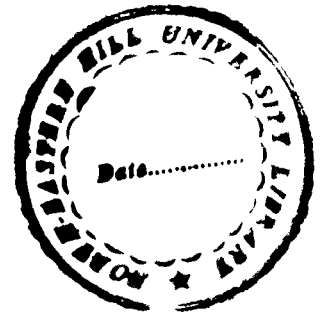


MIZO NATIONAL FRONT AND ITS ROLE IN MIZORAM POLITICS

By

CHAWNGSALOVA

POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT



A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

To

**NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
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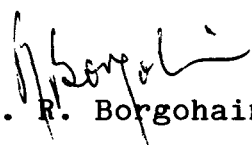
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I, **Mr. Chawngsailova**, hereby declare that the subject matter of thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

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PREFACE

The role of the MNF in Mizoram politics is an interesting field of study because no analysis on this subject has been attempted from this University so far. Ethnic nationalism and regional sentiments formed a part and parcel of Mizoram politics ever since the dawn of Indian independence. The very birth of the MNF was basically aimed at achieving political self-determination, and the MNF drew its strength by inspiring perception and sentiments of ethnic identity of the Mizos. In fact, ethnic nationalism remained at the centre-piece of the MNF movement.

The methodology of research in this chosen field is mainly historical and analytical. Oral interview in a recorded form of selected former MNF and other political leaders and a few members of Mizoram Legislative Assembly was conducted to collect facts relating to operational aspects of the MNF. Besides, the underground literature such as manifestos, leaflets, pamphlets, handouts and unpublished writings of former MNF leaders and personal diaries form the primary source. The secondary source includes published book and other materials such as newspapers, journals, magazines, Assembly proceedings, party and government records.

The research work had the following objectives:

- (i) To examine the factors leading to the emergence of the MNF.
- (ii) To study the underground activities and functioning of the MNF Parliament.
- (iii) To assess the leadership of Laldenga.
- (iv) To analyse the attitude of various political parties towards the MNF during the period of revolt.


I would like to thank God for his grace and giving me a good Supervisor Dr. B.J. Deb, Reader, Political Science Department, NEHU. I gratefully acknowledge with deep gratitude and appreciation for his learned guidance and dedicated concern in completion of this work. But for his help, direction and untiring guidance, this work would not have been completed in this form. I express my thanks and gratitude to the political leaders like Aichhinga, F. Malsawma, Lalrinchhana and Zoramthanga, and party leaders Biaklawma, C. Pahlira, Late C. Rochhinga, Late L.H. Lalmawia, Lalduhawma, Malsawma Colney, R. Haleluia, R. Zamawia, Late Tlangchhuaka, Late P. Siamliana, S. Lianzuala, Thangmawii, Zairemthanga, Zalawma, and Church leaders Rev. Lalngurauva Ralte, Rev. Dr. Zairema and Maj. Khaizading, S.A., who give valuable information at the time of interview. I also wish to convey my special thanks and gratitude to K. Hrangthankima, Sangkhuma and Dr. Lalthangliana who have rendered all necessary help for my work. I would also like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Late Raltawna Sailo, Late R.L. Thanga Chawngthu, R. Vanlawma, Lalengliana, M.C. Lalthankima and Prof. C. Nunthara for their inspiration and invaluable help. I am thankful to Lalramliana, State Librarian, Aizawl and H. Rotluanga, Sub-Div. Librarian, Kolasib for their generosity in lending me a number of books. I also take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to the Director of Higher & Technical Education, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl for providing me a Teacher Fellowship for Research.

I am also indebted to T.B.C. Liandala, Principal, Government Kolasib College and Head of the Department of Political Science C. Lalbiakthanga and my colleagues for their inspiration and understanding throughout the period of my research work.

I owe profound and heartfelt gratitude to my family, relatives and specially my wife Thuamliani Renthlei for their prayer and inspiration which give me strength to pursue my study, and I acknowledge their love and dedication with affectionate warmth. I do express my heartfelt gratitude to my brother-in-law, Lalmuanawma whose bike I extensively used while doing my research work.

SHILLONG

THE 17th Dec, 1997.


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GLOSSARY

(English equivalent of Mizo words used in the thesis)

<u>Mizo</u>	<u>English</u>
Aiawh	- To represent.
Aiawh In	- The "House of Representatives" as the MNF called it.
Awzia	- The eleven Mizo minor tribes were linguistically known under the common name "Awzia".
Bantirna	- Dismissal Order.
Bawi	- Slave.
Bawm	- One of the Mizo clans living in the Arakans and Chittagong Hill Tracts areas.
Bung	- Region, area.
Chawfun	- Mid-day meal which the Mizos used to take in their jhum land.
Chhinlung	- A closed-stone. The name of a mythical rock or stone from which the Mizos thought that their progenitors emerged.
Dan	- Law.
Danbul	- Constitution (the MNF Constitution).
Dumpawl	- Blue.
Fathang	- A tax or tribute paid to a Chief around one basket of rice by the Mizos annually.
Hmeichhia/Hmeichhe	- Women, Girl.
Hnam	- A nation, race, nationality.

<u>Mizo</u>	<u>English</u>
Hnamchawm	- In early days, the Mizos were divided into chief clans and commoners. The commoners were known as "Hnamchawm".
Hnathawktute	- Workers, employees.
In	- House.
Insuihkawm	- Organisation/Union/Association.
Kaihhruaina	- Guidance.
Khawchhiar	- A Mizo traditional village secretary/writer/clerk.
Krista	- Jesus Christ.
Kristian	- Christian.
Kohhran	- Church community, denomination.
Kut	- Festival.
Lal	- Chief/King.
Lusei/Lushai	- Mizo.
Lu	- Head.
Maicham	- An altar.
Pathian	- God/Lord.
Pawl	- Association/Union.
Ram	- Country/State.
Ramhuai	- Demon/evil spirit.
Remna	- Peace.
Run	- House/Camp.
Sakei	- Lion.
Sawikhawm	- Grouping of villages.
Sawrkar	- Government.
Thalai	- Young.
Tibuai	- Disturb.
Tibuaitude	- Trouble makers.
Thlam	- Jhum hut.

MizoEnglish

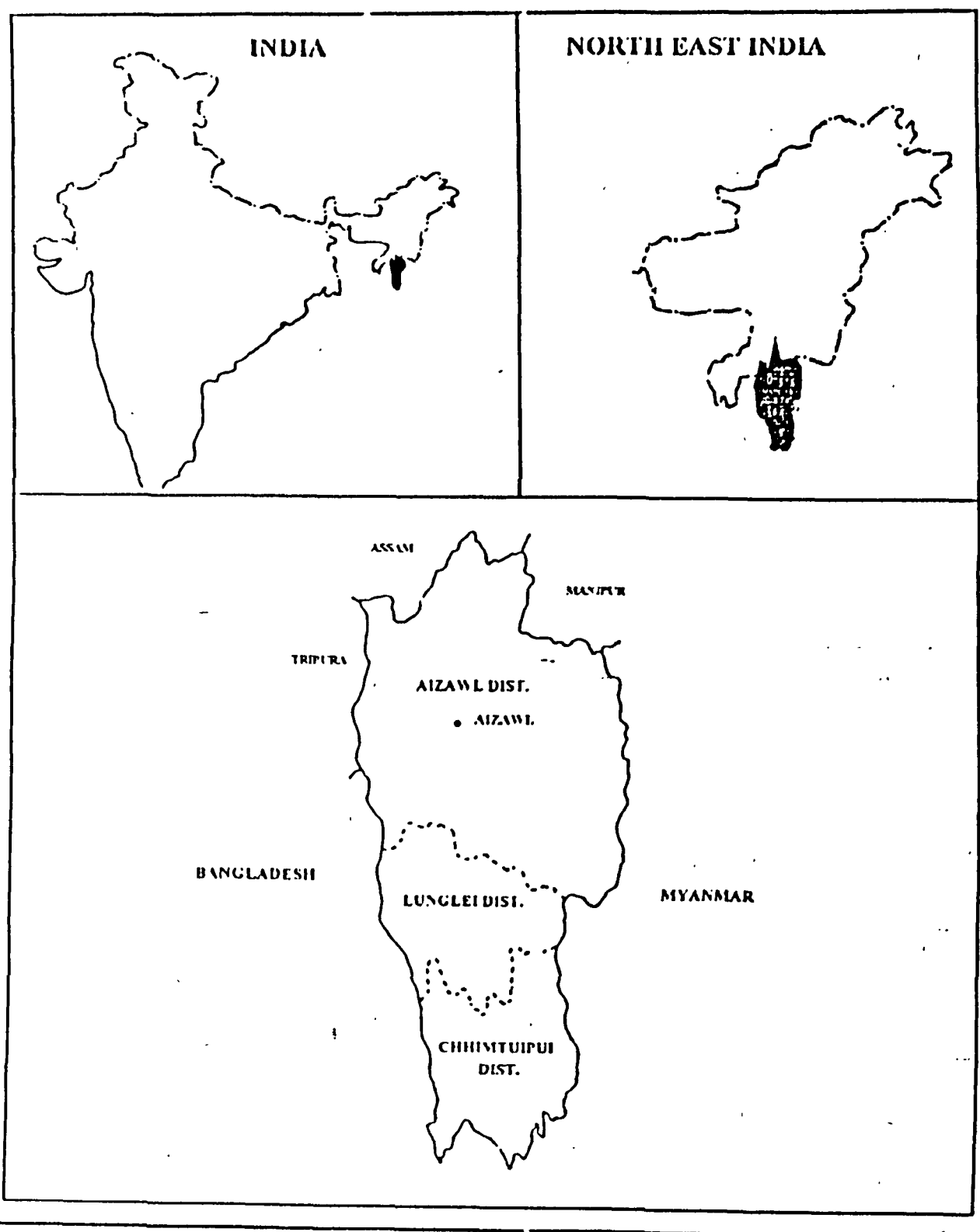
Upa	- Elders/Village elder.
Vai	- The Mizos called the Indian plainsmen simply 'vai'.
Zalenna	- Freedom/Independence.
Zawlbuk	- Bachelors' dormitory.
Zirlai	- Student.
Zoram	- Mizoram.
Zu	- Wine/Local rice beer.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.M.P.G.S.U.	- All Mizo Post Graduate Students Union.
A.O.	- Administrative Officer.
B.C.P.	- Burmese Communist Party.
B.R.T.F.	- Border Road Task Force.
B.S.F.	- Border Security Force.
C.B.I.	- Central Bureau Investigation.
C.E.M.	- Chief Executive Member.
C.P.C.	- Christian Peace Committee Churches Peace Committee.
D.I.R.	- Defence of India Rule.
E.I.T.U.	- Eastern Indian Trade Tribal Union.
E.L.A.	- Extended Loop Area.
G.T.C.	- Golden Tobacco Company.
H.P.C.	- High Power Committee. Hmar People's Convention.
H.R.C.	- Human Rights Committee.
K.T.P.	- "Kristian Thalai Pawl" (Young Christian Association/ Union).
L.M.G.	- Light Machine Gun.
M.C.L.C.	- Mizoram Churches Leaders Committee.
M.C.	- Mizo Convention.
M.D.C.	- Mizo District Council.
M.D.F.	- Mizo Democratic Front.
M.H.I.P.	- "Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl" (Mizo Women Welfare Organisation).
M.I.S.	- Mizoram Intelligence Service.
M.I.S.A.	- Maintenance of Internal Security Act.
M.J.P.	- Mizoram Janata Party.

- M.N.A. - Mizo National Army.
- M.N.F. - Mizo National Front.
- M.N.F.F. - Mizo National Famine Front.
- M.N.V. - Mizo National Volunteer.
- M.N.U. - Mizo National Union.
- M.P.F. - Mizo Peace Forum.
- M.U.C. - Mizo Union Council.
- M.U.C.D.S. - Mizo Union Christian Democratic & Socialist.
- M.Z.P. - "Mizo Zirlai Pawl".
(Mizo Students Union).
- N.E.T.C. - North Eastern Tobacco Company.
- N.E.C. - National Emergency Council.
- N.G.C. - New Group Centre.
- N.L.U.P. - New Land Used Policy.
- N.R.C. - National Refinement Court.
- P.A.C. - Publicity and Assistant Director.
- P.C. - People's Conference.
- P.C.'B' - People's Conference 'B'.
- P.N.C. - Paite National Council.
- P.P.A. - Progressive and Protected Area.
- R.T.B. - "Ram Tibuaitute Bantirna"
(An Order to eliminate trouble maker).
- S.A.C. - Students Action Committee.
- S.F. - Special Force.
- S.J.A.C. - Students Joint Action Committee.
- U.M.F.O. - United Mizo Freedom Organisation.
- V.G.C. - Voluntary Group Centre.
- Y.M.A. - Young Mizo Association.
-

LOCATION OF MIZORAM



CHAPTER - I

SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MIZOS

INTRODUCTION

Mizoram, known as 'Lushai Hills' during the British period, lies in a mountainous area in the extreme corner of North-Eastern India, having international boundaries with Myanmar in the east, and Bangladesh in the south. To its north lies Cachar district of Assam and in addition Tripura lies to its north-west and Manipur to its north-east.

The total geographical area covered by the State is 21,087 square kilometres, extending between 92°15' - 93°29' east longitude and 21°58' - 23°35' north latitude.¹ The Tropic of Cancer passes through Thenzawl village, 50 miles south of the Capital Aizawl town at 23°30' north latitude.² At present, the total population of Mizoram is 689,756 according to 1991 Census.³ Mizoram, the 23rd State of the Indian Union, is a hilly area with a large number of hill ranges mostly running through north to south and separated from one another by deep river valleys and gorges. The average height of the hill ranges is approximately 900

1. Mizoram Statistical Handbook, 1992, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, p. 12.

2. Statistical Handbook of Mizoram, 1989, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, p. 5.

3. Mizoram Statistical Handbook, 1992, op.cit., p. 4.

metres, and the highest mountain peak, "Phawngpui" (the Blue Mountain) is 2157 metres.⁴

The People

'Mizo' is a generic name of the analogous hill tribes living in Mizoram. The word 'Mizo' is a compound word of 'Mi' and 'Zo', literally translated as 'hillmen'. Therefore, 'Mizo' literally means highlanders or people living on high hill, an explanation which is mostly acceptable. No one has ever satisfactorily explained how the name 'Lushai or Lusei' originated. Colloquial of the term was used by men of olden days to typify the people with the long head. The word 'Lu' means head and 'Sei' means long or elongated and therefore, the name 'Lusei' implied a description of people whose head looked elongated because of their customary hair style with hair long and hair-knot at the top of their head.⁵ It was, in fact, the most acceptable meaning of the term Lusei.

Another reference to the origin states that during the period of early migration, there were ten tribes in Burma. One of them moved further west. This was the 'Lushai'

4. Statistical Handbook of Mizoram, 1987, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, p. 14.

5. Scholar's interview with Mizo Ex. Chief, Raltawna Sailo, Chief of Luangmual, dated 28th February, 1991, Luangmual.

tribe. In Burmese language, 'Lu' means tribe and 'Sei' means ten.⁶ Truly, speaking, there is no Mizo word as 'Lushai'. This is purely a corrupted version of 'Lusei', which is the name of one of the many tribes constituting the Mizos.

Mizoram was inhabited by a number of tribes which could be broadly divided into five major and eleven minor tribes. The tribes were again divided into a number of clans. The major five tribes were Lusei, Ralte, Hmar, Paite and Pawi. The Lusei consisted of ten commoners (Hnamchawm) and six Chiefs (Lal) clans viz. Pachuau, Hauhmar, Chhangte, Chawngte, Chuaungo, Chuauhang, Hrahsel, Vanchhawng, Tochhawng and Chhakchhuak in the former category and Zadeng, Palian, Rokhum, Thangluah, Rivung and Sailo in the latter category. The minor tribes were Chawngthu, Chawnte, Ngente, Khawlhring, Khiangte, Pautu, Tlau, Rawite, Renthlei, Vanchhia and Zawngte. These eleven minor tribes were known linguistically under the common name of "Awzia".⁷

Besides, there are several other tribes like Lakher (Mara), Chakma and Riang (Bru) etc. The Lakhers, also known as Maras, have their distinctive dialect, customs and

6. Prasad, R.N. Government and Politics in Mizoram 1947-1986, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1987, p. 4.

7. Thanga, L.B. The Mizos, United Publishers, Gauhati, 1987, p. 5.

culture and inhabit the southern part of the State. The Chakmas live in the south-west corner of the State with different culture and customs. They profess Buddhism and speak a dialect of Bengali. The Riangs or Bru dwell especially along the river valley in the west and north-western part of the State. They are the most backward tribe having their own customs and culture.

In the fifties, these tribes and sub-tribes preferred to identify themselves as 'Mizos' and this was formalised when the Lushai Hill District (Change of Name) Act, 1954, was passed by the Union Parliament. Under the Act, the name of the erstwhile Lushai Hills District was changed into 'Mizo District' with effect from April 1954.⁸

In the recent past, some of the tribes, earlier content with their description under the term 'Mizo', have been asserting separate identity of their own. The prominent among them are Hmars, Paites and Pawis. The Hmar People's Convention (HPC) spearheaded an armed struggle against the Government of Mizoram for recognition of their separate identity which ultimately resulted in a Peace Accord between the two in 1996. The Paites have also formed PNC (Paite National Council) demanding among other things, a separate

8. Phadnis, Urmila. Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1990, p.151.

autonomous council in line as the Pawis and Lakhers. The Pawis and Lakhers (now Maras) have already established Autonomous District Councils for themselves under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Origin

Mizo mythological accounts reveal that their ancestors originated from within the earth. The prevalent myth explains that once there was a big cave called "Chhinlung" which meant 'closed-stone' and the ancestors of the Mizos came out of that cave. However, another mythology explains that "Chhinlung" was not a cave but the name of a Chinese Prince, and the correct word was believed to be "Chin Lung", son of Huang Ti of the Chin Dynasty, who built the Great Wall.⁹ Chhinlung origin of the Mizos could possibly be associated with the name of the Prince who completed the Great Wall.

There is also a myth among a section of the Mizos that they might have been one of the lost tribes of Israel - the Manasse or Manashes.* A Mizo author, Zaithanchhungi, who

9. Thanga, L.B. The Mizos, op.cit., p. 3.

* In the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, Jacob, who later came to be called Israel, had 12 sons. The children of Israel were scattered all over the world due to the wrath of God since they disobeyed Him. But after Israel was made an Independent State in 1948, most of the descendants returned from their wanderings, except those from the Manasse, a descendant of Joseph, one of the sons of Israel.

made a thorough research in connection with the lost tribes pointed out around 48 points of similarities between the Israelis and the Mizos and believed that the Mizos were the descendants of Manasse.¹⁰ According to her, the descendants of Manasse crossed Persia and entered China around 200 B.C. and settled in south-west of Chunking. During that time, they came to be known as Lushei.¹¹

Rabi Eliyahu Avichail, Chairman of 'Amishav' (Chairman of Israel's Lost Tribe Committee) also believed in the theory of Zaithanchhungi, and commented that the Mizos (Lusei) first came to China and entered into their present habitat through Thailand (Siam) 400 years ago.¹²

Since the Mizos were believed to be the descendants of Manasse¹³ some Mizos migrated to Israel and at present, 206 Mizos which include 20 families have been settled in Gaza Strip.¹⁴ The Mizos who migrated into Israel were given full citizenship after only two months along with the right to vote.

10. Zaithanchhungi. Israel-Mizo Identity (in Mizo), S.T. Printing Press, Aizawl, 1992, pp. 50-65.

11. Ibid., p. 7.

12. Ibid., p. 88.

13. Scholar's interview with Zaithanchhungi, Dated 20th August, 1996, Place: Aizawl.

14. Meichher. A monthly publication magazine (in Mizo), July 1996, published by Directorate of Education, Adult Education Wing, Aizawl, p. 4.

