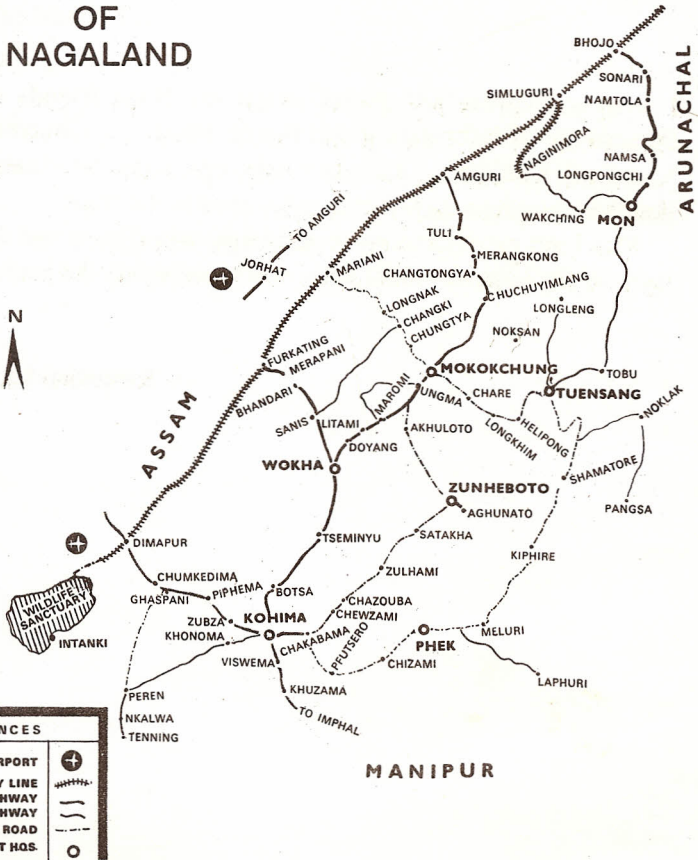
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my thanks to all my Naga friends and the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Government of Nagaland, Kohima for abundant help, up-to-date information, and sketches, graphics and photographs used in the book.

Also I am grateful to my wife Deepa, son Ujjwal and daughter Jaya for the help and indulgence while preparing the manuscript.

— Kiranshankar Maitra

GUIDE MAP OF NAGALAND



PREFACE

In the late sixties while I was working at Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, I received a letter from a senior author and editor of a magazine of Calcutta. He requested me to write an article for his magazine on different aspects of Nagaland. From then on I started collecting material on the tiny hilly state of the North-east in all earnest. I recorded personal experiences, held discussions with Naga friends of various tribes and of course, read a few rare and authentic books on Nagaland by eminent authors.

The process continued for about three decades. Even after having been transferred out of Nagaland, I had to visit the state later more than once. Thus, I started writing on Nagaland.

My first book on Nagaland in Bengali was published in 1973 (now out of print) and afterwards two more books on the state were brought out in English in 1991. One of the books, "Nagaland: Darling of the North-East" became very popular and the first edition was exhausted within a couple of years.

In my earlier books on Nagaland, I described the Naga festivals, dialects, customs and culture, head hunting, dress, the place of women in the Naga society, the Naga drum, modern Nagas etc., but carefully avoided the subject of insurgency and the rebel Nagas. Later, while I was looking at the state of affairs in different parts of the contemporary India: the trends of secession, terrorism and violence, I thought it was time to talk about the Naga rebels, the extremists and the militants of the North-east. What is happening at the moment in certain parts of India, has great similarity with the activities of the insurgent Nagas.

While I started writing the book, murder and depredation became a daily affair in the Punjab: Jammu & Kashmir was burning, and Assam followed suit. The mindless murders, devastating burnings, massive explosions, suicidal sabotages, the training of the terrorists in destructive devices in neighbouring countries-all have the resemblance with particular chapter in the history of Nagaland. The readers will come across with awe-struck amazement the destructive ingredients, chapter after chapter, in the book.

It must be mentioned that the book mainly delineates the story of the rebel Nagas, and insurrection in other parts of the north-east could not be described in detail.

I feel it is the duty of historians, sociologists and honest political leaders to assess the depth and width of the disastrous tendency towards insurgency. The present volume will speak of the sincere and intense love of an author for his unfortunate country, and also underline as to how historical events get repeated every now and then in India!

Kiranshankar Maitra

Chapter 1

THE ENEMY WITHIN

9th August, 1972

The then Chief Minister of Nagaland, Hokishe Sema was returning to Kohima from Dimapur. Dimapur, the only railwayhead of Nagaland, is connected with Imphal, the capital of Manipur by National Highway No. 39.

In the front seat of the jeep were the CM's bodyguards, in the rear at one side was his sixteen-year old daughter, Rev Kizung sat on the other side and the CM was seated in between. The police escort jeep, flying a red flag, was speeding a little ahead.

It was one in the afternoon. The red-white roof-top houses in Kohima were visible in the distance. Kohima was about 11 km away.

Before reaching Kohima there are two villages on the rightside, Jotsoma and Khonoma.