Migration

Though there were several views in connection with the origin and migration of the Mizos, there is no consensus in the absence of authentic record before the 17th Century. Therefore, the chronological history of their true origin and migration cannot be highlighted. However, the Mizos are generally believed to be of Mongoloid stock, having migrated into their present homeland possibly sometime between 1400-1800 A.D. from Upper Burma. Lalthangliana argued that the Mizos once dwelled in Thantlang in Upper Burma on the bank of the river Run between 1400-1500 A.D. From there, they migrated to their present land around in 1700 A.D.¹⁵ Another Mizo historian K. Zawla wrote that the Mizos were in the Chin Hills in Upper Burma possibly between 1400-1700 A.D. and their gradual migration started between 1700-1730 A.D.¹⁶

Mizo legends and folklore indicate that they were driven out from their previous habitation forcing them to come towards their present settlement. According to Lalhmuaka, the Mizos came to their land because their old homeland became unproductive due to a long period of cultivation. Besides, there were frequent internal conflicts

15. Lalthangliana, B. History of Mizo in Burma (in Mizo), Nazareth Press, Aizawl, 1980, p. 86.

16. Zawla, K. Mizo Pi Pute leh an Thlahte Chanchin (in Mizo), Gosen Press, Aizawl, 1980, p. 86.

and outside invasions which forced them to seek a peaceful land for survival.¹⁷ Therefore, in order to seek a safe and fertile place, they moved westward and crossed Chindwin valley and Tiau river in Upper Burma, separating Mizoram and Burma and finally settled in their present habitation. At present, the Mizos are scattered in proper Mizoram, Cachar district of Assam, southern part of Manipur State, Chittagong Hills Tracts of Bangladesh and in Myanmar.

The idea of greater Mizoram was first highlighted by the Mizo Union when in 1947 it gave a description of the total Mizo population living in Lushai Hills and contiguous areas. The Memorandum stated:

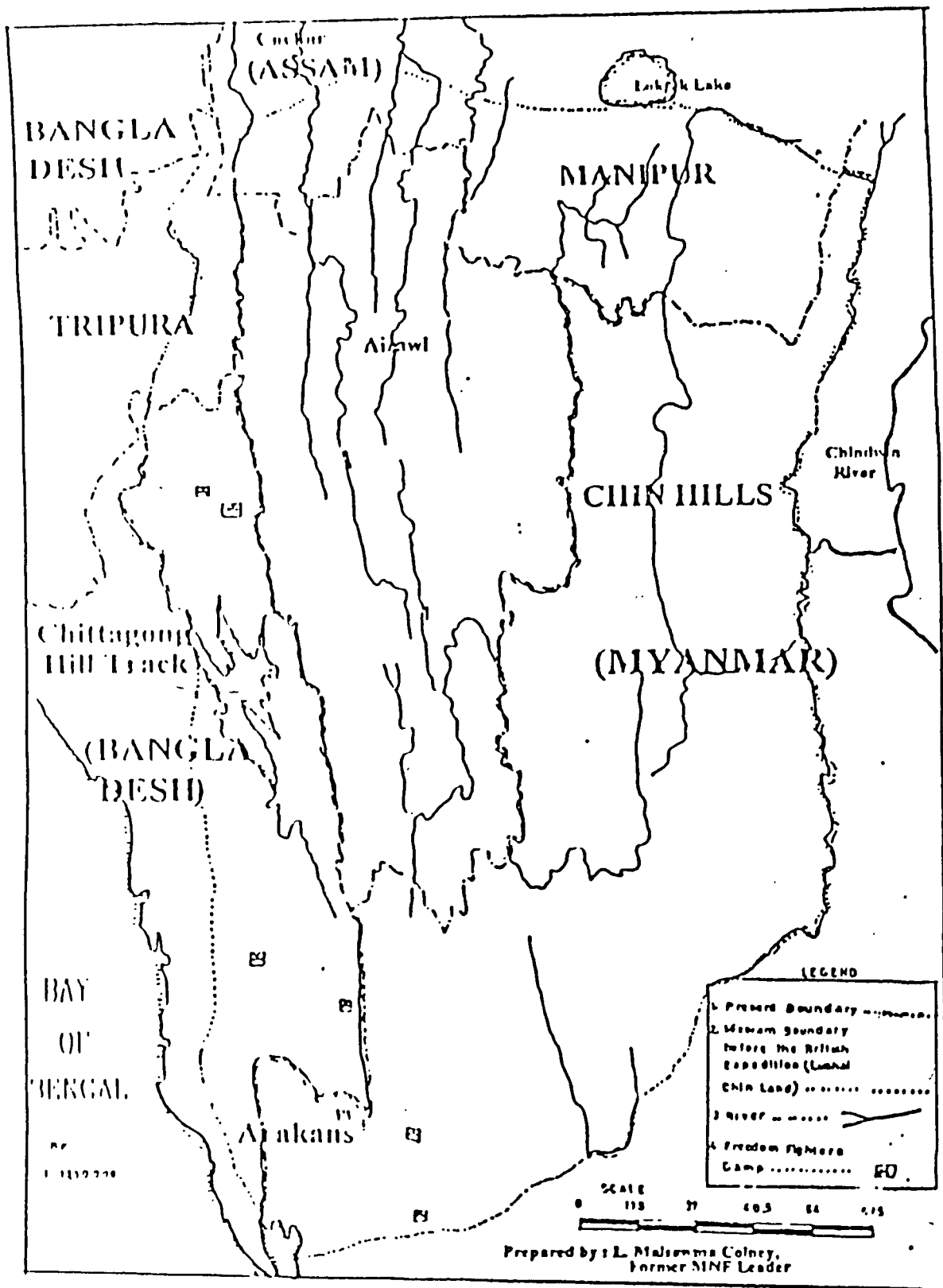
"(a) The Mizo people in the Lushai Hills alone number 146,900 with an area of 8,143 square miles according to the Census of 1941.

(b) The Mizo population of Manipur State contiguous the Lushai Hills again comes to about 70,000 with an area of about 35,000 square miles.

(c) The Mizos in the Cachar District contiguous to the Lushai Hills number about 9,000 with an area about 300 square miles.

(d) In Tripura State contiguous to the Lushai Hills, the Mizos again number approximately 7,000 with an area about 250 square miles.

17. Lalhmuaka, "The Mizos in Mizoram" in Souvenir, International Seminar on Minority and Nationalities: The Mizos, Aizawl, dated 7-9th April 1992, Directorate of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, p. 11.



A historical map of Mizoram circulated during the MNF movement in support of Greater Mizoram claiming the Areas as Mizo Territory before the British Expedition.

(e) In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, contiguous to the Lushai Hills who are now commonly known and termed with the Chin, number not less than 90,000 with an area of about 35,000 square miles occupied by them."¹⁸

The MNF, in course of its political movement also highlighted the issue and tried to mobilise public opinion in its favour. The enclosed map drawn by Malsawma Colney, a former MNF leader gives an estimate of the Mizo inhabited areas.

Occupation

Like many other hills tribes, jhum or shifting cultivation is the main occupation of the Mizos, and majority of the Mizos living in the rural areas are engaged in agriculture. Their principal crop is rice. Other crops like maize, ginger, sesamums etc. are also grown. The Mizos are a hard working people because of their occupational compulsions. In fact, no man who wins his existence from a hard forest by this indigenous method of agriculture can be called a lazy man.¹⁹

Kut

In the past, the Mizos had three main "Kuts" or

18. Vanlalhluna, John. Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, Synod Press, Aizawl, 1985, p. 170.

19. McCall, Major A.G. Lushai Chrysalis, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1977, p. 31.

festivals namely "Mim-Kut", "Pawl Kut" and "Chapchar Kut". Since the Mizos were mainly agriculturists, all their social activities revolved around their jhum operations, their festivals were also connected in one way or another with agriculture or jhum operations. The "Kuts" were celebrated with great funfare which included singing, dancing and feasting together. However, with the spread of Christianity, the traditional way of celebration was discontinued. But "Chapchar Kut" is still celebrated by the people in the month of February with some modifications.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTION AND EARLY SOCIAL HISTORY

Traditional Political System

The traditional political system of the Mizos was hereditary chiefship. Customary laws decided disputes arising among themselves and during the British period such laws had legal sanction as well. Due to the absence of any written document, however, it is not possible to ascertain since when the Mizos had practised chiefship as the corner stone of village administration.

According to a Mizo legend, during their stay at Seipuikhur in Chin State, the institution of chiefship emerged when one of the Mizo inhabited villages decided to have a chief to provide leadership against external attack

and invited men of ability even from the neighbouring Mizo inhabited villages to come forward. It is said that no one accepted the offer except Zahmuaka, who had six sons namely, Zadenga, Paliana, Rivunga, Rokhuma, Thangluaha and Thangura.²⁰ All the chiefs' clans, therefore, owed their origin to the name of certain persons. In the case of Thangura, the name of his son Sailova came into vogue from whom the Sailos of today trace their descent.²¹

Each village used to be a separate unit under the full power of its chief or "Lal". The chief enjoyed wide powers and he was assisted by "Upa" or Council of village elders. The following were the duties of the traditional chiefs during the British period.

- (i) The Mizo chiefs were held responsible for the good behaviour of their people and for the control of their villages.
- (ii) The chiefs with their elders had to dispose of all litigations in their villages except serious cases such as *murder, arson, rape etc.*
- (iii) It was the duty of a chief to know his villagers intimately and understand their grievances and

20. Thanga, L.B. The Mizos, op.cit., p. 9.

21. Ibid.

difficulties and to do all in his power to raise their standard of living and encourage them in all ways possible.

- (iv) The chief was responsible for allotment of cultivation and for taking measures necessary to ensure that the villagers could support themselves from year to year.
- (v) The chief was responsible for supervising the work of his village writer (or "Khawchhiar").
- (vi) The chief was responsible for the maintenance of cultivation and inter-village paths.
- (vii) It was the duty of the chiefs to report all epidemics, heinous crime, violent and accidental deaths occurring within their jurisdiction.
- (viii) Chiefs outside Aizawl and Lunglei towns were responsible for reporting the presence of any foreigner within their jurisdiction.
- (ix) Chiefs were responsible for the realisation of house tax from their villages without payment of any compensation.

To sum up, the duties of a chief showed that he was the agent of the government combining the functions of the

policeman, the local magistrate, the mouzadar and administrator of the village. The British Superintendent of the Lushai Hills also considered it desirable to interfere as little as possible. The traditional rights and privileges of the chief were never interfered with. The support extended by British administration, however, provided legitimacy to the arbitrary action of the chiefs.

Traditionally, the Mizo chief was the guardian of his subjects, leader in time of war, protector and giver of food in time of scarcity and distress. War fugitives used to take shelter in his house. Each family had to contribute a certain amount of rice called "Fathang" every year towards the support of the chief. Besides, a portion of every animal captured in the hunt or trapper's chase was his privilege.

In theory, the chiefs were all quite powerful, but actually their powers were circumscribed by the fact that their subjects could easily transfer their allegiance to some rival chief.²² Therefore, every chief had to rule tactfully without making discrimination. "A strong ruler who governed mainly according to custom could do almost anything without losing his followers, but the weak ruler who tried

22. Vanlalhluna, John. Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 32.

petty tyrannies soon found himself a king without any subjects."²³

However, after the introduction of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, traditional chiefship was abolished following mass agitation led by the Mizo Union through the enactment of Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Act in 1954. Under the Act, the rights and privileges of the Mizo traditional chiefs were abolished without payment of any compensation.²⁴

"Zawlbuk"

'Zawlbuk' was bachelor's dormitory where young Mizo boys slept together and learnt the values of community living. It was also a place of public transactions of the chief. 'Zawlbuk' was built in the centre of a village close to the Chief's house. A senior man usually took responsibility and was much respected.

In olden days, when the villages were constantly at war with one another, young boys were required to sleep together at one place so that they could be mobilised easily in any emergency. 'Zawlbuk' also developed a number of

23. Shakespear, J. The Lushai Kuki Clan, McMillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1874, p. 45.

24. Scholar's interview with Raltawna Sailo, op.cit.



functions till it became the most important social institution in Mizo society. It may, thus, be said that 'Zawlbuk' played a very important role in shaping the young Mizos as responsible members of society as well as in assisting the chief in administering the village. It also served as the instrument of social control.

However, with the spread of Christianity and education, 'Zawlbuk' gradually disappeared. With the cessation of inter-tribal warfare, 'Zawlbuk' lost much of its utility. Young boys could not spare time to collect firewood for 'Zawlbuk' since they began to engage in education. Similarly, the elder boys could no longer uphold the institution because of the occupational diversification. Further, Christian teachings and values ran counter to certain practices and activities associated with 'Zawlbuk'.

Religion

Before the introduction of Christianity, the Mizos were wholly animists. However, they believed in a supreme being known as "Pathian" whose abode was supposed to be in heaven. They used to offer sacrifices to 'Ramhuai' out of fear for they believed that 'Ramhuai' or demons caused illness. The Mizos worshipped and respected objects of nature like mountains, rivers, stones, trees, caves etc.

When the western missionaries started preaching Christianity in the Lushai Hills from 1894,²⁵ the bulk of the Mizos were gradually converted as Christians. The rapid spread of Christianity in Mizoram was due to some waves of mass enthusiasm which converted more people than could be done by sustained proselytisation. Records indicate that in 1911 there was only 2655 Christian population which increased to 109,740 in 1951 and 218,452 in 1971 Census.²⁶ At present, more than 95²⁷ per cent of the Mizos are Christians. In general the Presbyterians are dominant in the north Mizoram compared to the Baptist influence in the south.

Literacy

The Christian missionaries were also pioneers in the field of education. They introduced education based on Roman script and opened schools. Even today, a number of schools in Mizoram are run by the Church. The rate of literacy in 1901 was 0.93 per cent which rose to 31.13 per cent in 1951.²⁸ At present, the literacy percentage of Mizo

25. Vanlalhluna, John. Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

26. Remthanga, H., Lalbiaktluanga. Kohhran Chanchin (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, 1990, p. 248.

27. Ibid.

28. Mizoram in Brief, Directorate of Information and Public Relation, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, 1996.

population is 82.27.²⁹ The overall development of literacy standard of the Mizos was due to the sincere efforts and sacrifice of the Christian missionaries, and in the post-independent period, it was the joint venture of the Christian missionaries and the Government that succeeded. The introduction of education gradually led to social regeneration in the Mizo society by ensuring modification and abolition of numerous indigenous social practices. A new educated elite emerged in the society who found their traditional political system oppressive which ultimately led to the demand for introducing modern democratic form of administration. The correlation political consciousness of the Mizos is of a relatively recent origin with the foundation laid by the activities of Christian missionaries.

ENCOUNTER WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Mizo Raids and British Expedition

The Mizos lived in splendid isolation before they contacted the outside world. Though inter-tribal rivalries occurred from time to time, but there was no evidence of external interference in their political system before the 19th Century.

29. Statistical Handbook, Mizoram, 1996, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, p. 12.

During the latter half of the 19th Century, the number of Mizo Chiefs increased because each grown up son of a Chief was given a village to rule. As a result, their land became too scarce to accommodate all the Mizo Chiefs. This led to frequent raids on their neighbouring areas.³⁰ In the Mizo society, raid had a distinct place, and a chief himself usually indulged in raids because it was also profitable. Therefore, the Districts of Cachar, Sylhet, Chittagong Hill tracts, and princely states of Tripura and Manipur had frequently suffered from the Mizo raids; and in retaliation, several expeditions were sent to chastise the raiders. The first British expedition force in the Lushai Hills was sent in December 1844, in retaliation of a Mizo raid in British territory of Kachu Bari, a Manipur village in Sylhet District.³¹

British Annexation and Administration

In the middle of the 19th Century, the British tea enterprise was booming in the Cachar district. When the Mizos realised what was happening, they thought that the British were cultivating their prospective land.³² The

30. Samuelson, Ramchuan Sena. Love Mizoram, Goodwill Press, Imphal, 1985, p. 16.

31. McCall, Major A.G. Lushai Chrysalis, op.cit., p. 40.

32. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram leh Kei (in Mizo), Bethel Press, Aizawl, 1989, p. 26.

opening of any tea garden in Cachar produced a rather disquieting effect upon the Mizos who viewed it as an encroachment upon their potential hunting grounds. Therefore, on 23rd January 1871, Bengkhuaia, the Chief of Sailam village invaded Alexanderpur of Cachar district. They killed the Manager of a tea garden and abducted his six-year old daughter, Mary Winchester.³³ They gave her a Mizo name 'Zoluti'. In retaliation to this, a British Officer, Lt. Tom Herbert Lewin and his troop came to Lushai Hills to retrieve Mary in December 1871. Mary was retrieved on 21st January 1872 and sent back to England.³⁴

The Mizos continued a number of raids and in retaliation, punitive expeditions were sent into Lushai Hills.* At last, the British Government did not tolerate their territories remaining under the constant raids of the Mizos. Therefore, the Lushai Hills was subjugated by the British in 1891, for the protection of their territory.³⁵ When the British occupied the Lushai Hills, there was no

33. Carey, Bertram S., Tuck, H.N. The Chin Hills, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1976, (Reprint), p. 15.

34. Zatluanga. Mizo Chanchin (in Mizo), Khuma Press, Aizawl, 1966, p. 130.

* For a detailed study of raids and punitive expeditions, please see A.S. Reid's Chin Lushai Land, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1996.

35. Sanga, R.R.T. Administrative Development in Lushai Hills Upto 1972, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1990, p. 14.

protection of the frontier boundary. Therefore, the British Government decided to define the boundary of all the plain districts of Assam with the neighbouring hill areas inhabited by the hill tribes. Thus, the imaginary boundary line called "Inner Line" was determined. Under the provision of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, the Government prohibited all British subjects from going beyond the "Inner Line" without a pass from the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.³⁶

According to the Government of India Act 1919, the Governor-in-Council declared the Lushai Hills as a "Backward Area" on 3rd January 1921,³⁷ and the subjects of "Backward Area" were kept as a reserved subject for the Governor's special interest. The Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as Simon Commission suggested the exclusion of all the Assam hill districts from the purview of reforms. As such, the Lushai Hills District was placed under "Excluded Area"* in 1936, under the Government of India Act, 1935.³⁸

36. Ray, Animesh. Mizoram: Dynamics of Change, Pearl Publishers, Calcutta, 1978, p. 43.

37. Sanction 56 A(2) of the Government of India Act, 1919.

* The term 'Excluded Area' implies that Lushai Hills was outside the control of the provincial legislature. The Governor of Assam as the Crown representative was to administer the Lushai Hills.

Source: Ray, Animesh. Mizoram: Dynamics of Change, op.cit., p. 47.

38. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei (in Mizo), op.cit., p. 68.

Since Lushai Hills was placed under "Excluded Areas", no provincial law could be applied to the areas. The British authority left the internal administration to the chiefs according to the customary law of the land. However, the Superintendent was authorised to interfere with the administration of the chief only when the chief went beyond his jurisdiction, as prescribed by the British law. The Superintendent was only official head in the Lushai Hills. The Mizo National Front (MNF) party took advantage of this in their struggle for independence by highlighting that even during the time of British rule, Lushai Hills was excluded from the Provincial Government of India and that no Indian laws were applied.

POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The main instrument of western missionaries in preaching Christian religion was education. Consequently, the introduction of education created a new elite, who posed a challenge to the chiefs, and mobilised themselves against the traditional political system.³⁹ Meanwhile, the traditional elite clung to the old ways and practices and opposed any change in their status.

Encouraged by "bawi" (or slave) controversy, the first instance of political activity dated back to 1925,

30. Vanlalhluna, John. Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 61.

when Telala Ralte and his friends approached the Superintendent of Lushai Hills to initiate change in the administration to pave the way for the Mizos to join politics. But the Superintendent did not pay heed to the suggestion.⁴⁰ They even convened a public meeting and delivered some speeches. But the British administrator did not tolerate such political activity. They were arrested and later released after being given a stern warning. The main reason for the suppression of such political activity was that the Britishers did not allow any political movement in the "Excluded Area".⁴¹ As such, no political party existed until the dawn of Indian Independence.

During the first and the second world war, many young Mizos were sent out as war personnel. When they come back, they could not accept the archaic rule of the traditional Chief. Under their influence, the Mizo Commoners regarded the Chiefs as despotic. However, they could not do anything because their position was safeguarded by the British Government. A significant development, however, took place in 1946 when at a meeting convened by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, a declaration was made stating that

40. Goswami, B.B. Mizo Unrest, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1979, p. 128.

41. Vanlalhluna, John. Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 63.

the Lushai Hills belonged to the people and not to the Chiefs who were fiduciary agents of the Government.⁴² This declaration caused consternation amongst the Chiefs who felt that it was quite inconsistent with the policy which government had pursued in the district since its annexation.

At that time, the closeness of Japanese troops in Burma endangered the British territory in India and international political developments of 1940's encouraged Mizo political consciousness. Thereafter, A.R.H. McDonald, Superintendent of the Lushai Hills constituted a "District Conference" in 1946 on behalf of the people in which, 40 members - 20 Chiefs and 20 Commoners to represent the popular will of the people.⁴³ The provision regulating the election of one Chief and a Commoner from each Circle as representative to the Circle Representative Committee set up in 1946, further promoted their political sentiment. The Commoners, felt that they should have more representatives because their population was larger than that of the Chiefs.⁴⁴ This also accelerated the need to have a formal political party.

42. Confidential File No. 8C of 1947, Assam Secretariat.

43. Constituent Assembly of India, Proceedings of the North Eastern Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Area Sub-Committee, Vol. II, Part I, New Delhi, 1949.

44. Scholar's interview with Raltawna Sailo, Ex. Chief of Luangmual, op.cit.

Moreover, in the wake of Indian Independence, a sense of uncertainty and apprehension about their political future gripped the mind of the Mizo people. It was reported that, "With the movement towards independence in India, political forces are beginning to awake in the Lushai Hills."⁴⁵ As a result of this widespread feeling of restlessness, R. Vanlawma, who later became the General Secretary of the party, formulated the outlines of a party. The first political party called 'Mizo Common Peoples Union' was formed on 9th April 1946, with the 'permission' of the then Superintendent, to voice the people's aspiration and various demands especially political right and status.⁴⁶ Vanlawma maintained that the unity of the Mizos necessitated the establishment of a political party and the name of the party was simply changed into "Mizo Union" (M.U.) removing the phrase "Common Peoples" because of a desire to associate the traditional Chiefs with the new party.⁴⁷

FORMATION OF DISTRICT COUNCIL

When the Constituent Assembly of India set up an Advisory Committee, the latter created three sub-committees to report and recommend on (i) the north east frontier

45. Administrative Reports of the Lushai Hills for the Year 1945-1946, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1946.

46. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, Founder of Mizo Union in Mizoram, Dated 2nd June 1993. Place: Aizawl.

47. Ibid.

(Assam) tribal Excluded Areas; (ii) the Excluded and Partially Excluded Area in the Provinces other than Assam; (iii) the tribal areas in the north west frontier provinces and Baluchistan.⁴⁸ When the sub-committee on Assam Tribal and Excluded Area popularly known as "Bardoloi Committee" visited Aizawl, several Mizo representatives belonging to various interests such as the Mizo Union, Church, Chiefs, Ex-Servicemen, Government Officials and Women met the Committee, and submitted memoranda stating their proposals for political future.⁴⁹

A spate of political activities had taken place in the Lushai Hills District ever since the Mizo Union with a membership of 20,000 came to the forefront of public activity.⁵⁰ The Mizo Union and breakaway faction of the Mizo Union submitted a number of memoranda⁵¹ to the Constituent Assembly Sub-Committee on Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas of Assam and also the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, demanding interim government for Mizoram with a Constitution of its own within the Province of Assam

48. Chaube, S.K. Hill Politics in North East India, Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1973, p. 76.

49. Chaltuahkhuma. Political History of Mizoram (in Mizo), L.B. Press, Aizawl, 1981, p. 40.

50. Memorandum of the Case of Mizo, Dated 22nd April 1947, Prepared by the Mizo Union.

51. Draft Constitution of the Mizoram (Lushai Hills) for the Future Administration of the District, Submitted to the Constituent Assembly of India, Dated July 1947.

federated on the basis of negotiation, subject to its revision after ten years even to the extent of seceding. These were strengthened by a resolution⁵² passed in an all party meeting held on 14 August 1947, demanding recognition of the right of the Lushais to opt out of the Indian Union if they so wished after a period of ten years. The meeting held at Aizawl under the Chairmanship of L.L. Peters, Superintendent of Lushai Hills also resolved to make enquiries "whether the Lushais are at this stage allowed the option of joining any other dominion i.e., Pakistan or Burma."⁵³ This issue along with the issue of conditional joining into the Indian Union had generated a great deal of interest and was admitted in a strictly confidential note sent by L.L. Peters to the Secretary of the Governor of Assam. As L.L. Peters stated: "The thing that struck me most forcibly was the political consciousness which has permeated the entire population of Aijal."⁵⁴ The situation was considered to be "explosive" and an "unequivocal declaration" was demanded by the Superintendent. The Mizo Union also prepared a draft constitution providing a permanent administrative structure for the district and

52. Ibid.

53. Confidential File No. 8C of 1947, Assam Secretariat.

54. Ibid.

submitted it to the Constituent Assembly. It may be mentioned that A.R.H. Mac Donald, Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, prepared a similar constitution which was later approved by the Conference of Chiefs and Commoners elected by the whole district on a basis of household suffrage in April 1947. The point was reiterated in a joint memorandum⁵⁵ to the Governor of Assam on 20th January 1948, jointly submitted by Lushai Chiefs Council, Mizo Union, United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) and Lushai Ex-Servicemen Association. The MNF took the clue from all such developments and in 1962 exactly ten years after the establishment of the District Council its leaders started claiming that Mizo District was not a part of India.

The Bardoloi Committee recommended to set up administration for the hill areas of Assam, based on the concept of regional autonomy in matters affecting their custom, laws of inheritance, administration of justice, land and forest.⁵⁶ This pattern of administration took shape in the form of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

However, the latter political and administrative development of the Mizo Hills shows that the Government of

55. Ibid.

56. Report of the North Eastern Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Area Sub-Committee, 1947, Manager of Publication, New Delhi, 1950.

India did not pay heed to the appeals and memoranda of Mizo political leaders. The M.U. was restless over the delay in the implementation of the proposal of Sixth Schedule. Therefore, they launched a civil disobedience movement which resulted in assaults on the Chiefs and their supporters.⁵⁷ The M.U. members were pacified only when the Advisor to the Governor of Assam on Tribal Affairs promised to implement the proposed Sixth Schedule at an early date.⁵⁸

Simultaneously the recommendation of the Bardoloi Committee was accepted by the Advisory Committee on 24th February 1948.⁵⁹ Therefore, the government set up an Advisory Council in the hills. Though the Advisory Council had no statutory basis, they were treated as Provisional District Council.⁶⁰ At last, the District Council in Lushai Hills was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi on 25th April 1952 at Aizawl.⁶¹ The Sixth Schedule fixed the maximum strength of the Mizo District

57. Sanga, R.R.T. Administrative Development in Lushai Hills Upto 1972, op.cit., p. 113.

58. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, op.cit.

59. Rao, B. Shiva. The Framing of Indian Constitution (Select Document), Vol. III, pp. 780-782.

60. Rao, V. Venkata. A Century of Tribal Politics in North-East India, 1874-1974, S. Chand & Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1976, p. 108.

61. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram leh Kei (in Mizo), op.cit., p. 222.

Council at 24.⁶² With the introduction of District Council in Mizoram, a new era of democratic administration began.

ABOLITION OF CHIEFSHIP

As mentioned earlier, the traditional Mizo Chief enjoyed wide and independent powers within the jurisdiction. There was concentration of powers in the hand of the Chief and his Council called "Upa", who traditionally used to control and regulate all aspects of village administration in accordance with the customary laws of the land and as such enjoyed several privileges.

In 1940, the Chiefs were brought together in a platform called the Chiefs' Durbar under the auspices of the district Superintendent. During the war, the Council did not function between 1941 and 1946. In the latter years it was revived when the Mizo Union threatened the vested interests of the Chiefs. The aims and objects of the Council were:⁶³

- a) To work for the general advancement of the Lushais.
- b) To foster unity amongst the Chiefs.

62. Scholar's interview with Zalawma, Ex. MDC, Dated 19th January 1995, Place: Aizawl.

63. Scholar's interview with Raltawna Sailo, Ex. Chief, op.cit.

- c) To maintain and strengthen the relationship between the government and the Chiefs.

Even before the formation of the first political party, the common people had nurtured an anti-chief feeling and looked forward for an appropriate forum to mobilise popular aspirations. When the M.U. was elected in the first Mizo District Council election held in 1952, it pressed the Government of Assam to abolish traditional Chiefship in Mizo District. However, it was not easy to do away with the traditional Chiefs or find substitution in their places.

The Chiefs were reluctant to part with their traditional status. In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, during his visit to Assam, the Chiefs' Council stated: "The attempt of the District Council, composed mainly of members of the reactionary party is against the spirit of the constitution. If our rights and privileges are done away with or impaired, Indian Independence will be a curse to us."⁶⁴

The United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) formed in July 1947, was against total abolition of traditional Chiefship. Its leader, Lalmawia expressed the view that his

64. The Statesman, Calcutta, 10th November, 1952.

party would be satisfied if the Chiefs were kept under the control of the District Council.⁶⁵ But the educated Mizos could not have faith upon the Chiefs in the fast changing situation. To them, the Chiefs or traditional political institution was too fragile to cope with the new political changes.

The Chiefs in the Lushai Hills, unlike their counterparts in other tribal societies of the North-East had to face a tough time and the wrath of the common people was successfully mobilised by the Mizo Union through a civil disobedience movement against them. Contrary to the commonly held view which also received support of a number of scholars that the exploitation and oppressive role of the Chief had turned the people hostile towards them. An important cause of discontent was the conflicting aspiration of the traditional Chiefs and the Commoners, over possession of power in administration in the framework of local autonomy outside the shell of excluded status, a development which was in the offing as per the Sixth Schedule. The Chiefs despite being insignificant numerically had already established a status of equality in the District Conference

65. Vanlalhluna, John. Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 79.

arranged by administration in 1946 and were able to ensure reservation of ten seats in the Advisory Council, a development against the democratic spirit, the wind of which had started blowing in the Lushai Hills in an unprecedented manner.

Therefore, the Mizo Union passed a resolution in 1953 in the Autonomous District Council for the abolition of Chiefship.⁶⁶ The resolution was later, approved by the Assam Legislative Assembly on 28th June 1954, and came into force from 16th August 1954.⁶⁷ Subsequently, the name of the Lushai Hills District was changed into Mizo Hills District.⁶⁸ Following this development a total number of 305⁶⁹ Mizo Chiefs and their traditional rights and privileges were abolished. In its place, a modern democratic form of political institution was adopted. Each village elected its representative to the Village Council by adult franchise which functioned under the instructions given by the District Council.

The creation of a District Council was an important

66. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 232.

67. Lushai Hills Acquisition of Chiefs Rights Act No 23, 1954, June 1954.

68. The Lushai Hills Changed Name Act, 1952.

69. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 232.

landmark in Mizoram. But due to lack of adequate financial support from the Assam Government, developmental schemes could not be speeded up.⁷⁰ At first when traditional Chiefship was abolished, the people were content with the Mizo District Council (MDC). However, with the day to-day political changes, a general feeling of discontentment and dissatisfaction developed against the government on account of a meagre financial support and poor developmental schemes. Further, when the MNF came into being, most of the disgruntled ex-chiefs and their relatives supported the new party to oppose the M.U. which abolished the traditional Chiefship. A feeling of separatism, thus, gained its momentum in Mizo Hills under the leadership of the M.N.F.

70. Lalbuai, Ex. CEM, in Seminar on Mizo History organized by the Mizo History Association, Aizawl Club, Dated 20th September 1984.

CHAPTER II

EMERGENCE OF THE MIZO NATIONAL FRONT

The Biblical story of the tower of Babel could be interpreted as a mythical description of the origin of nations. According to the story, at this early stage in human history, the world was inhabited by one people who spoke one language until, in their vanity, human beings challenged the limits of their ability and joined together to build a tower reaching upto heaven. Angry and apprehensive about this expansion of human powers, and about the conceit it conveyed God said:

"Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."¹

Thus it is said God scattered human beings across the face of the earth and they divided into nations. Social scientists, however, trace the chronological development of national movements, starting with sixteenth century England, and continuing through mid-seventeenth century France and Russia during the eighteenth century, and early nineteenth century Germany and the United States during the

1. The Holy Bible, Genesis, Chapter II, Revised Standard Version, The Bible Society of India, Second Edition, 1971, p. 8.

late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. The national evolution of these societies represents the interplay of diverse forces including the conscious drive to unite the people. To understand the power and appeal of nationalism it is necessary to focus on national identity treated as a collective phenomenon. The fact, however, remains that nationalism provides the most compelling identity myth in the modern world.

According to Anderson, a nation is an imagined political community.² It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow members, yet in the mind of each lives an image of this community. Gellner, however, believes that nationalism "invents nations where they do not exist."³ Anderson's argument is very weighty as it is impossible for all its members to engage in face-to-face contact with fellow members. Hence members can only perceive the nation as a whole by referring to the image of it that they have construed in their own minds. The image of a nation is cemented by certain attribute such as culture, language, history and national consciousness which all its members

2. Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities, 2nd Edition, Verso, London, 1991, p. 6.

3. Gellner, Ernest. Thought and Changes, London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971, p. 169.

share in common. The paramount common denomination of all nations is a national consciousness fostering feelings of belongingness and fraternity. One must also take into account the specific conditions that led to its emergence. Anthony Smith in his analysis of nation gives prominence to this aspect, although there is an opinion that a definition of nationhood should not specify the causes leading to the emergence of nations but should stress those features common to communities that fall under the definition of nation.⁴ Greenfield specifies nine stages in the development of the term nation which underwent semantic transformation and launched the era of nationalism and came to be understood as 'a sovereign people'.⁵ The mid-twentieth century marks the emergence of yet another stage of the term's evolution, in which national groups begin to recognise their own inner strength and potential well articulated by the educated elite of the group. No nation, argues Anderson, "imagine itself continuous with mankind" and all nations see themselves as having some separateness from those around. Most of the national groups seek fulfilment of their distinctiveness through ethnocentric nationalism as opposed to polycentric nationalism.

4. Smith, Anthony D. National Identity, University of Nevada Press, 1991, pp. 14-18.

5. Greenfield, Liah. Nationalism, Five Roads to Modernity, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 6.

Significantly, nationalism plays a central role in the shaping of individual consciousness, beliefs and self-perception. While explaining the importance of nationalism Yael Tamir observes: "Liberalism and socialism invite individuals to see themselves as part of humanity at large; Marxism tells them that class membership should overshadow all others; feminism urges them to give priority to gender-based identity; while nationalism encourages them to see themselves as contextualised, as members of a particular continuous community."⁶ Anthony Smith considers that the power of nationalism should be attributed to the fact that membership in a nation provides "a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture."⁷ National identity is more powerful than other identities because it provides individuals "a place in the world" and is also stable in nature when compared with gender, class or regional identities. Four features are generally cited to emphasise the power of nationalism. They are:

1. Membership in a nation promises individuals redemption from personal oblivion.

6. Tamir, Yael. "The Enigma of Nationalism", World Politics, Vol. 47, April 1995, p. 431.

7. Smith, Anthony D. Op.cit., p. 17.

2. Identification with a nation gives individuals hope of personal renewal through national regeneration.
3. Membership in a nation offers rescue from alienation, solitude, and anonymity.
4. National membership assures individuals that it entails equal status.

No doubt nationhood grants individuals a feeling of belonging and a sense of mutuality, but it does not eliminate divisions of class and gender based status and in this sense, it is similar to membership in a family. Greenfield also explains the potential of nationhood which elevates every member of the community.⁸ She argues that national identity is fundamentally "a matter of dignity. It gives people reason to be proud".⁹

In the name of nationalism, mobilization of the people can take place easily and that is why it plays a functional role in modern politics. The belief that a nation is chosen and its land is holy ignites the sense of national dignity that transcends human action in fond

8. Greenfield, op.cit., p. 10.

9. Ibid., p. 487.

memory of historical continuity and also in search of a collective destiny.

The nationalist leadership interprets historical events and provides its own explanation of the apprehensions and potentials of the community. There is the desire to connect their nation to a remote past. As pointed out by Smith, the nationalists have long understood that the criterion of national dignity "is the felt antiquity of a community's ethno-history, irrespective of its truth content. Deliberate forgetfulness and misrepresentation of historical facts seem to constitute an important and perhaps indispensable feature of nation building."¹⁰ Historical accuracy is often sacrificed and to this extent national identity may be based on intentionally misleading beliefs. Anderson ventures into the murky territory whereby the modern phenomenon of the nation imagines itself to be rooted in antiquity.

In the recent decades the pervasiveness of ethnic politics has added a new dimension to nationalism. The explanation of 'nation' as being ultimately a 'supreme loyalty' for which people are prepared to die is particularly powerful. Ethnicity is sometimes a sufficient

10. Smith, Anthony D. Op.cit., p. 161.

condition for the emergence of nationalism. Political, economic and cultural changes together make up the development of nationalist movement. In Kellas's theory, nationalism develops on the basis of national self-determination. Kellas rightly points out that a theory of nationalist politics must include both a 'bottom up' approach, that is, an analysis of emerging nationalist forces, their leaders and organization and a 'top down' approach, analysing the political context and responses of the political, economic and cultural elites to the emergence of nationalist forces.¹¹ Statehood has become the ultimate prize of nationalists; their banner is self-determination and their demands are territorial.¹²

Significantly, ethnic separatism and militancy has occurred in several places and ethnicity is used as a criterion for statehood although only a few ethnic communities - out of the many that could demand autonomy and independence - have retained states of their own. According to Anthony Smith, "to grasp the nature and power of ethnic nationalism today, one must focus primarily on

11. Kellas, James G. *The Politics of Nationalism & Ethnicity*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1991, see Review article on it by Gabriel Tapor, Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 45, No. 2, Winter 1992, p. 647.

12. Gottlieb, Gidon. "Nations Without States", Foreign Affairs, May/June, 1994, p. 103.

the collective level of identity and community.¹³ The particular collective cultural identity of concern here is the 'ethnie' or ethnic community. A brief working definition on the 'ethnie' refers to a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories and cultural elements, a link with an historical territory or homeland and a measure of solidarity.

Ethnic nationalism is promoted by several factors. First of all, names are important not only for self and other identification but also as expressive emblems of the collective personality. A proper name thus gives a recognizable sense of community. Secondly, what is important is the belief or myth of common ancestry. Ethnicity, according to Anthony Smith, "is not about blood or genes as such, but about myths and beliefs in common origins."¹⁴ Further, "for the ethnic nationalists and their followers, the 'ethnie' is indeed a super-family extended in space and time to distant relations over many generations, including the yet 'unborn'".¹⁵ Thirdly, nurturing of historical memories is also important. Such memories are not relies of historians or based on

13. Smith, Anthony D. "The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism", Survival, Vol. 35, No. 1, Spring 1993, p. 48.

14. Ibid., p. 50.

15. Ibid., pp. 49-53.

documentary evidence. The ethno-historical memories form a malleable resource to morally inspire members of a community. Fourthly, a shared culture unites people which encompasses dress, food, music, crafts and architecture as well as laws, customs and institutions. The fifth factor is the attachment to a specific territory. In the estimate of Smith, "what is vital for ethnicity is the sense of attachment to a particular land, the fervently held belief in an historical connection of this people with that land." The sense of belonging even from afar to a homeland is most important. Finally, there is the element of solidarity which binds the members together.