Jotsoma is not that remarkable, but Khonoma is well known for many reasons. This village is still carrying on the old Naga traditions in religious and social customs. Besides, Khonoma is the birthplace of the self-exiled, London-based rebel Naga leader, A.Z. Phizo. Phizo was the President of the Naga National Council (NNC) and the founder of the so called Federal Government of Nagaland.

While the jeep was manoeuvring a bend near the village, burst of rifle fire started suddenly on the CM's convoy from both sides. The CM's bodyguards also returned fire. One of the CM's bodyguards was found lying in a pool of blood. The CM and his companions ducked the moment shooting started. The jeep halted almost immediately.

Meanwhile the assailants fled away. The bullets made numerous holes on the jeep. The CM's daughter was wounded in the thigh.

Miraculously saved were Hokishe Sema and Rev Kizung, but the bodyguards, driver and one of the constables were killed while some other constables were injured. The life of the CM's daughter was saved after she was operated upon at the Kohima Government Hospital.

Immediately after the shooting incident the entire area was combed. But the assailants had vanished into thin air. Till the evening no arrest could be made:

A few days before this incident some unknown militants fired at the guardroom of the local Kohima station of All India Radio. Two persons were wounded.

Previously six attempts had been made on the life of Hokishe Sema but every time he had a miraculous escape without any injury. The attacks in 1962 and 1964 were lethal. The spot where the seventh attempt was made, was ill-famed as a 'death-trap'. Hokishe's father, a 'Gaon burrah', had been a village leader and reader and respected by all. He had to pay with his dear life for his peaceful policy and loyalty to the Government of India.

Prior to the deadly attack on his life a few days back, the CM had appealed to his 'Underground' brethren to eschew violence and create a peaceful atmosphere. The extremist rebels gave him a wonderful reply through their machine gun bullets!

But that was not the end. After this incident they shot at the education minister, Don Bosco Jashokie as well while he was returning from the Catholic Church at the back of Kohima village along with his wife. Jashokie and his wife both were injured.

In the background to all these incidents Governor B.K. Nehru banned three underground organizations: the 'Naga Federal Government', the 'Naga Army' and the 'Naga National Council' on September 1, 1972. The charges against them were secessionism, armed rebellion, attack on the Security Forces, Government servants and the public, collusion with foreign powers and instigating other rebel elements of the North-East.

While Phizo condemned the ban from London, the insurgents in the Naga Hills regarded it as their recognition.

The state government arrested an extremist on October 7, 1972. Following his confession, a former chief minister T.N. Angami and ministers S.C. Jamir and Akul Mailing were arrested on October 12. They were however let off after interrogation.

Since the Hokishe Sema-led government of 'Nagaland Nationlist Organization' (NNO) was responsible for the arrests of S.C. Jamir and his compatriots, they vowed for the downfall of the Hokishe Sema-government.

Before having made the attempt on the life of Hokishe Sema, the underground murdered one of the state's policy makers - a very talented young theoretician, a bold and strong Sema warrior and a respected peace loving old physician. Besides these conspicuous political murders the hands of insurgent Nagas were tainted with the blood of many ordinary public and private citizens.

There are many tribes in Nagaland. Every tribe has its separate identity and individuality. The Underground rebel Nagas were also divided into many groups and sub-groups based on tribal feuds.

A.Z. Phizo who belonged to the Angami tribe, always tried to dominate over other tribal leaders. That is why he could not tolerate the hegemony of Hokishe Sema and tried to liquidate the latter and also create anarchy in the state.

Despite being an Angami, J.B. Jashokie supported a Chief Minister of the Sema tribe. How could the Angami leader Phizo tolerate such an abominable thing? Jashokie was also Phizo's follower once. But when T. Sakhrie, the young intellectual Naga leader was butchered by the Phizoites, Jashokie changed his mind completely. The story of the change of mind is fascinating.

Politics in Nagaland is like an iceberg: very little is visible on the surface, but what is visible is the expansion of the invisible.

The present volume gives a chronological account of the growth and decline of insurgency in Nagaland. Dispassionately the author has narrated the history of insurrection in Nagaland in particular and in the North-East in general from the beginning to the recent time till 1996. His intimate knowledge of the militant underground guerrillas is exhaustive, and amazing.

While the research scholars and students of political history will get a whale of information, ordinary readers may find it immensely absorbing which is replete with explosive contents.

The style of the book is intensely gripping and presentation exquisitely interesting.

Rs. 350



Kiranshankar Maitra after having completed his academic education in the Presidency College and Calcutta University joined All India Radio as a Programme Executive. As he was promoted to the rank of Station Director and posted to different cities of India one after another, he travelled various parts of the country like Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Ladakh etc.

As an author, he has been noted in the International Writers and Authors Who's Who (Cambridge, London), Biography International, Authors and Writers Who's (Sahitya Academy, New Delhi) and many others.

The author in his chequered career held many highly responsible posts in All India Radio and Doordarshan and lastly worked as a Senior Director in the office of the Director General, All India Radio, New Delhi.

ISBN 81-259-0447-6



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