In this connection, it is important to distinguish between ethnic categories and ethnic communities. The former possess little or no sense of common ethnicity, whereas in the latter the members have never lost the sense of belonging to an all-embracing 'ethnie'. The distinction between ethnic category and ethnic community is important for grasping the dynamics of ethnic nationalism. It has been pointed out that "one of the self-appointed tasks of nationalists is to turn ethnic categories into ethnic communities, and ethnic communities into ethnic nations."¹⁶

16. Ibid., p. 56.

Ethnic nationalism has an advantage over territorial and civic nationalism - that of building the nation, as it were, out of pre-existing ethnic ties on the basis of 'a genealogical and vernacular cultural community' and not on the basis of merely shared culture, common laws and territorial citizenship. This has been true with the Slovaks, the Ukranians, the Turks, the Azeris, Tadzhiks, Sikhs and Tamils.¹⁷ There is also the inevitability of cultural politicization of the vernacular heritage. This mobilization leads to ethnic purification with greater stress on preservation of cultural values against alien influence.

The immense power and unpredictability of ethnic nationalism has become evident following the collapse of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Wherever ethnic nationalism has taken hold of a population, one may expect to find powerful assertion of national self-determination. John Locke laid the foundations of the right to self-determination by deriving from the proposition that individuals had certain natural rights which include the right to leave political communities to which they did not consent and that majorities had the right to resist the

17. Watson, H. Seton. Nations and States, Methuen, London, 1977, pp. 17-19.

tyrants. The American revolutionaries interpreted the right of resistance to tyranny to include the right of cessation. Under the UN system the right to self-determination has legitimised certain new states while denying the same to various peoples who came into conflict with the state power. The right to self-determination of peoples can be grounded in various widely accepted political principles: (a) the liberal right to resist tyranny, (b) the liberal right to freedom of association, (c) the democratic principle of popular sovereignty, (d) the nationalist value of cultural community, (e) the 'realist' requirement of world order.¹⁸ There is also a view that the demand for national self-determination is political rather than cultural. Thus the claim for national self-determination is about the realization of one's political status, ability and collective character, which may be activated only through participation in autonomous political institutions.¹⁹

The emergence of the Mizo National Front could be understood in proper perspective if we at first take into account the force of nationalism that surfaced in the wake

18. De Shalit, Avner. "National Self-Determination: Political, Not Cultural", Political Studies, Vol. XLIV, 1996, p. 912.

19. Freeman, Michael. "Democracy & Dynamite: The People's Right to Self-Determination", Political Studies, Vol. XLIV, 1996, p. 759.

of Indian independence, a force which was hitherto suppressed under the 'Excluded Area' status that ruled out political activities in the Lushai Hills. The emerging political leadership particularly representing the Mizo Union made no secret of their apprehensions to the possible amalgamation of the Lushai Hills with Assam - a development which in their understanding could wipe out their ethnic identity and culture and this is why they were quick to raise autonomist demands from the very beginning. In fact, they wanted a transitional arrangement for a period of ten years at the end of which they preferred their right to opt out. This move was no doubt thwarted by the integrationists but the MNF after its birth in October 1961, was able to capture the imagination of the people when it channellised the nationalist feeling by igniting the latent ethnic aspirations of the people. The apprehensions earlier expressed had become a reality in view of the failure of the District Council to deliver the goods to the famine affected people of the district. The political ideology of the MNF was directed towards mobilising the people in defence of a homeland for the Mizos and ethno-historical memories were interpreted in its favour. In fact, even before its 'declaration of independence', it was successful in converting the Mizos from an ethnic category to an ethnic community.

The MNF demand for self-determination for the Mizos is nothing new since the demand was placed across the table way back in 1946. The MNF leadership was influenced by the liberal democratic interpretation of the right and its secessionist stance was formulated as part of its claim for certain inalienable rights of the people.

RISE AND GROWTH OF MIZO NATIONALISM

In the struggle for Mizo independence, the MNF made use of Mizo Nationalism as the strategic base of their movement. Several factors promoted nationalist sentiment among the Mizos. They are:

(a) Survival Instinct: In the case of the Mizos, survival instinct was perhaps, the most important force in the development of nationalism. According to Zoramthanga,

"All men are created and endowed with inalienable human right by God and blessed with the spirit of nationalism. The more the nation is small and weak, the more they are concerned about their survival against domination and oppression of the bigger nation. Mizo nationalism also emerged out of this survival instinct against the fear of oppression and assimilation."²⁰

The same defensive posture and a bit of scepticism appeared to characterise "the budding political attitude of the

20. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, MNF President, Dated 26th July 1993. Place: Aizawl.

Mizos."²¹

(b) Fear of Assimilation and Oppression: Mizo nationalism developed due to fear of losing ethnic identity, and the apprehension of oppression and domination by the larger plains people. Being a minority there was a constant fear of assimilation and oppression in the vast Indian community. Nibedon has rightly observed thus: "When a small community realises it has to live with a much larger community forever, the built-in defence mechanism tells him that he is in danger...."²²

The Mizos were afraid of being assimilated just like their neighbouring tribes - the Kacharies and the Tripurians. During the time of the formation of the MNF, its leaders in their campaign used to expose such issues to mobilise the feeling of nationalism.²³

(c) Ethnic-Cultural Differences: Ethnic-cultural differences with the mainstream of India is another important factor to have stirred up nationalism. Many a time, the founder president of the MNF, Laldenga

21. Sharma, M.L. "Elite Conflict, Regionalism and the Capability Crisis", A Study of the Autonomous Movement in North East India, in Ramakant (ed) Regionalism in South Asia, Jaipur, Aalekh Publisher, 1983, p. 70.

22. Nibedon, Nirmal. The Ethnic Explosion, Lancer Publisher, New Delhi, 1981, p. 16.

23. Scholar's interview with Rochhinga, one of the founders of the MNF, Dated 25th July 1993, Thakthing Veng, Aizawl.

articulated the ethnic distinctiveness of the Mizos in order to arouse the nationalist feelings and indoctrinate the feeling of separatism in the minds of the people. He used to say, "Being a Mongoloid stock with distinct culture and custom, we should stay separated from India...."²⁴ Vanlawma also observed,

"From time immemorial the Mizos stood as a separate nation. Even before the British occupation, our forefathers stood separately under the traditional administration of our chiefs. Due to our distinct ethnicity, our culture and custom are completely different from the plains people. Therefore, a nationalist feeling was stirred up to safeguard our culture and custom as well as for our self-determination."²⁵

Thus, the ethnic and cultural differences undoubtedly gave birth to the feeling of nationalism.

(d) Leadership of Laldenga: Personally, the founder president of the MNF, Laldenga played a significant role in mobilising Mizo nationalism. Laldenga was an influential orator, a brilliant propagandist and possessed qualities of leadership and commendable power of organisation. In order to arouse Mizo nationalism, he often stated that the Mizos

24. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, Ex. Vice President, MNF, Dated 25th July 1993. Place: Aizawl.

25. A Pamphlet issued by Cultural Society at Aizawl in 1959. Source: Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, Dated 24th November 1992. Place: Aizawl.

were created and moulded by God as a separate nation and their land had never been subjugated and conquered by any Indian ruler or Maharaja.²⁶ A large section of the Mizos were convinced by his charismatic leadership and lent a moral support to the cause of the MNF and were ever ready to give their lives for the Mizo nation. Gaugin commented that Laldenga's attempt to stir up nationalist sentiments caught the imagination of the people in the Mizo hills and touched the very sentiment of the youth.²⁷

(e) Mizo Reunification: Mizo reunification was another factor responsible for promoting nationalism. It should be noted that during the time of the British occupation, the Mizo occupied areas were divided according to administrative convenience and formed parts of different countries and states with international boundary restricting their free movement. This man made boundaries acted as a barrier in their political, and social integration. In spite of such critical vivisections, the mode of living and the society, culture and customs remained unchanged. The Mizos had always dreamt of

26. Laldenga. "Man and Freedom" in Mizoram Marched Towards Freedom, Published by Information Broadcasting and Publicity, MNF, 1973, p. 12.

27. Gaugin, T. The Discovery of Zoland, Zomi Press, Churachandpur, 1980, p. 87.

reunification with their brethren living across the international boundary which was clearly evident with the emergence of political consciousness. Every political party that came into being had propagated reunification. The Mizos asserted that self-determination and unification of vivisected Mizo areas were the twin right endowed to them by God.²⁸ Thus, the issue of reunification of their scattered areas played an important role in the rise of nationalist feeling.

(f) Psychological Factor: There was psychological barrier and a wide gap between the plains people and the hill men due to ethnic and cultural differences. As a result, mutual distrust, and antagonistic feelings towards each other automatically evolved. While the plains people looked upon the Mizos as "nomadic, dirty and uncivilised both in manner and habits,"²⁹ the Mizos also regarded them as selfish and oppressive. In their political campaign in order to arouse nationalist feeling, the MNF leadership exploited the mutual distrust between the two communalities which generated a psychological distance between the two.³⁰

28. Lalhmingthanga. Problem of Peace Making In Mizoram, Published by the MNF Foreign Ministry, 1972, p. 51.

29. Hluna, J.V. "Mizo Problems Leading to Insurgency" in Proceedings of North East India History Association, Sixth Session, Agartala, 1985, p. 445.

30. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana Phillips, former MNF 'Ambassador' to China, Dated 22nd March 1993, Khatla, Aizawl.

It was in fact, a potent factor that gave rise to Mizo nationalism.

BIRTH OF THE MNF

The birth of the MNF was obviously not a sudden development. In fact, there are several factors responsible for the formation of the party apart from the Mizo nationalism such as activities of the Mizo Cultural Society and 'Mautam' famine.*

(a) Cultural Society: An important factor responsible for identity aspiration was the activities of the Mizo Cultural Society. It was initiated by R. Vanlawma and several other Mizo intellectuals in 1959 during the time of 'Mautam' famine at Aizawl. According to R. Vanlawma, "The main objective of the Cultural Society was to inculcate a sense of Mizo identity, promote nationalistic feeling, and to lay stress upon integration of all Mizo contiguous areas of the neighbouring states."³¹

* In Mizo language, 'Mau' means bamboo, and 'Tam' means to die off. Therefore, 'Mautam' means dying off bamboos. In Mizoram, the people assert that every 50 years, 'Mautam' occurs. When 'Mautam' occurs, bamboo shed their leaves and start flowering and bears fruits. Significantly, rats multiply by eating those bamboo fruits and flowers. When bamboo seeds are exhausted, thousands of rats swarm jhum cultivation and devour crops. Subsequently, it causes a wide spread famine which the Mizos called 'Mautam'.

31. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei (in Mizo), Zomi Printing Press, Aizawl, 1972, p. 257.

During that time, a section of the younger generation, who studied outside despised Mizo culture and customs. Moreover, there was the fear of renunciation of Mizo tradition because young men who studied outside began to imitate the behaviour and mode of living of the non-Mizos.³² The Cultural Society was, thus, formed by a few Mizo intellectuals to safeguard Mizo culture and traditions. In fact, the Cultural Society was mostly concerned with inculcating nationalist feeling in the younger generation.

When 'Mautam' famine hit the area in 1959, Capt. W.A. Sangma, the then Assam Tribal Area Development Minister visited Mizo District to investigate the situation on the spot. During his visit, the Mizo Cultural Society organised a successful procession at Aizawl to express their dissatisfaction against the Government of Assam for their slow pace of rehabilitation of the famine stricken people.³³ Actually, the procession was organised to instigate the people against the Government of India for their allegedly step-motherly treatment which also contributed to the political awakening of the Mizos.³⁴

32. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

33. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 258.

34. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, one of the founders of the MNF, Dated 2nd June 1992, Place: Zalen Cabin, Aizawl.

The District Council authority, thereafter, did not allow any government servant to take part in the Cultural Society. Since most of the active members and office bearers of the Cultural Society were government employees, the Society gradually became defunct. However, Laldenga, the Assistant Secretary of the Cultural Society tendered his resignation from the post of Clerk in the Mizo District Council in order to devote wholeheartedly for the sake of the Mizo people.³⁵ Since then, the cry for Mizo independence became an issue and the people started nurturing separatist tendency.

(b) 'Mautam' Famine of 1959: It should be noted that the bulk of the Mizos depend upon jhum cultivation for their livelihood. When 'Mautam' famine hit the area in 1959, there was immense multiplication of rats which devoured all their crops. As a result, the whole District suffered the havoc of famine. The Mizo District Council authority and the M.L.A. representing Mizo District also informed the Government of Assam in 1958, that a great famine would occur in 1959, and demanded preventive measures for protection of their crops. But their appeal was not heeded by the Assam Government.³⁶ Consequently,

35. Scholar's interview with Aichhinga, MLA, dated 30th June 1993, Aizawl.

36. Scholar's interview with L.H. Lalmawia, Ex. MLA (Assam Legislature), dated 10th April 1993, Lunglei.

there was shortage of foodstuff resulting in starvation death in the District. After sometime, the Government of Assam sent an entomologist from Dibrugarh to investigate the situation. He stayed one night at Aizawl and returned the following day. Surprisingly, in his report to the Government, he stated that he did not see a single rat in Mizo District.³⁷ Moreover, the Indian Air Force did not make proper air-dropping due to an excuse of hazy weather even during dry season.³⁸

Therefore, non-governmental organisation called 'Mizo National Famine Front' (M.N.F.F.) was formed to help famine stricken people. The primary aim of the MNFF was to help the famine stricken people in obtaining food from the Government.³⁹ The word 'National' was added to the name of the new organisation purposely in order to popularise the feeling of nationalism, and with the expectation that one day the MNFF would be transformed into a political party by dropping one 'F' (Famine) from the organisation.⁴⁰ In the MNFF, R. Dengthuama was the President and Laldenga was the General Secretary.

37. Saprawnga Ch. Ka Zin Kawng (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, 1990, pp. 179-180.

38. Ibid.

39. Samuelson, Ramchuani Sena. Love Mizoram, Goodwill Press, Imphal, 1985, p. 67.

40. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 260.

As a welfare organisation it earned a good reputation by devoting free services to the people and collecting house-to-house donation to help the people in distress. The starving people felt consoled due to the relief work undertaken by the MNFF. When the famine was over in 1961, its leaders felt that the time had come to form a political party with the objective of propagating separatist feeling. Therefore, on 28th October 1961, the MNFF was transformed into a political party by dropping the word 'Famine' from it.⁴¹ During the formation of Mizo National Front (M.N.F.), its first President Laldenga was reluctant to have 'Mizo Independence' as one of the objectives. However, after sometime, he accepted 'independence' as the primary objective of the new party on 28th October 1961.^{42*}

41. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, one of the founders of the MNF, op.cit.

42. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 261.

* The first ad-hoc Office Bearers of the MNF were: Laldenga - President, R. Vanlawma - General Secretary, A. Rohnuna - Joint Secretary.

Source: Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 261.

After sometime, the party held its first election at "Zalen Cabin", the residence of R. Vanlawma at Aizawl and the following persons were elected:

Laldenga - President, J. Manliana - Vice-President, R. Vanlawma - General Secretary, Isaak Zoliana - Assistant Secretary, C. Rochhinga - Treasurer, Denghmingthanga - Finance Secretary. Source: Ibid.

AIMS OF THE MNF

Initially, the MNF was formed as a regional political party and its primary objective was to carve out an independent state of Mizoram, with the contiguous Mizo inhabited areas in the neighbouring states and countries. They aimed at 'highest sovereignty' which implied self determination. Their motto was 'For God and Our Country'.⁴³ Moreover, the party also aimed at safeguarding Mizo culture, tradition and Christianity, and promised to make Mizoram a Christian state.⁴⁴

After sometime, the original aims and objectives were streamlined highlighting three main principles.

- (i) To achieve highest sovereignty for all Mizos living in contiguous areas of the neighbouring states under one political boundary.
- (ii) To uplift Mizo society in all respects.
- (iii) To preserve and safeguard Christian religion.⁴⁵

43. Liankima. Robert. Pathian Leh Kan Ram Tan, a booklet (in Mizo), Kwality Press, Aizawl, p. 5 (Year not mentioned).

44. M.N.F. "Danbul" (Constitution), Published by the MNF Headquarters (Mobile), 1967. Source: Tlangchhuaka.

45. Tlangchhuaka, "Mizoram Politics" (in Mizo), Issued by the MNF Headquarters, 1973, p. 19. Camp:Mobile.

They had political campaigns with prayers wherever they went. Gradually the MNF was gaining ground and many young people joined the party.

CAUSES OF THE MNF POPULARITY

As stated earlier, the MNF leadership was quite adept in mobilising the sentiment of the Mizos and obtaining mass support for their cause. They adopted several tactics and methods like propaganda campaign, issuing of pamphlets, leaflets, press-hand-out etc. in order to popularise the party. Some of these are discussed below:

(a) The first method that the MNF adapted in order to popularise their party was making public campaigns. The MNF leadership made a mass campaign throughout the length and breadth of the Mizo District. Using their gift of the good and brilliant propaganda, they skilfully exploited the ethno-cultural differences of the Mizos against the plains-men, and spread hatred and mutual distrust between the Mizos and the rest in order to popularise the MNF. In view of their possessing a distinct culture, it was rather easy to influence younger generation and inculcate an antagonistic feeling. Therefore, the MNF was able to obtain tacit support especially from the young people and its membership increased day by day.

(b) The MNF also issued several pamphlets, booklets and leaflets etc. like "Mizoram Marches Towards Freedom", by Laldenga; "Exodus Politics", by Lalhmingthanga; "Mizoram Politics", by Tlangchhuaka; "Government of Mizoram", by S. Lianzuala; "MNF Thiltumte Hrilhfiahna" (in Mizo), issued by the MNF Headquarters, etc. which laid down the MNF aims and objectives, and were circulated throughout the district. These had cast a great impact upon the Mizos both in Aizawl and outside.

(c) The talk of 'independence', which was the main aim of the MNF had great impact in the mind of the people while the Mizo Union (M.U.) while in power in the District Council, aimed at statehood. Moreover, the very name MNF carried an emotional appeal which pierced through the heart of the youth and ignited a feeling of solidarity.⁴⁶

(d) In early sixties, there were a few hundred Mizo soldiers in the Assam Regiment Second Battalion. Due to some misunderstanding, the Battalion was disbanded without making any provision for their rehabilitation in 1957.⁴⁷ They nurtured a grudge against the Government of India and

46. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, op.cit.

47. Scholar's interview with Rochhinga, op.cit.

their ill-feelings prompted them to join hands with the MNF. The ex-army men were recruited by the MNF to give guerrilla training to the young volunteers.

(e) The support that the MNF obtained from the people was partially owing to the poor developmental work carried out by the Assam Government in the erstwhile Lushai District. At one stage, more than 40 (forty) Mizo graduates joined the MNF due to unemployment.⁴⁸ The MNF reinforced the discontent by raising the slogan of deprivation of job to the Mizos. Nibedon also interpreted that, "the Mizo problem was only a question of lack of proper development, socially, economically and educationally; and yet they are surrounded by areas well developed in communications in rail, road and other facilities".⁴⁹ Before the disturbance, there was only 128 Kilometres pucca road and 581 Kilometres kutcha road in the whole district.⁵⁰ Moreover, the Mizo District Council was in a bad financial shape and had to approach the State Government frequently for financial assistance.⁵¹ Industrially, Mizo District was "one of the

48. Scholar's interview with R. Haleluia, MNF 'Colonel', dated 23rd March 1993, Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

49. Nibedon, Nirmal. The Ethnic Explosion, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

50. Goswami, B.B. Mizo Unrest, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1979, p. 180.

51. Ray, Animesh. Mizoram: Dynamics of Change, Pearl Publishers, Calcutta, 1982, p. 107.

most industrially backward districts of Assam. The few industries found in the district are the traditional cottage and village industries like weaving, carpentry, etc."⁵² Till 1971, there was no industrial unit worth the name in the Mizo Hills. Besides, no importance was ever given to vocational education. The widespread primary and middle level education ultimately brought a big chunk of the young people away from agricultural pursuits. They, however, remained without any employment as there was practically no other economic activity in the area.⁵³ These frustrated young people who were the main catalytic agents in the disturbances in 1966.

(f) Another reason behind the MNF popularity was the support extended by the former chiefs who were disgruntled following the abolition of traditional chiefship. When the institution of traditional chiefship was abolished by the M.U., the deprived chiefs and their relatives became frustrated and nurtured a wrath against the M.U. The situation was skilfully exploited by some intellectuals, especially during the time of the formation of the MNF. In

52. Report on "Development on Industries in Mizo Hills", Small Scale Industries Development Organisation, Ministry of Industrial Development and Internal Trade, New Delhi, 1971, p. 23.

53. Scholar's interview with Raltawna Sailo, Ex. Chief of Luangmual, dated 28th February 1991, Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

a public speech at Luangmual in Aizawl, Laldenga himself said that,

The traditional institution of chiefship was inherited by our forefathers and thus it was our birth right and our most invaluable cultural heritage. The abolition of the chiefship by the M.U. was a sheer mistake. I am afraid that it would lead our younger generation to the field of dirty politics. When we realised that it was a big mistake, it will be too late.⁵⁴

Therefore, the disgruntled chiefs and their relatives and those who sympathised the dethroned chiefs lent their full support to the newly formed party in order to overpower the M.U., who held the reign in the District Council in Mizo Hills.⁵⁵ Moreover, to boost up the morale of the MNF volunteers and to win the support of the civilians, publicity department of the MNF spread many rumours such as (i) a major (foreign) power from the east would come to the aid of the MNF once they started movement. (ii) Around 500 Chinese soldiers were ready to march into Mizoram in aid of the MNF to drive out the Indian army. (iii) China and Pakistan were ready to supply arms and ammunitions, as well

54. Speech of Laldenga, President of the MNF, at Luangmual Lower Primary School in 1962.

Source: Interview with Raltawna Sailo, Ex. Chief, Luangmual, Aizawl, op.cit.

55. Ibid.

as provide financial assistance to the MNF for their operation.⁵⁶

ROLE OF THE MNF BEFORE INSURRECTION

The MNF was formed as a regional political party though its aim was secessionist. Soon after its inception, the MNF became a popular organisation and carried its message into every corner of the district. The party was able to enjoy wide appeal and recognition from the people mainly because of the objectives and pledges set out by its leadership. The MNF Assembly in early 1962 resolved to participate in the third Mizo District Council election. The party leadership wanted to test the popularity of the organisation and also to prove their strength constitutionally to show the Government of India that they had popular support of the people.⁵⁷

However, there were differences of opinion with regard to the participation in election held under the Indian Constitution while aiming at independence of Mizoram. Several MNF leaders, including its first General Secretary, R. Vanlawma did not appreciate the idea though

56. Scholar's interview with Biaklawma, Ex. MNF Unit Commander, Dated 3rd September 1993, Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

57. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, MNF Office Bearer, op.cit.

they hesitated to object the decision of the party leadership. Those who criticized the idea of the party leadership felt that it was premature to undertake such activity.⁵⁸ According to the party decision, three MNF leaders, namely, Laldenga, R. Vanlawma and J. Manliana contested the election. At the same time, Sena was also a candidate of the MNF for the Lok Sabha seat. But unfortunately, all the MNF candidates failed to win the election.⁵⁹ This proved that they were not popular enough to face election largely due to their organisational weakness. Besides, being the first political party in the district, the M.U. still had more weight in the heart of the Mizo electorate. Among other things, the reason for their failure in the District Council election was that it was barely four (4) months after the formation of the MNF (October 1961) that the election was held in February 1962. There were several rural areas where no unit was yet raised by the MNF. So they had poor chance in winning the election when poised against the M.U.

The party, therefore, worked harder to consolidate its organisation and mobilise public support. The MNF

58. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, one of the Founders of MNF, op.cit.

59. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 264.

President Laldenga himself visited the entire district for support, exposing the party's manifesto and objectives. To put his plan into action, he influenced the youth power which became a strong force in Mizoram politics. Owing to its popularity, the MNF in a short period of time became a symbol of the Mizo national entity. With that strength, the party was in a better position to face election later on.

In the Assam Legislative Assembly, the Mizo District had three seats. The three seats were lying vacant following the resignation of three M.U. MLAs to press for hill state as a constituent partner of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC).⁶⁰ Therefore, by-election was held on 24th April 1963. In the by-election, out of three seats, two MNF candidates namely, J.F. Manliana and L.H. Lalmawia defeated their M.U. counterparts by a margin of more than 1500 votes each.⁶¹ In the same year, Village Council election was held and the MNF captured only 16.⁶² After their victory in the Assembly by-election, the MNF demanded the dissolution of Mizo District Council. However,

60. Saprawnga, Ch. Ka Zin Kawng, op.cit., p. 188.

61. Scholar's interview with L.H. Lalmawia, Ex. MLA, op.cit.

62. Ray, Animesh. Mizoram: Dynamics of Change, op.cit., p. 134.

the party retraced their demand and left the District Council administration under the stewardship of the M.U.⁶³

The MNF at first, tried to achieve their immediate objective through electoral politics. Being a legitimate regional political party seeking to unite the Mizos, it was a 'political necessity',⁶⁴ to participate in the election held under the Indian Constitution. Nevertheless, the MNF participation in the democratic and constitutional process was merely a prelude to their fulfilling political and extra constitutional objective they had promised to the people.

As members of the Assam Legislative Assembly, L.H. Lalmawia and J.F. Manliana contributed a lot during their short tenure . At the time of the 'Mautam' famine, the relationship between the ruling Congress of Assam and the M.U. leaders in the Mizo District Council was unsatisfactory. Due to their strained relationship the common masses (Mizos) were the innocent victims. Therefore, the two MNF MLAs met the Assam Chief Minister, B.P. Chaliha and requested him to undertake rapid relief work and

63. Scholar's interview with L.H. Lalmawia, Ex. MLA, op.cit.

64. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

rehabilitation in the famine affected areas. Consequently, air dropping of foodgrain etc. was done by the Indian Air Force in the district.⁶⁵ Besides, a sum of forty eight lakh rupees was sanctioned by the Assam Government for the construction of truckable road from Silchar via Aizawl upto Lunglei.⁶⁶ Therefore, towards the end of 1964, B.R.T.F. started construction of truckable road from Silchar. Moreover, the Sub-Divisional Medical Officer of Lunglei Civil Hospital was empowered authority of drawing and disbursing due to the pressure of the two MNF MLAs.⁶⁷

Before the outbreak of disturbance, the MNF leaders, namely, Laldenga, Lalnunmawia and Sainghaka went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1963 to seek support for their political movement. They were assured of all possible help including supply of arms and ammunitions as well as finance by the Pakistani agents and they also assured armed training to the MNF volunteers and shelter if required.⁶⁸

But on their way back home, Laldenga, the MNF President and Lalnunmawia, the Vice President were arrested

65. A letter to the Researcher sent by L.H. Lalmawia, Ex. MLA, dated 10th August 1993, Lunglei.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, Ex. MNF President, dated 20th March 1993, Luangmual, Aizawl.

at Aizawl in December 1963 by the Indian security force. They were immediately sent to Silchar jail. But Sainghaka, another MNF leader who also accompanied them somehow managed to escape.⁶⁹ Laldenga informed the Chief Minister B.P. Chaliha that he and his companion went to East Pakistan just to see their relatives, and gave a written assurance that he and his party would follow non-violent method. Further, they professed to be loyal Indian citizens and expressed sorrow for the technical violation of the border. Therefore, Laldenga and Lalnunmawia were released on parole two months after their arrest, as they gave a written undertaking of good conduct to B.P. Chaliha.⁷⁰ Laldenga later explained to his supporters that he had given the assurance in question to hoodwink the Assam Government and reiterated that he still stood by his earlier commitment.⁷¹ However, the message was clear that though they concealed the truth, the MNF were on the look out for foreign aid for their political movement before they started violent activity.

Like many other parties, the MNF was also plagued by factionalism, rivalry and clash of personalities. For the

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Baveja, J.D. The Land Where The Bamboo Flower, Assam Publication Board, Gauhati, 1970, p. 80.

first time, the party faced an internal problem due to difference of opinion in regard to the question of whether to participate in the Mizo District Council election in 1962. As earlier stated R. Vanlawma, the first General Secretary of the MNF was never in favour of participating in any election under the Indian Constitution while other leaders had no objection.⁷² Being an editor and owner of a pro-MNF newspaper, "Zalenna" (Freedom), he criticized the MNF participation in the election and called upon the people to boycott the voting. Consequently, R. Vanlawma was replaced by Laldenga as Editor of "Zalenna".⁷³ Vanlawma was not happy about this. Thus, the relation between Vanlawma and Laldenga deteriorated.

Due to his frustration, after sometime, R. Vanlawma formed a new group called Mizo National Council (MNC). the MNC was not formally organised as a political party though in a sense, it claimed to be one.⁷⁴ Both the MNF and the MNC aimed at independent Mizoram but the MNC later eschewed violence while the MNF were preparing for extra constitutional political struggle.

72. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, op.cit.

73. Samuelson, Ramchuani Sena. Love Mizoram, op.cit., p.72.

74. Ibid.

However, in spite of the notion that the MNF attempted to launch an armed struggle right from the initial stage, a thorough study reveals that the party at first did not openly advocate armed struggle for achievement of the objective. That is one reason why the MNF participated in the election held under the Indian Constitution for mobilising popular support. In the Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister Lalbahadur Shastri during his visit to Assam in 1965, the MNF stated that they would adopt non-violent method to achieve their demands. In the Memorandum, the MNF stated thus,

"... the only aspiration and political cry is the creation of MIZORAM, a free and sovereign state ... the Mizos commit themselves to a party of non-violence in their struggle and have no intention of employing any other means...."75

However, there is no denying the fact that the MNF recruited volunteers, which they called "Mizo National Volunteer" (MNV), comprising of both young men and women. They gave them armed training in the jungle and in some place at a local play ground using artificial rifles and shot gun etc. Biaklawma, a one time MNF unit president and

75. Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, Lalbahadur Shastri, by the MNF, dated 30th October 1965. Source: Lalthangliana.

'Commander' of the MNV said that sometimes, they stayed at night in the jungle performing military training using their artificial weapons.⁷⁶ The reason for such armed preparation while advocating non-violence means was explained to be their preparation for any eventuality.⁷⁷

Besides, being a small community, the MNF realised that though they apparently prepared non-violent method, they would not achieve their objective easily without violence. There was also a lot of pressure from the Mizo volunteers to adopt "more effective measure" to press their demand.⁷⁸ Therefore, the MNF launched an armed movement on 28th February 1966 in order to free themselves against the oppression of the Indian Government. Subsequently, wide spread lawlessness followed throughout the whole district for twenty years until the signing of Peace Accord between the MNF and the Government of India in June 1996.

76. Scholar's interview with Biaklawma, op.cit.

77. Scholar's interview with R. Haleluia, op.cit.

78. Ibid.

CHAPTER III

**THE MNF DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, UNDERGROUND
MOVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT**

The MNF rebellion was not accidental or a sudden occurrence, but was the outcome of a planned preparation clandestinely made. It was deeply rooted in the social, political and cultural milieu of the society which supported the movement. The topography of Mizo Hills, a mountainous region covered with thick forest and uneven terrain having international boundaries provided an easy access of rebels to foreign countries. The communication network is also restricted by the physiographic constraints which severely affected the economy, which had its chain reaction in a politico-economic set up, culminating into political antagonism. Geography and history of the people also contributed towards assertion of separate ethnic entity. The growth of ethnic regionalism and separatist tendency in such a situation was almost a natural corollary.

As the ten-year period of supposed experimentation of association with India was well over, the conditions brought about by the trend of events were too fertile to the development of secessionist tendency among the Mizos. Separatist feeling which had been nurtured so long in the mind of the people got erupted taking advantage primarily of the economic discontent. In their book, Rao, Thansanga

and Hazarika commented thus;

"The situation was ripe for a conflict. There was dissatisfaction in the Mizo Hills over the administration of the Government of Assam and the MNF exploited the situation to its fold. The MNF were also preaching openly a secessionism from Indian Union."¹

It is rather difficult to differentiate between the factor responsible for formation of the MNF and the causes of secessionist movement because basically "the same nationalism was the compulsive factor that led to the MNF militancy".²

CAUSES OF SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT IN MIZORAM

(a) The MNF claimed that the Mizos enjoyed a semi-independent status all along in a definite territory before they were conquered by the British. Further, shaped by their close-knit insular mode of living, they talk painfully about how they were taken to be foreigners in other parts of India.³ Such feeling deepened their sense of isolation. In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, the MNF stated:

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1. Rao, V. Venkata; Thansanga, H.; Hazarika, Niru. A Century of Government and Politics in North East India: Mizoram, Vol. III, S. Chand & Co. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1987, p. 240.
 2. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, former MNF General Secretary, dated 25th July 1993, Aizawl.
 3. India Today, October 1982, p. 81.

"The Mizos, from time immemorial lived in complete independence without foreign interference.... Their territory or any part had never been subjugated by their neighbouring states.... In a nutshell, they are a distinct nation, created, moulded and nurtured by God.... The British Government having fully realised the distinct and separate nationality of Mizo people decided that they should be excluded from the purview of the new Constitution and they were, accordingly classed as an Excluded Area in term of the Government Order 1936.... In other words, the Mizos had never been under the Indian Government.... During their close association with India, they had not been able to feel at home... now, the cry for political self-determination is the only wish and aspiration of the people... the creation of MIZORAM, a free and sovereign State to govern itself, to work out her own destiny and to formulate her own foreign policy...."⁴

(b) The MNF used to propagate that the Government of India did not take into consideration the 'conditions prevalent after the so called 'experimentation period' was over. Therefore, the MNF felt that the Constitution of India had been imposed against their wish.⁵

(c) Slow pace of development and neglect of the erstwhile Mizo District by the Government was exploited by the MNF in order to raise secessionist stance. During the

4. Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the MNF on 30th October 1965. Source: Lalthangliana.

5. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, MNF President, dated 26th July 1993, Ramhlun Veng, Aizawl.

period of Assam, no intensive works were done in the territory. Even upto 1966, Mizoram had no road at all except bridle part linking to various places of the administrative importance. In fact, Mizoram was not touched by administration. Even many years after independence, Mizoram being one of the border states continued to be inaccessible, isolated and under developed. Mizo District was in fact, undoubtedly the most neglected and undeveloped district under Assam State. Thus, neglect of the Assam Government caused disillusionment among the Mizos.

(d) The MNF also brought to the surface religious issue accusing the Central Government of discriminating against Christianity, and following a policy of exploitation to wipe it out. Central Government often conducted Public examination on Sundays and official dignitaries occasionally visited Mizoram on Sundays. Nehru himself visited Mizoram on 3rd April 1953, which was Sunday. Moreover, restrictions on free entry of missionaries into the district were interpreted as an attempt to curb and restrict Christian enterprise.⁶ In the words of Singh, "Laldenga emphatically convinced his tribal

6. Hluna, J.V. "Mizo Problem Leading to Insurgency", in Proceedings of North East India History Association, Sixth Session, 1985, p. 445.

brethren that the Hindu dominated India wanted to thrust upon them, their religion (Hinduism) and intended to Hinduise them by all possible means."⁷ The Mizo youth were inspired by the faith that they have to struggle for the survival of Christianity:

Like the Muslims have been fighting for their 'Jehad', the MNF had propagated that they are fighting a war of God. This thought kept the morale of the Mizo boys who had joined the MNF and its volunteer force high and made them willing to suffer even to the extent of death. They would be considered as heroes and martyrs by all the Mizos, they were told."⁸

The MNF indoctrinated that Christianity was not safe in India. Thus, the fear of possible religious deprivation enhanced frustration and became a potent factor leading to secessionist movement.

(e) In order to overshadow the Mizo Union (MU), B.P. Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam pampered the MNF. During the time of the District Council, the relationship between the Assam Congress party and the M.U. deteriorated. Chaliha was accused of being too lenient in dealing with the MNF though he knew that the MNF planned to resort to

7. Singh, S.N. "The Crisis in Mizoram: A Study in Geopolitical Perspective", Ph.D. Thesis submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1990, p. 340.

8. Verghese, C.G., Thanzawna, R.L. A History of the Mizos, Vol. II, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1997, p. 21.

violent activities. But for the strained relationship between the M.U. and B.P. Chaliha, the MNF leaders would have been arrested and the suppressive measures undertaken much earlier.⁹ Thus, Chaliha's patronage of the MNF in order to weaken the M.U. accelerated the MNF mobilization.

(f) On the eve of Indian independence, there was a proposal called 'Coupland Proposal', that the hills areas of Assam should remain as British colony, separated from India. The proposal indirectly encouraged the Mizos to demand a separate land based on self-determination.

(g) The personality of Laldenga, his influential speeches and capability to win over a large section of Mizo population was another factor responsible for the MNF movement. The party worked under the slogan of 'Mizo nationalism', 'Self-determination', 'Mizo Independence', and 'Greater Mizoram' etc. and a large section of Mizo people were convinced of a homeland demand.

(h) The unfriendly relationship between India and Pakistan created tension in the region which was geopolitically more vulnerable. In order to disturb law and order situation in the region and to weaken India, Pakistan

9. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, Former MNF 'Ambassador', dated 25th March 1993, Aizawl.

was ready and willing to give a helping hand once they started a movement. As such, arms and ammunitions and other facilities were supplied to the MNF in addition to guerrilla training.¹⁰ The topographic features of the region favoured the possibility of guerrilla training across the boundary. Moreover, Laldenga was also pressed by Pakistan to start action failing which their relationship could not continue any more.¹¹ The Chinese were also generous to the MNF and their assistance was funnelled through Pakistan.

(i) When the Assam Legislative Assembly passed Assam Language Bill declaring Assamese as the official language, the MNF carried a rigorous campaign against it. The Mizos were alienated further by this Act from the mainstream of India. G.G. Swell also attributed that the Mizo problem was mainly due to the wrong policy of introducing Assamese Language Act by the Assam Government.¹² Thus, it may be said that discontent and distrust encouraged MNF extremism into a rebellion.

10. Scholar's interview with R. Haleluia, Ex.MNF 'Colonel', dated 23rd March 1993, Place: Aizawl.

11. Personal Note Book of Lalthangliana, former MNF 'Ambassador' to China.

12. Proceedings of Lok Sabha Debates, 3rd March 1966, Vol. LI, Column 3720.

DECLARATION OF MIZO INDEPENDENCE

The increase in the rate of daily enrolment of the MNF volunteers made the preparation for independence more and more conspicuous to the Government. The arms training given to the MNF volunteers could no longer be kept secret. On 23rd September 1965, an Army Commander at Calcutta had written to B.P. Chaliha and said,

"I have been somewhat concerned about certain recent reports we received with regard to the MNF activities in Mizo Hills. It is evident from the latest reports that the MNF have been stepping up their activities towards organising certain bases from which they can operate into the interior."¹³

Keeping in view the political situation in Mizo Hills, the army authority suggested the Assam Government to maintain law and order in the Hills. However, the then Joint Secretary of the Assam Government said that, "There is little activity and the intentions of raising the MNF volunteers seem to be to keep the MNF movement going on. So far as arms are concerned at present, they are particularly nil, and pose no threat. But the development is under close watch."¹⁴

13. Verghese, C.G., Thanzawna, R.L. A History of the Mizos, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 42.

14. Ibid., p. 43.

During the time, a Planning Commission team led by Tarlok Singh came to Aizawl on 12th to 19th January 1966 to study the situation of the district with a promise of some economic development. The Governor of Assam, Vishnu Sahay also came to Aizawl in early 1966 trying to pacify the Mizo people with some promises. After that, the Pataskar Commission also visited the district in the second week of February 1966,¹⁵ to offer Scottish Pattern or Nehru Pattern of autonomy to the hills of Assam. But the MNF leaders turned down all such offers as they were hardly better than the prevailing District Council scheme.¹⁶ Meanwhile, 18th Battalion of Assam Rifles was sent to the district to help the 1st Assam Rifles.¹⁷

In the meantime, the MNF leader tried to internationalise the Mizo problem wooing foreign dignitaries. In his letter to President Sukarno of Indonesia, Laldenga painstakingly outlined recent history of the Mizo Hills and pointed out that:

15. Nunthara, C. "History of the Mizos' Struggle for Self-determination and self government", in The North East Voice, Vol. I, No. 2, July 1994, p. 38.

16. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, dated 2nd June 1993, Place: 'Zalen Cabin,' Aizawl.

17. Nunthara, C. "History of Mizo's Struggle for Self-determination and self government", op.cit., p. 38.

"... Nationalism and patriotism inspired by the political consciousness has now reached its maturity and the cry for political self determination and creation of a separate homeland are the only wish and aspiration of my people...."¹⁸

OPERATION JERICHO

The MNF had set 28th February 1966, 12.00 midnight as 'Zero Hour' for the strike and their code name was 'MIZO'.¹⁹ About 2000 Mizo volunteers took part in the revolt in February 1966 and their strength rose to 3000 in December 1966.²⁰ The name 'Operation Jericho'* was taken from a Christian nomenclature in the Holy Bible. Since the Mizos were Christians, they chose Christian nomenclature and adopted many other Christian concepts in their operations. The MNF's operation order also reads: "They will be helped by the earthly soldiers whereas our's will

18. Laldenga's Letter to Indonesian President, Mr. Sukarno, dated 21st January 1966. Source: Tlangchhuaka's personal note book. Tlangchhuaka, Ex. MNF President.

19. Scholar's interview with L.H. Lal̄mawia, Ex. MLA, dated 10th August 1993. Place: Lunglei, Mizoram.

20. Scholar's interview with Ex. MNF General Secretary, S. Lianzuala, op.cit.

* 'Jericho' was a Philistian fortress on the bank of river Jordan in Palestine. The Jews, on their way to Holy Land (Palestine) after their exodus from Egypt, crossed river Jordan and they had to defeat the Jericho in order to occupy the Promised Land. According to God's command, the Jews took over the Jericho fortress dramatically. As such, the MNF believed that they will be also helped by God because they were Christians. Please see Old Testament of the Holy Bible, Joshua, Chapter 6.

be helped by the soldiers of the living God."²¹

Prior to the outbreak of violence in 1966, one battalion of Assam Rifles and few detachments of B.S.F. and unarmed Police were considered adequate for the whole Mizo district. The 1st Assam Rifles Battalion and Police Check Posts as in February 1966 were as follows: A battalion headquarters and the Company at Aizawl, wing headquarters and two platoons at Lunglei and Demagri, one platoon each at Champhai, Tualbung, Tuisen, Chawngtlai, Lungpho, Vaphai, Hnahlan, Vanghmun, Sangau, Lawngtlai, Tuipang, Saiha, Vaseitlang and Tuipuibari. One Police Check Post each at Vairengte, Chawngte, Chhimluang, Kolasib, Kawnpui, Seling and Serchhip.²² As there was no good road communication, supplies to all Assam Rifles posts in the interior were made by air. Wireless was the only inter-communication which was extensively used.

On the 28th February 1966, the bulk of the Mizo people were not aware of exactly what was going to happen that night. But many could feel that something was in the air. Armed MNF volunteers had virtually taken position

21. Nibedon, Nirmal. The Ethnic Explosion, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, p. 39. (The MNF quoted from the Holy Bible: 11 Chronicles, Chapter 38:8).

22. Scholar's interview with R.L. Thanga Chawngthu, Inspector of Police, dated 21st January 1993, Place: Aizawl.

around their villages by noon and within one night, using torch light and visual signal, messages were sent throughout the whole district. The MNF President Laldenga was informed that the final preparation for 'Operation Jericho' was complete and they only awaited his order.

Only five hours before the 'zero hour', a bomb accidentally exploded in Aizawl. A volunteer named Rokima, younger brother of the MNF Vice President, Lalnunmawia died on the spot and it wounded two others. The incident created alarm and spoiled the operation plan at Aizawl because those killed and wounded were specially trained for the assault and no one could take their place.²³ When the 'zero hour' came, other volunteers who turned up did not know how to use light machine gun, which was their mainstay. For this reason, the plan to take over the 1st Assam Rifles camp at Aizawl failed.²⁴ But armed police camp and the main Aizawl treasury were captured as planned. The MNF cut off telephone lines which disrupted all communication with the outside.

The 'Operation Jericho' was carried out as planned

23. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, Ex.MNF' Army Chief', dated 25th July 1993, Place: Aizawl.

24. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, op.cit.

simultaneously at Aizawl, Kolasib, Champhai, Serchhip, Lunglei and many other places capturing Indian army posts, security posts, police stations and 5th B.S.F. Camp etc. The MNF also captured the Sub-Divisional Office (Civil) at Lunglei town and looted around eighteen lakhs and hoisted their flag.²⁵ Within a few moments after the 'zero hour', the MNF declared 'Mizoram Independence'. The declaration appeared to be similar in style and content to that of the American Declaration of Independence. It was signed by 61 MNF leaders. The declaration reads:

"In the course of human history, it became invariably necessary for mankind to assume their social, economic and political status to which the Law of Nature and Nature's God entitles them. We hold this truth to be self evident that all men are created equal and that they are endowed with inalienable fundamental human rights and dignity of human person; and to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed and whenever any form of government becomes destructive of this end, it is the right of the people to alter, change, modify and abolish it and institute a new government laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such forms as to them shall see most likely to effect their rights and dignity. The Mizo, created and moulded into a nation and nurtured as such by

25. Scholar's interview with R. Haleluia, Ex.MNF 'Colonel', Luangmual, Aizawl, op.cit.

Nature's God, have been intolerably dominated by the people of India in contravention to the laws of nature...."26

The 'Operation Jericho' was an important operation as the MNF took over most of the settlements in the district and battered Aizawl. At Vairengte, the first Mizo village on Silchar-Aizawl road, all non-Mizo residings were asked to leave Mizo Hills immediately. The volunteers blew up tow culverts between Vairengte and Lailapur, the first village on Cachar side in the plain, on the Aizawl-Silchar road, which completely disrupted road communication. The MNF had, in fact, virtually controlled the whole district for a few days till the Indian army reinforcement arrived.

The MNF also attacked and surrounded the Assam Rifles Battalion Headquarters but were unable to take over the camp. It was only on 4th March 1966, when reinforcement of Air Force arrived, the MNF started retreating. Meanwhile, Laldenga and his 'Cabinet' shifted towards South Hlimen village, around three miles south of Aizawl town. The MNF Vice President Lalnunmawia was in-charge of the operation in Aizawl.

26. "The MNF Declaration of Mizoram Independence". Source: Ex. MNF President Tlangchhuaka.

Soon after the MNF operation had started, T.S. Gill, the Deputy Commissioner of Mizo District took shelter in the Assam Rifles camp for protection. On 1st March 1966, he proclaimed curfew in the district. But since police and Assam Rifles were not in a position to enforce law and order, the proclamation of curfew was not effective till reinforcement arrived. Thus, for the first time in post Independent India, Mizo problem was a topic of discussion over the radio, newspaper, and even in the Indian Parliament where it was hardly mentioned before.

The All India Radio announced that the only road connecting Mizo district and Indian proper was cut off by the Mizo nationalists, and because of this, the Indian troops could not reach Mizo hills for a week as they had to travel on foot.²⁷ Following the incidents in Mizoram, the Union Minister for Home Affairs informed the Parliament thus:

"Serious incident that have occurred in the Mizo Hills district in the night of February 28th and 1st March, some tribals resorted to acts of lawlessnessthese tribals are led by extremist elements the Mizo National Front.... As a result of this, the army has been asked to deal with the situation in the

27. Samuelson, Ramchuani Sena. Love Mizoram, Goodwill Press, Imphal, 1985, pp. 77, 78.

district.... Government are determined to put down the disturbances with the utmost firmness and speed, and to restore peace and order...."²⁸

Consequent upon the incidents, J.S. Pathak, the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Aizawl, submitted a First Information Report to the Officer-in-Charge of Aizawl Police Station on 27th May 1966, requesting registration of a case against the MNF under 'Rules 41(5) read with rules 35(6)(a)(m)-(m)(o) and (P) of the Defence of India Rules, 1962, and Section 121 of the I.P.C.'²⁹

GOVERNMENT REACTION AND COUNTER ACTION

The Central Government of India came to know of the armed revolt in Mizo district through wireless message. The Home Minister was questioned by the journalists for being unaware of armed preparation for uprising in Mizo Hills.³⁰ In Parliament, the Home Minister promised the sore MPs that 'stern action' will be taken to crush the MNF rebels with all the force of the country.³¹ Simultaneously, the

28. Indian Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 55, Nos. 10-22, 28th February and 17th March 1966, Rajya Sabha, pp. 2127 (Document).

29. F.I.R. submitted by DSP J.S. Pathak to the O/C, Aizawl Police Station, dated 27th May 1966 (Source: Ex MNF 'Ambassador' Lalthangliana).

30. Nibedon, Nirmal. Mizoram: The Dagger Brigade, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, p. 78.

31. Ibid.

Government of India sent military forces to counter the MNF movement in Mizo district. The whole district was declared a 'Disturbed Area' under Assam Disturbed Area Act of 1955.³² Besides, the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Power Act of 1958 was also in force in the district.*

In another consecutive move, the Government of India declared the MNF as unlawful organisation and also banned it vide Notification No. S.O. of 6th March 1966.³³ Moreover, the Deputy Commissioner of Mizo District promulgated Rules 80 of the D.I.R.** and also issued order against production, import and storage of sale and purchase of torch lights, military uniform, typewriter and duplicator.³⁴ Besides, the District Magistrate, under Rules 31 of the D.I.R., 1962, directed all gun licences holders to deposit their guns and licences to the nearest police post or station, or to any army authority. One who failed

32. Prasad, R.N. Government and Politics in Mizoram, 1947-1986, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, 1987, p.184.

* The Act empowered the Army in the 'Disturbed Area' to arrest any person without warrant and to enter and search any premises without warrant.

33. Extra Ordinary Gazette, Part 2, Section 3(1), Dated 6th March 1966.

** The Rules prohibited possession, carrying and use and sale of arms and ammunition in the district.

34. Deputy Commissioner, Mizo District No. ASID/1/67/1, Dated Aizawl, 9th June 1967.

to comply was liable to be punished with imprisonment for a term of five years or fined or both.

Indian Air Force was used, perhaps, for the first time within the country, to bomb the rebel formation around Aizawl town on 5th March 1966. Indian army personnel were air dropped at various places and more troops arrived in helicopter. The advancing column which came on foot from Silchar reached Aizawl in the second week of March 1966. Several localities of Aizawl were completely demolished, shops were ransacked and houses were burned down by the Indian army.³⁵ Aizawl came under the control of Indian army. The army column proceeding to Lunglei had threatened to get it bombed because Lunglei town was under the complete control of the MNF. But the church leaders pleaded with the MNF to leave the town just for the sake of innocent civilians fearing loss of life and property in the eventual bombing. Due to this, the MNF retreated from Lunglei and when the Indian army entered the town on 13th March, there was no resistance from the MNF.³⁶ The "Mizoram Sawrkar" of the MNF issued a 'Quit Mizoram Notice' to all

35. Swell, G.G. & Roy, Nichols. "Suppression of Mizos in India", A Report submitted to the Government of India. Source: Lalthangliana.

36. Scholar's interview with L.H. Lalmawia, Ex. MLA, op.cit.

non-Mizos residing on 17th August 1967. The 'Notice' stated that "all non-Mizos, who are not working in our administration residing in town area and Indian Government servants and Hindus must leave Mizoram by 1st September 1967."³⁷

Gradually, Indian security forces consolidated their position in the district and pushed the rebels into the jungle. Since then, they adopted hit and run tactics and other means of guerrilla warfare like ambush etc. The Government declared the area within ten miles of both sides of Silchar-Aizawl-Lunglei roads as protected area.³⁸

Identity cards were introduced for the localities throughout the district. Anybody who failed to produce identity card on demand to the security forces was arrested. The imposition of endless curfew was perhaps, the most pervasive order of counter insurgency measure adopted by the Indian security forces. At the initial stage, curfew order was issued under D.I.R., 1962. But later, the order was regularly passed under the Code of Criminal Procedure,³⁹ so that no person could remain out of doors

37. "Quit Mizoram Notice" issued by the "Mizoram Sawrkar", dated 17th August 1967, Camp: Mobile.

38. Government of Assam Notification No. PLB 70/67/5, dated 3rd May 1967. Source: Lalthangliana.

39. Ray, Animesh. Mizoram: Dynamics of Change, Pearl Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, p. 167.

during the period between 6.00 p.m. to 4.00 a.m.

The security forces also used to search and check houses frequently while on duty, sometimes even at midnight, looking for the MNF hiding or illegal properties. It was in fact, the most critical hardship that the Mizo civilians experienced during the period. In the meantime, the Government of India announced that any rebel surrendering with serviceable weapon to the Police or Indian army will be pardoned.⁴⁰ It was also announced to offer cash award to the rebels surrendering arms at the following rates:

(1) Light Machine Gun (LMG)	- Rs. 4,000/-
(2) 2 Mortar/Rocket Lancher	- Rs. 600/-
(3) S.L.R.	- Rs. 500/-
(4) 303 Rifles/Sten Gun	- Rs. 300/-
(5) Revolver/Pistol	- Rs. 250/-

As a result, several Mizo volunteers surrendered to the Indian security forces and obtained rehabilitation from the Government. On 21st August 1967, two armed MNF and another 539 unarmed volunteers surrendered.⁴¹

40. Assam Government Memo No. PBL 444/66, dated 24th August, 1968.

41. Verghese, C.G., Thanzawna, R.L. A History of the Mizos, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 90.

The Indian security forces also faced several problems in their counter operations. "Intelligence network is the main source of information on guerrillas and information had to come from the population, but the population will not talk unless it feels safe, and it does not feel safe until the insurgent's power has been broken."⁴² This exactly happened in Mizoram. The indigenous people felt that they were not safe to talk and protest against the undergrounds' retaliation. As such, the rebels never spared those whom they thought were informers, traitors and collaborationists. Therefore, the Indian army could not easily obtain proper information about the MNF. Moreover, the security forces could not easily distinguish between pro-MNF and anti-MNF among the civilians. They imposed severe punishment and tortured civilians merely on suspicion. As a result, the Mizo civilians turned against the Indian army and were compelled to look contemptuously towards the security forces. The Government also adopted a scheme known as 'Operation Security' involving grouping of villages.

Grouping or "Sawikhawm"

The declared objective behind the 'Operation Security' was to provide security to the villagers as well

42. Galula, David. Counter Insurgency Warfare, Sagar Publication, New Delhi, 1971, p. 72.

as initiate development in the villages. But the real idea behind the 'Operation Security' was to isolate and cripple the MNF undergrounds physically and politically from the bulk of the localities. There were four categories of grouping of villages, "Sawikhawm" in Mizoram, which was done on compulsory and voluntary basis, such as (i) Progressive and Protected Villages (PPV), (ii) New Group Centre (NGC), (iii) Voluntary Group Centre (VGC), (iv) Extended Loop Area (ELA). Wherever there was voluntary grouping, compensation was not given. But in the case of compulsory, compensation was paid for properties destroyed.

(i) Progressive and Protected Villages: It was the first stage of grouping undertaken on 4th January 1967, under the order of Central Government Liaison Officer for Mizo Hills District in accordance with D.I.R., 1962⁴³ on the main road of Silchar-Aizawl-Lunglei. More than 50,000 people from 106 villages were grouped in 18 centres. Immediately after the old villages were vacated, all houses therein were destroyed. At first, PPV was under the control of the army but since February 1967, a civil officer took over the administration. The PPV grouping scheme was completed within three months.

43. Government Order No. CLD 1/1-67/1-80, Dated Silchar, 27th February 1967, Under Rules 57 of D.I.R., 1962. Source: J.V. Hluna.

(ii) New Grouping Centre: The NGC grouping was done in 1969 according to the order of District Magistrate. 40 NGCs were established which effected approximately 65,000 people from 185 villages.

(iii) Voluntary Group Centre: The total numbers of 110 villages were grouped into 26 VGCs according to the District Magistrate order in 1969-1970. However, in most of the cases, it was rather compulsory than voluntary.⁴⁴

(iv) Extended Loop Area: Under this category, about 40,000 people from 63 villages were grouped into 17 ELAs centres.

While the security forces were busy with their 'Operation Security', the MNF strategy was to foil the groupings. Thus, in order to intercept governmental operation, the undergrounds adapted hit and run ambush to the security forces engaged in the 'operation security'. Thus, 'ambush', 'curfew', 'identity card' and 'grouping' were the words that became quite common in the vocabulary of the rural folk.

After grouping was completed, the Government of

44. Scholar's interview with Raltawna Sailo, Ex. Mizo Chief, dated 27th January 1993, Luangmual, Aizawl.

India took several security measures to protect the villagers against the MNF hostilities. All houses were numbered. A census sheet for every family was prepared and family photos were also taken for identification. To check the free movement of the undergrounds, movement permit and identity card for all adult male members were issued by the civil authority. Besides, villagers were not allowed to go out of their village without obtaining prior permission from the authority concerned. Moreover, no one was allowed to take his mid day meal "Chawfun", while working or carry food outside village. It should be noted that in Mizo society, it was a customary practice to stay outside in the hut of their jhum land which they called "thlam". But the Government prohibited the Mizos to stay outside their village overnight and also ordered to demolish or burn down all their huts (thlam) in the jhum which, according to the Government, could shelter the MNF undergrounds.

Many a time, the Indian security forces grossly abused the special power given to them. In many cases, they wrongfully detained innocent people for a long time and even tortured them without good reasons. If such a person reported to the higher authority against brutality of the security forces, the latter would arrest him, accused him

as a pro-MNF, and threaten him with dire consequences.⁴⁵

It must be understood that the problem of Mizoram was not a military problem, but a political problem. In a political problem strong-arms method never brought any solution. It only engendered bitterness and hatred against the security forces⁴⁶ and the same was in the case of Mizo problem.

Each P.P.V. was placed under the charge of Administrative Officer (AO). The main duty and function of A.O. was to represent the Deputy Commissioner to the people and keep in touch with the security forces so that no undue harassment was done to the people. The A.O. were also responsible for the proper functioning of various governmental departments in their areas. Grouping, therefore, was a major event in the Mizo Hills, which affected more than 80% (or 236,162 in numbers) of the total population of the whole district.⁴⁷ Due to the MNF

45. Scholar's interview with R. L. Thanga Chawngthu, Inspector of Police, Mizoram, Aizawl, dated 21st January 1993, Police Station, Aizawl.

* During the disturbance, he was transferred from place to place and in the process, he became familiar with the development.

46. Sailo, Brig. T. AVSM (Retd). Speeches and Writings, Director, IPRT, Government of Mizoram, 1981, p. 4.

47. Nunthara, C. The North-East Voice, op.cit., p. 39.

movement, a total number of 59,457 houses were burnt down, out of which, 41,921 were verified according to P.U.C.L. (People Union for Civil Liberty) report in Mizoram. However, the Rehabilitation Minister of Mizoram Government informed the Assembly that 2022 houses were burnt,⁴⁸ and it was reported that total number of 948 persons were killed according to information collected by the Mizoram Youth Congress (I).

The cost of militancy drawn upto 1972 was thus:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a) Free Ration supply to P.P.V. | - Rs. 71,00,000/- |
| b) Rehabilitation grant | - Rs. 64,00,000/- |
| c) Compensation to the
villages shifted | - Rs. 1,00,000/- |
| d) Maintenance grant to the
families of Security
prisoners | - Rs. 4,00,000/- |
| e) Fest Relief Grant | - Rs. 5,90,000/- |
| f) Cost of properties destroyed | - Rs. 93,93,476/- ⁴⁹ |

After the outbreak of violence in Mizoram, the Government of India offered general amnesty to the MNF undergrounds on 1st January 1967 for a period of three

48. Huapzo Weekly Magazine (in Mizo), Vol. I, No. 29, Editorial.

49. Rao, V.V., Hazarika, Niru, Thansanga, H. A Century of Government and Politics, op.cit., p. 271.

months. However, the Government of India liberalised terms of amnesty with effect from 20th August 1970 till 15th December 1971, which was later extended upto 31st August 1972.⁵⁰ Consequently, 350 MNF volunteers and their families surrendered on the Christmas Day of 1971. After the en-mass surrender, more undergrounds started surrendering and the total number of the surrenderees upto August 1972 was more than 900.⁵¹

Due to counter-operations, the MNF undergrounds found it difficult to stay inside the district. As a result, they shifted their headquarters to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) from the last part of September 1968.⁵² In East Pakistan, the underground recruited new volunteers who prepared for guerrilla warfare directed from the MNF headquarters in Chittagong Hills Tracts. Ambush, killings, intimidation, and capturing of the rebels were almost of daily occurrence. Between July to September 1967 alone, Prasad stated that a number of 57 undergrounds were killed

50. Verghese, C.G., Thanzawna, R.L. A History of the Mizos, Vol. II, op.cit., p. 144.

51. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, Ex. MNF President, dated 23rd March 1993, Luangmual, Aizawl.

52. Vanhela, MLA Palite Banna Thuruk (in Mizo), Zion Printing Press, Aizawl, p. 41.

and 405 captured while 177 surrendered to the Indian security force.⁵³ During January 1974 to September 1975, there were 124 incidents in different places where 410 volunteers were arrested and 209 surrendered with 15 LMGs.⁵⁴

The MNF also delcared Chin Hills as a part and parcel of their territory, and wanted to liberate the Mizo settlers against the 'foreign oppressors'. Therefore, the MNF made an operation in Chin Hills in May 1968, at several places, where they lost 55 volunteers.⁵⁵

After the MNF shifted their headquarters to East Pakistan, they adopted new strategies - intimidating and even killing of civilians.. The MNF, therefore, issued 'Quit Notice Order' again to the non-Mizo residents in the district and used to strikes to give effect their 'Quit Notice Order'. According to Zoramthanga, their new strategies had two objectives: (a) To paralyse administration through terrorism and to show their capacity to strike back. (b) To force the Government of India to

53. Prasad, R.N. Government and Politics in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 211.

54. Ray, Animesh. Mizoram: The Dynamics of Change, op.cit., p. 233.

55. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, op.cit.

come to their terms.⁵⁶ Justifying the killing of innocent people Laldenga stated:

"It is painful, but this is war. Killing of security forces does not create much impact in Parliament of India. Soldiers are to die. Even if hundred soldiers get killed, replacement is despatched. But when we kill civilians, it can create a storm in Parliament."⁵⁷

The MNF not only concentrated their activities on violent and guerrilla warfare, but also intended to reform Mizo society based on what was described as 'Christian Values'. Therefore, sale of liquor (or 'Zu') was strictly prohibited. Any person who was found drunken was severely reprimanded. In order to preserve and protect Mizo society against assimilation, the MNF also forbade intermarriage between Mizos and non-Mizos, especially with the plain people whom they called 'vai'. They also disapproved purchase of goods and other commodities from non-Mizo traders within the district so long as possible.⁵⁸

In spite of Government's tremendous efforts to curb the MNF and their underground activities using security forces, it was a fact that the undergrounds played an

56. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

57. Mizoram Towards Peace, Directorate of Information, Public Relations & Tourism, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, 1980, p. 39.

58. Tlangchhuaka. Mizoram Politics (in Mizo), A booklet issued by the MNF Headquarters (year and date not mentioned).

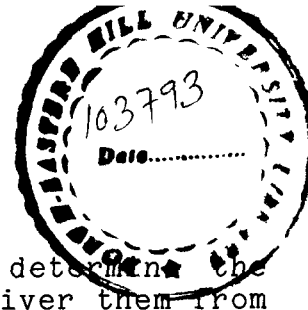
influential role in the society. In the Mizo district, thus, there was a parallel administration - one run by the Government of India and the other - run by the undergrounds. Therefore, deployment of the Indian army in the district to counter the MNF sometimes deteriorated the situation as it was difficult for the army to act efficiently in accordance with civil and political norms.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

The MNF movement in Mizoram could not have sustained itself on its own against the might of the Indian army for long period without support of foreign countries. In order to keep their claim of independence alive, the MNF were aware of the urgent need to establish relations with foreign countries.⁵⁹ In order to obtain support and assistance from other countries, the main concern of the MNF was thus, to internationalise the Mizo cause and establish clandestine relationship with foreign countries. Laldenga stated thus,

"....India ruled over us by establishing her puppet regime for a period almost two decades for the implementation of her expansionist programme.... I, therefore, appeal to the

59. Hluna, J.V. "Mizo National Front: The Role of Foreign Power in their Freedom Struggle", in Proceedings of North-East India History Association, 12th Session, Jagiroad, 1991, Kamala Art Press, Shillong, p. 437.



candid world to champion and determine the just cause of my people and deliver them from this Indian rule.... Also I earnestly appeal to your countrymen to extend their helping hand towards the freedom fighters of Mizoram, and to give support in politics and in material for the realisation of their just demand...."⁶⁰

(a) Relationship with Pakistan

Having a full grasp of the strained political relations between India and Pakistan, Laldenga contacted a Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan at Shillong in early 1962, to discuss the possibility of help from Pakistan. In Shillong, Lalmawia, Ex. MLA (Assam) was somehow able to contact the official secretly and make a plan for Laldenga's visit to East Pakistan.⁶¹ As such, Laldenga, the MNF President, Lalnunmawia, the Vice President and Sainghaka, 'Defence Secretary' of the MNF went to East Pakistan in December 1963. They were received by Pakistan's top military functionaries. Their main objective was to obtain arms, money and safe sanctuary when needed.⁶² They were assured of military, economic and other essential facilities including a safe base once they started an armed rebellion. Pakistan was the first country which helped the

60. Laldenga's Letter to President Sukarno of Indonesia, op.cit.

61. Scholar's interview with L.H. Lalmawia, Ex. MLA, op.cit.

62. Ibid.

MNF in their struggle for Mizoram independence. However, she was able to provide with only small quantities of arms and ammunitions, economic assistance and shelter. But she could not offer political aid to champion their cause. The MNF, therefore, realised that Pakistan only tried to disintegrate Indian unity encouraging a rebellion in India.⁶³

However, a group of 21 volunteers led by R. Zamawia, the MNF 'Army Chief' went to East Pakistan to obtain arms and military training in December 1964. They were given guerrilla training, arms and other equipments. They returned to the district on 4th March 1965, with arms and ammunitions as much as they could carry.⁶⁴ Soon after this, Lalthangliana and J.H. Rothuama went to East Pakistan to request Pakistan Government a safe passage for the transportation of foreign aid to Mizo District through their government. This was verbally granted.⁶⁵ The second batch of the MNF volunteers, around 200 in numbers, led by Sapzova and Sapbawia went to East Pakistan in the last part

63. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

64. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, op.cit.

65. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, op.cit.

of 1965. They were also given arms and ammunitions which were handed over at the border near Tlabung.⁶⁶ Another batch of around 160 volunteers, led by Sepbawia and Tunkhawpum went again to East Pakistan in February 1966. This time, they were only given financial support.⁶⁷ However, a MNF 'Colonel' R. Haleluia said that he met a Pakistani army at Ruma Bazar in East Pakistan and collected the following weapons:

- (a) LMGs - 60 Nos
- (b) Bareta Guns - 6 Nos
- (c) Sten Guns - 6 Nos
- (d) Rocket Launchers - 3 Nos
- (e) Rocket - 15 Nos
- (f) Rifles 303 - 60 Nos along with huge ammunitions
- (g) Hand Grenades - 36 Nos.⁶⁸

In the latter part of 1966, Laldenga left for Dacca and stayed there with his family whereas the bulk of the volunteers camped at Sazek range in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

66. Hluna, J.V. "Mizo National Front: The Role of Foreign Power in their Freedom Struggle", op.cit.

67. Ibid.

68. Scholar's interview with Ex.MNF 'Colonel' R. Haleluia, op.cit.

Laldenga was given a warm welcome and kept in a fashionable quarters and also provided a chowkidar, whose duty apart from his daily work, was to spy on him. For the sake of security, Laldenga and his family were shifted from place to place and a strict vigil was kept on their movement by the Pakistan intelligence. They were asked to conceal their identity either as Chakmas or Azad Kashmiris if questioned.⁶⁹

While in Dacca, Laldenga wrote a letter to the President of Pakistan, Md. Ayub Khan thanking the Pakistan Government for their sympathy and hospitality, and assistance rendered to the MNF. He also mentioned that he stood by Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and blamed the Indian leaders for creating border problems. He expressed his desire to discuss Mizo problem with him personally for the recognition of Mizoram independence.⁷⁰

The Chittagong Hill Tracts of East Pakistan remained the operational headquarters of the MNF till 1971, the fall of East Pakistan. Having realised that Pakistan was not

69. Kiangte, Mary Zirhmingthangi. International Dimension of the Mizo Insurgency, M. Phil Thesis submitted to JNU, 1991, New Delhi, p. 73.

70. Laldenga's Letter to Pakistan President, Md. Ayub Khan, dated 27th September 1966. Source: Ex. MNF President, Tlangchhuaka.

trying to give political support to the extent needed, the MNF sought wider foreign support.

(b) Relation with China

It was in 1968 that Lalthangliana, 'Ambassador' of the MNF contacted Chinese Embassy in Dacca and arranged for Laldenga's meeting with the Chinese Consul.⁷¹ Being of a Mongoloid stock, the MNF felt a sense of brotherhood with China. Moreover, the Chinese aggression of 1962 also encouraged the MNF to approach China for help and support. Therefore, Laldenga went to China and met several Chinese leaders in June 1968. Chinese leaders informed him that they were ready to offer armed support through Pakistan Government.⁷²

Consequent upon the clandestine relation between China and the MNF, the first contingent of about 1000 MNF volunteers, led by 'Brig. General' R. Sangkawia and F. Sappawia headed for China by land rout in June 1968. But they could not reach China because they failed to cross the swollen river of Chindwin, and came back after a long journey of about three months braving bad weather in the midst of Burmese security forces.⁷³

71. Personal note book (Dairy) of Lalthangliana, op.cit.

72. Ibid.

73. Vanhela. MLA Palite Banna Thuruk (in Mizo), op.cit., p. 24.

When Laldenga came back from China, he decided to send Lalthangliana as an 'Ambassador' to China. Subsequently, with the help of Pakistan Government, on August 9th, 1968, he landed at Canton Airport and reached Peking. He was received at Peking by the Director of South East Asian Relation. He stayed there for six months.⁷⁴ Lalthangliana's visit to China had facilitated the MNF volunteers to obtain arms support. Thereafter the MNF was able to send volunteers to China batch after batch to fetch arms and ammunitions. But the Chinese authorities made it clear that they could not give political support. They also made it clear that they would not send Chinese army to help the MNF. According to Tlangchhuaka,

"Though the Chinese wanted to send their army to give a helping hand, yet they thought that it would not be the best for the Mizos in future. First of all, they were communists whereas the Mizos were Christians, who favoured democracy. Again if the Chinese army liberated Mizoram against Indian oppression, there would have been bloodshed. The Chinese may not have easily wanted to leave the place where their blood had been shed. For this reason, the Chinese did not send their army."⁷⁵

After Langthangliana returned from China, the MNF President, Laldenga, accompanied by his 'Foreign Minister'

74. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, op.cit.

75. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, MNF Ex. Vice President, op.cit.

Lalhmingshanga and his 'Secretary', Zoramthanga went to Peking in September 1970. They met the Chinese Premier, Chau-En-Lai, who advised Laldenga to win the support of all sections of Mizo people, which would be the main source of their strength, while arms and ammunitions would play the secondary role.⁷⁶

The Chinese leaders also reiterated an assurance to provide armed assistance to the Mizo freedom fighters. But the Chinese authority made it clear that there was no question of immediate recognition of Mizoram as an independent state.⁷⁷ By mid 1971, the Chinese supplied clothings and other equipments, for 1000 men through Pakistan Government. The supply of arms and ammunitions were, however, reportedly rejected by the Pakistan Government. The Chinese also gave Yen 500,000/- to the MNF.⁷⁸ After sometime the MNF once again went to China to obtain arms and ammunitions. On 27th November 1972, about 50 volunteers, under the leadership of Demkhosiak, 'Adviser to the Government of Mizoram', went to China to take arms. On 30th December 1972, they met Wangsikhai, a Commander of

76. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

77. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

78. Hluna, J.V. Mizo National Front: The Role of Foreign Powers in Their Freedom Struggle, op.cit., p. 442.

Pauseng Unit Training Centre. They were given serviceable clothes and some money. The followings were some of the requirements made to the Chinese authorities at Phaoshan:

- (i) to make better arrangement for the MNF to go to China for armed training,
- (ii) better military, political and arms aid for the MNF,
- (iii) immediate financial aid from China,
- (iv) to recognise 'Mizoram Sawrkar' as an independent state,
- (v) to have high level meeting between the MNF and the Chinese authorities.⁷⁹

'Colonel' Demkhawsiak and his team returned with 3 wireless sets (No. 1078) and 30 boxes of medicines along with several arms equipments.⁸⁰ Later, about 150 MNF led by 'Colonel' Biakvela went to China and brought several armaments.⁸¹

Thus, most of the assistance the MNF received from China was funnelled through Pakistan Government, and the financial assistance was also given to them in pound

79. Unpublished note book of Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

80. Ibid.

81. Scholar's interview with R. Haleluia, op.cit.

sterling through Pakistan. Due to the difficulties of direct access to China from Mizo Hills, there were several problems for maintaining a cordial relations between the two. As already stated the Chinese made it clear that there was no question of recognition of Mizoram as an independent state. The relationship with Communist China was far from cordial.

Therefore, circumstances compelled the MNF once again to seek wider support, particularly in the U.S.A. But the Chinese Government did not welcome this. Therefore, the Chinese emphatically expressed their distrust of Laldenga for he was also seeking a negotiation with the Government of India.⁸² The Chinese aid could not continue due to the fall of East Pakistan.

(c) Relation with the U.S.A.

The first contact with the U.S.A. took place as early as in 1968. Prior to his departure for China in July 1968, Lalthangliana contacted the U.S. Consul at Dacca. But before they proceeded further, the U.S. Consul was transferred. Soon after that Lalthangliana succeeded in contacting another C.I.A. agent, who informed Lalthangliana

82. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, op.cit.

that the Mizo problems was 101st in the White House list of foreign problems.⁸³ The C.I.A. agent (name unknown) suggested that some of the MNF personnel to go to the USA to approach some influential persons, who might be able to help them. The bulk of the MNF undergrounds were enthusiastic and eager to establish a clandestine relation with USA even if it meant losing support from Communist China. The C.I.A. agent also informed the MNF to contact Fullbright, then Chairman of Foreign Policy Making Committee of the USA, who he thought would be of great help for their movement as well as to make an acquaintance with the other U.S. Officials in Washington.

But the dream of making a clandestine relation with U.S.A. was in vain because the MNF President, Laldenga was not appreciated much in establishing a relationship and he was reluctant to send a representative unless he himself could go there first. Hluna commented thus: "Laldenga refused to send the MNF official to the USA unless he, as a leader of the MNF could go first. This was basically according to Lalthangliana a fear that he (Laldenga) would be outwitted in the MNF."⁸⁴ Thus, the MNF endeavour to

83. Ibid.

84. Hluna, J.V. Mizo National Front: The Role of Foreign Powers in Their Freedom Struggle, op.cit., p. 443.

establish a relation with the U.S.A. could not proceed beyond the preliminary stage.

(d) Relation with Burma (Myanmar)

Although the Mizo District had a common boundary with Burma, the MNF could not maintain any working relationship with them. As already stated, the "Chin Hills Operation" led by the MNF Vice President, Lalnunmawia irritated Burmese authority.⁸⁵ The hostility of Burmese Government towards the MNF crippled their movement in obtaining for further help and assistance from China.

Thus, with a view to establishing a clandestine and friendly relationship with the Burmese authority, the MNF send T.H. Rothuama and Saikunga, 'Senators' of the MNF and they met several Burmese leaders. But their mission did not bring the MNF any tangible outcome. On their way back home, they were arrested by the Burmese security, in a bid to claim exchange for Hrangnawla, a leader of Chin Hills freedom fighter, who was captured by the Indian security forces.⁸⁶

85. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei (in Mizo), Zoram Printing Press, Aizawl, 1972, p. 232.

86. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, op.cit.

IMPACT OF BANGLADESH INDEPENDENT ON THE MNF MOVEMENT

The events in East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh greatly crippled the MNF movement as they had to shift their headquarters into the Arakan. It was obvious that the newly formed Bangladesh Government would like to show their gratitude to the Indian Government for assistance in their freedom struggle, and the only means to show this, was not to host any extremist group. While the MNF were staying in East Pakistan, they already contacted with various revolutionary groups in the region.

It was on 2nd January 1971, that the MNF 'Foreign Minister' Lalhmingthanga and 'Defence Minister' R. Zamawia met the Burmese Communist Party (B.C.P.) leaders in the Arakan. Later, the MNF 'Lt. Colonel' Demkhawsiak went to the B.C.P. headquarters in the Arakan and presented a small quantity of arms and ammunitions in order to please them for their future friendship.⁸⁷ On 13th January 1971, some MNF leaders met Arakan National Unit Front (comprising of four different insurgent groups) under the leadership of Kra Hla Aung. Both sides agreed to help each other and the MNF presented them around 200 rounds of ammunitions as a token of friendship.⁸⁸

87. Ibid.

88. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

Immediately after the fall of Dacca, on the night of 16th December 1971, the MNF evacuated their main base in East Pakistan and headed towards the Arakan through the Tatkawng river. On their way to the Arakan, there were several exchanges of fire between the MNF and Mukti Bahini (Bangladesh Revolutionary Army). Several people were wounded and a few died on the spot.⁸⁹

The MNF leadership, having no alternative, decided to send home (to surrender) the sick and weak persons. Therefore, a number of 356 MNF, including women and children surrendered to the Indian army camp on the Christmas Day of 1971. They were led by Lalnunmawia, the MNF Vice-President and R. Zamawia, the Defence Minister. Before they left they were asked to seek a possible way for negotiation with India.⁹⁰

In the Arakan, the MNF were hosted by the B.C.P. The bulk of the MNF stayed in the Arakan from 1972 till the signing of Peace Accord in 1986. After reaching the Arakan, Laldenga and his family with his four aids, namely Zoramthanga, the, 'Secretary', 'Captain' Tawnluaia and

89. Vanhela. MLA Palite Banna-Thuruk, op.cit., p. 104.

90. Ibid.

'Captain' Lalsangliana, and Private Dotawna left for Karachi by KLM flight taking with him Taka* 350,000.⁹¹

Even though Laldenga was given shelter in Karachi, the Pakistan Government could no longer pay much attention to the MNF due to their own internal political crisis. Laldenga also failed to convince any foreign country to come to their help. Besides, they could not easily contact and communicate with the MNF headquarters in the Arakan. There upon, Laldenga found no better solution to solve the Mizo problem except through a negotiation under the framework of Indian Constitution.

IMPACT OF THE MNF MOVEMENT

Before the outbreak of violence, the Mizos enjoyed peace and harmony in the society and helped each other in distress and in needs. Theft and robbery were very rare and uncommon even though their doors were never locked. During 1920 to 1956, there was only one murder case at Aizawl.⁹² There was never an occasion to restore law and order in the villages. Sareen remarks that "Mizoram was an exceptionally crime free district, and there was not even a single

* Taka is Bangladesh currency.

91. Hluna, J.V. Mizo National Front: The Role of Foreign Powers in their Freedom Struggle, op.cit., p. 445.

92. Keivom, L. Zoram Khawvel - 3 (in Mizo), Lenchhawng Press, Aizawl., 1994, p. 63.

jail...."⁹³ It was reported that during 1986-87, there was 45 murder cases, 62 rape cases, 28 robbery, 133 burglary, 347 theft and total IPC crimes 1157 in Mizoram.⁹⁴ Thus, two decades of rebellion affected the social and political life of the Mizos adversely. The counter activities of the Indian security forces have affected the normal life and administrative system.

(a) Social

After the Indian army took over of the control of the district, the situation deteriorated from bad to worst because the bulk of the Mizos had to live under the pressure of both the Indian army and the MNF undergrounds. Some villagers helped the MNF volunteers by providing their daily needs such as food, medicine etc. But when the villagers helped the volunteers, the Indian army only tortured them. Since it was quite difficult to differentiate between the pro-MNF and anti-MNF, the Indian army meted out the same treatment to the civilians. Thus, life in the hills was completely miserable.

The 'Operation Security' adopted by Indian security

93. Sareen, H.K. Insurgency in North-East India, Sterling Publication, New Delhi, 1980, p. 62.

94. S.P. (Crime) Department, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl. Source: R.L. Thanga Chawngthu, Inspector of Police, Aizawl, op.cit.

forces was brutal, obnoxious, and ruthless. Swell recorded that, "In Kolasib, the army rounded up all menfolk of the villagers. They were asked to lie down on the ground, and were kicked, beaten, tramped upon and confined for the night, broke into houses and raped women."⁹⁵ Likewise, several people were sent to jail without proper reason. In Maite village, all the villagers were rounded up and were asked to keep all their paddy and other properties inside their church building. After that, the church was burnt down to ashes, and the villagers had to find their survival elsewhere with an empty hand. The Indian army also despised Christianity. They used to call public meetings inside the church buildings, torture people and even raped women in the church.⁹⁶ Many a time, they disrupted church meetings and congregations in a most calculated manner.

According to Maj. Khaizading of the Salvation Army, the total number of church buildings burnt down and destroyed were 373 due to the counter-insurgency of the Indian security forces.⁹⁷ It was also reported that a total number of 29242 family houses were damaged and 155

95. Swell, G.G., Roy, Nichols. Suppression of Mizos in India, op.cit., p. 5.

96. Hluna, John V. "Peace in Mizoram", in Proceedings of the North East India History Association, 8th Session, Kohima, 1987, p. 497.

97. Scholar's interview with Maj. Khaizading, S.A., Secretary, Church Leader Social Action Committee, Aizawl, dated 22nd October 1996.

businessmen suffered for which the central government paid Rs.18,36,84,950/- as compensation, Rs. 6,000/- each to each family.⁹⁸ According to Lianzuala, the Indian army burnt down 21 villages and raped 54 women.⁹⁹

Therefore, the Mizos could not but talk about the cruelty, atrocities and ill-treatment inflicted upon them by the security forces. Mizo Hills, once known as a place of peace and harmony, and a crime-free zone turned into the main garrison of brutal armed forces, which created a lot of confusion among the people. As a result, the bulk of the Mizos felt more alienated against Indian Government. To a villager, Indian soldiers represented India, who generated bitterness and hatred in the minds of the people.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the most undesirable impact in the society, was a feeling of alienation against the Indian Government, generated and accentuated by a psychological gap between the Mizos and the plains people.

As stated, before the rebellion, majority of the Mizos depended upon slash and burn system for their

98. No. 4/1/92-MZ. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 19th May 1995. Source: Secretariat Revenue, Govt. of Mizoram, Aizawl.

99. Lianzuala, S., Secretary, "Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Publicity, Government of Mizoram (Underground)", Pamphlet, June 1966, Source: S. Lianzuala.

100. Sailo, Brig. T., AVSM (Retd), Speeches and Writings, op.cit., p. 2.

livelihood. Due to less pressure of population and consequent high land man ratio, the traditional economy was a self-contained one. Any failure to go by strict sequence from cleaning to harvesting would certainly have caused production to deteriorate. That is why the rebellion of 1966 and the subsequent grouping of villages compelled the indigenous people to switch over to other occupation. The interior villagers had no other alternative left and there was limited employment opportunities. This made the living condition more miserable and ultimately, many of them had to migrate to the urban centres in search of wage employment.

The outcome of grouping was a nightmare to the people as it only brought untold sufferings and miseries to the general public due to the ruination of their traditional economy. The number of agriculture days was minimised by the frequent imposition of endless curfew. Besides, the security forces used to take a lot of time in regularly checking identity card which also reduced the working hour. The villagers also had to render manual work to the army. Whenever the Indian army moved, they used the villagers as unpaid porters. Such forced labour and hazardous works also affected their involvement in shifting cultivation.

Besides, as a result of grouping, village population

increased in the grouping centres. Therefore, they had to go much further beyond the area for their jhum land (which the security forces did not allow them to spend night time in the paddy field). The traditional economic system was thus, totally damaged and the villagers could hardly produce sufficient foodgrains for their living. Due to the security force's "Operation Accomplish", the bulk of the Mizos faced economic hardship and sufferings, and created a deep and unhealthy scar in the mind of the Mizo people. Another impact on the society was the increase of social crimes. The Indian army personnel allegedly not only raped Mizo maidens, but also did not spare married women and under aged. Those molested young girls lost their dignity and chastity. As a consequence, social evil like sexual immorality increased.¹⁰¹

Moreover, due to the insufficiency of foodstuff, people had to go to the army camp as daily labourer to earn some money. Sometimes, poverty compelled women to earn money from the army by "any possible means".¹⁰² The

101. Irish, R.F. "K.S. Leh Pawngsualte Tobul" (Root of Prostitution), in Hriatna Weekly News (Mizo), dated Aizawl, 3rd Nov. 1986, Vol. III, No. 18, p. 7.

102. Dokhuma, D. The Hand Capture (in Mizo), Rawihte Publication, Aizawl, 1991, p. 22.

security forces, taking advantages of the grave situation, bought the honour and chastity of women for a morsel of food if they happened to find them dying of hunger.¹⁰³

(b) Political

Before the rebellion, the Mizos were comparatively little known to the outside world. But since the MNF raised the banner of independence in 1966, the Mizo Hills hit the headlines of the world press. In order to win the support and sympathy of foreign nations, the MNF President popularised the Mizo cause by sending letters to foreign dignataries in China, Pakistan and Indonesia etc. The MNF advocacy of independence also contributed a great deal in developing a feeling of regionalism among the Mizos.

It may be noted that the volunteers gave their signature using their own blood to show that they really meant business.¹⁰⁴ In order to encourage the volunteers, Laldenga used to say that, "I may not be the best leader to take you back within Indian Constitution once I led you out of it."¹⁰⁵ Therefore, many volunteers sacrificed their valuable life for the 'cause' they dearly believed in.

103. Ibid.

104. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, Ex. MNF President, dated 25th July 1993, Aizawl.

105. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

However, since 1976, the MNF leadership accepted an offer of peace dialogue within the framework of Indian Constitution, which resulted in the signing of a Peace Accord and Laldenga came home accepting Mizoram as a part and parcel of India. As a result, there was distrust against the MNF leadership. Many people had not forgotten Laldenga's inspiring speeches, especially the relatives of the volunteers killed during the rebellion. They thus stated: "the Accord has not brought any special thing for the Mizos and a mere statehood is not worth the blood that had been shed. It could well be achieved long back without any bloodshed had there been no rebellion".¹⁰⁶ Therefore, they gave a nick-name for the MNF organisation as "the institution of fraud and called Laldenga as its "teacher".¹⁰⁷

Under the critical circumstances, the church, not being politically biased, was the only voice that could be heard as civil administration and law and order situation had completely collapsed. A peace committee and a citizens' committee were formed by the church leaders which acted as mediators between the Government and the underground, to

106. Ibid.

107. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, Ex. "Army Chief" of the MNF, op.cit.

promote a working relationship between the people and the security forces.¹⁰⁸ In spite of the church neutrality in the political process, the military often charged them with biasness for condemning only the security forces and not protesting against the MNF violence.¹⁰⁹

It should be noted that the MNF factor always played an important role in Mizoram politics. The emergence of People's Conference (P.C.) was considered to be a pro-MNF development at the initial stage. However, after holding the reign of power in the government, it turned its back towards the undergrounds. As a result, the P.C. and the undergrounds were virtually opposed to each other which resulted in several acts of bloodshed and the split of the party into P.C. 'A' and P.C.'B' in 1979. Likewise, the State Congress (I) who succeeded the P.C. came to power purely with the blessing of the MNF Chief.

The Mizo Democratic Front (MDF) came into being in 1976 under the leadership of Sanglianchhungi. The party's main intention was to bring about peace and tranquility in the territory. But the party could not make much headway

108. Hminga, Rev. C.L. The Life and Witness of Churches in Mizoram, GLS Press, Bombay, 1987, p. 237.

109. Ibid.

due to weakness of leadership.¹¹⁰ Therefore, in 1982, it merged with the Mizo Convention.

Another important political development in Mizoram was the emergence of P.C. 'B', the dissident group of P.C., which asserted that peace and tranquility was the main purpose of the party and accused that the P.C. led by Brig. T. Sailo had gone astray from their main objective of implementing peace and normalcy in the territory.¹¹¹ In 1979 mid-term poll, it was able to capture 4 seats in the Legislative Assembly and expressed its full support to the MNF demands in the peace talks, and played a remarkable role in hastening the peace negotiation. However, in order to make a better pressure in the on-going peace talk, it joined the Mizo Convention.

The Mizoram Janata Party (MJP) was also established in 1978 as a branch of Central Janata Party. Though the party was national in nature, all its programmes were based on regional demands and it promised to step down in favour of the MNF if the party was elected. It also joined Mizo Convention after Janata Ministry's collapse at the Centre.

110. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, Aizawl, op.cit.

111. Scholar's interview with F. Malsawma, MLA, Aizawl, dated 19th January 1995, Chaltlang, Aizawl.

Another important political impact of the MNF movement was the establishment of Mizo Peace Forum (MPF) by the leaders of various Mizo Students viz., Mizo Zirlai Pawl (M.Z.P.), Mizo Students Union (Shillong) and Mizo Post Graduate Students Union in the late 1982. The MPF played a very significant role during the peace talk, taking leading parts in the All Party Meetings, All Party Joint Action Committee etc., which were temporarily formed to hasten the peace dialogue.

Another political impact of the MNF movement was the major split of State Congress (I), due to its failure to implement its commitment to the people during the time of 1984 Assembly election. As a result, the President of the State Congress (I), the sitting M.P. Lalduhawma, along with Youth Wing leader Rochhunga Ralte also an MLA and several other party workers tendered resignation in protest against the delaying of the peace settlement by Lalthanhawla, the Congress (I) Chief Minister. Later, Lalduhawma formed Mizo National Union (MNU) in May 1986. But most of the members of the M.N.U. were of vacillating political ideas and ideological belief and could not appeal to the Mizo electorate. Therefore, the MNU ceases to exist when it merged with the P.C. and formed a new party called Mizo Democratic Party in the Post Accord.

CHAPTER IV

CHURCHES, STUDENTS AND THE M.N.F. MOVEMENT

This chapter highlights the role of church and students in Mizoram during the period of disturbance caused by the MNF movement. In Mizoram, apart from the church and students' organisations, there were several other non-political organisations such as Young Mizo Association (YMA), "Kristian Thalai Pawl" (KTP), (Young Christian Fellowship of the Presbyterian Church), "Thalai Kristian Pawl" (Young Christian Fellowship of the Baptist Church), "Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl" (MHIP) (Mizo Women Welfare Organisation) etc. Among the non-political organisations, only the students and the church leaders held a definite stand on the political situation and expressed their desire for peace and normalcy which was disrupted by the MNF movement in Mizoram. Therefore, an attempt will be made to explain why church and students played an important role in the Mizo society during the political negotiation period held between the MNF and the Government of India.

ROLE OF THE CHURCH

The word church is defined as "the community of those who are called to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to collaborate in His historic mission. It is also used to denote the individual Christian denomination,

as well as the building used for Christian worship."¹ In the early days of Christianity, church often meant 'the worship of God by a Christian group.'² Therefore, the word church refers to the world community of Christians, or any denomination or group professing the same Christian creed.

There are several church denominations and religious sects in Mizoram including the Presbyterian church, which is the biggest church denomination mostly found in the northern part of the state, and the Baptist church, the second largest denomination, found in the southern part of the state. Besides, there were also the Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Independent Church of India, Evangelical Free Church of India, and the Methodists. Moreover, there were also a number of local church denominations like "Isua Krista Kohhran", Lairam Baptist, Independent Church of Maraland, Jehova Witness, Church of God, "Lalchungkua", "Kohhran Thianghlim", Assembly of God, etc.; and other numerous religious sects like "Maicham", "Tlira Pawl", "Vanawia Pawl", "Khuangtuaha Pawl", "Zhangvunga Pawl" etc., which were usually called after the name of its founders. In fact, there were around eighty

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1. Lexicon Universal Encyclopedea, Lexicon Publication Inc., New York, 1983.
 2. The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, Enterprises Educational Corporation, USA, 1972.

two different church denominations and religious sects found in Mizoram.³ The main reasons for the emergence of such petty religious sects, and local church denominations were over enthusiasm and differences of ideology in religious rites and ceremonies etc.⁴

Religion often plays a vital role in the affairs of mankind. Chaudury observes: "A society is made up of religious sects, governed by religious principles and the propagation of a culture is inspired by the religious zeal. In politics too, religion is the strongest fibre in the stuff of which patriotism or nationalism is made."⁵ There is no people, however, primitive who are without religion. Religious ideals, views and values are expressed through culture in society, and the socio-cultural system decides the kind of political patterns that a people decides to follow.

Religion possesses ideals and values that guide one's behaviour. Therefore, religion involves thought and activity as well as belief and values. It is not only

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3. Mizoram Gospel Centenary Bulletin, Gospel Centenary Committee, Synod Office, Aizawl, 1994, pp. 30-31 (No.75).
 4. Remthanga, H., Lalbiaktluanga, Kohhran Chanchin (1500-1990), (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, 1990, p.254.
 5. Chaudury, K.C. Role of Religion in Indian Politics, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1978, p. 1.

worship and rituals but a mode of life, a code of conduct that regulates men's activities to reach the goal of human needs. According to Radhakrishnan, "Religion must necessarily have social dimensionthat it must contain prescriptions for men's life and role in the society...."⁶

In fact, because of the potential impact of governmental decision on their various activities, religious groups frequently find it valuable or necessary to take an active role in the political process.⁷ Religious groups are thus, concerned with problems and with expression of aspirations of hopes and goals. It is the strongest influence in the life of an individual and also in the society.

In Mizoram, the impact of religion in day to day life of society is very profound. The Mizo society, which is predominantly Christian, is always careful to regulate its conduct according to religious injunctions. "More than 95% of the Mizos have embraced Christianity since the advent of Christianity in 1894."⁸ In Mizoram, churches are not merely buildings that provide place for worship,

6. Radhakrishnan, S. An Idealist View of Life, George Allen & Unwin, Bombay, 1971, p. 32.

7. Wald, Kenneth D. Religion and Politics in the United States, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1992, p. 28.

8. Mizoram in Brief, A booklet issued by the Directorate of Information and Public Relation, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, 1996, p. 9.

rather, they have become multipurpose agencies providing an array of services to the society. The spread of Christianity among the Mizos had tremendously changed their entire mode of living and transformed their primitive society into a new one. Elwin remarks thus: "Christianity (among the Mizos) means medical care, education and English language, and richer material life...."⁹

There are several reasons why church played an important role in the Mizo society:

(a) The traditional society was always haunted by constant fear of evil spirits whom they believe to be the cause of their illness and sufferings. Therefore, they had to perform costly and burdensome sacrifices in order to please those evil spirits. But when the Western Missionaries preached the Gospel of Christ, the Mizos readily welcomed anything which could free them from such constant fear, burdensome rituals and sacrifices.

(b) Apart from their spiritual upliftment, the western Missionaries gave education and prepared their literary development. The first Lower Primary School was

9. Elwin, Verrier. A Philosophy of N.E.F.A., Published by the Adviser to the Governor of Assam, Shillong, 1960, p. 110.

opened by the Missionary in April 1894.¹⁰ At present there are 1 college, 4 high schools, 12 middle schools and 79 primary schools looked after by the Presbyterian Church in Mizoram.¹¹ The Baptist Church also looks after 24 primary schools, 6 middle schools, 2 high schools and 1 higher secondary school. The Roman Catholic too own a number of schools in the State.

(c) The churches in Mizoram are also engaged in medical and philanthropic work. At present, the Salvation Army and the United Pentecostal Church have Orphan Home, where they look after a number of orphans. During 1995, the Presbyterian Church distributed Rs. 1202699.45 to the needy persons as relief and for other philanthropic work to 181 persons.¹² Besides, the Presbyterian Church have also a Rescue Centre and Counselling Centre to look after destitutes and drug-addict persons, while the Baptist Church maintains a Youth Skill Development Centre and Child Care Project. The Presbyterian Church also looks after one Hospital at Durtlang, and eight dispensaries cum health centres in which hundreds of persons have been employed as

10. Lalhluna, C., Lalliana, K.C. Mizoram General Knowledge (in Mizo), Bethesda Printing Press, Aizawl, 1988, p.28.

11. 1995 Presbyterian Synod Bu (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, The Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Aizawl, 1995, p. 255.

12. Ibid., p. 261.

full time workers.¹³ The Baptist Church also owned one hospital at Serkawn and four other health centres.

(d) Before the introduction of Christianity, various clans and sub-tribes such as Pachuau, Sailo, Chhakchhuak, Chawngthu, Renthlei, Khiangte etc. could not perform same rituals altogether, and different kinds of animals were sacrificed to appease evil spirits. However, since the bulk of the Mizos accepted Christianity as their religion, their traditional life-style underwent radical transformation. Now, different clans and sub-tribes can worship one God together which has strengthened their solidarity. In fact, Christianity has created a Mizo identity.

(e) In order to practise new religion, the Mizos had to give up many old practices such as drinking of 'Zu' (local rice beer) in any celebration, and several old habits. Drinking of 'Zu' was traditionally common to the Mizos prior to the introduction of Christianity amongst the people. But since the Mizos accepted Christianity, drinking of 'Zu' was not only regarded as social evil, but was also taken as opposed to the Christian teaching. Besides, customs relating to marriage and divorce, place of women in the society, death, burial and condolences all came to be

13. Ibid., p. 258.

practised according to the teachings of the Holy Bible.

First Peace Initiative

The MNF was the first political party in Mizoram who mixed up religion with politics and claimed "God as its driving force",¹⁴ and used the sign of Cross as its official seal. As Christians, a number of Mizos believed in the prophecies as the means of God's communication to men. During the initial stage of the MNF movement, there were several prophecies as revealed in dreams in favour of the MNF movement which were only wishful thinking. They simply believed that God would liberate them from the domination of 'non-believers' (Indian Government), and would use them to preach the gospel of salvation all over the world.¹⁵ Consequently, various local church denominations in Mizoram supported the MNF movement and had a strong conviction that their cause was just worthy to die for. For that reason, those who got killed in fighting the Indian security force were regarded as 'martyrs'. It was, in fact, not surprising that church got involved in the political turbulence between the Government of India and the MNF trying to bring

14. Mizoram Danbul (Mizoram Constitution), Issued by the MNF, House of Representative Office, New Chhantlang, 1971, p. 1.

15. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, former church leader in the Underground, MNF, dated 20th March 1993, Luangmual, Aizawl.

them together at the negotiation table to restore peace and normalcy.

As stated, law and order situation in the district was completely paralysed due to disturbance and no political organisation dared to speak up in favour of the Mizos. Wherever the Indian army went, they disrupted and even dispersed church services. They sometimes defiled sacred places by destroying and robbing church properties, encamping therein, drinking and smoking inside churches and even in the pulpits.¹⁶ They also tore copies of the Holy Bible, hymn books etc. They dug trenches in the church yards and imposed unending curfew and forbade church services.¹⁷

On the other hand, the MNF act of depredation and terrorism were also unbearable. Murder, intimidation and arson with a view to paralyse law and order situation in the district were reported all the time. The MNF asked the government servants to quit their job in some areas. The Mizo District Council members were also forced to resign.¹⁸ The MNF also prohibited people from participating in any

16. Personal Manuscript, (Unpublished), Note-book of Lalthangliana, Ex. MNF 'Ambassador', Aizawl.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

elections conducted by the Government of India and ruled out any services to the Indian security force whether paid or unpaid.¹⁹

Therefore, the Presbyterian Church felt it their moral duty to take initiative for the restoration of peace and normalcy by maintaining goodwill and mutual understanding between the MNF and the Indian security forces as well as between the public and the undergrounds, and between the public and the security forces.²⁰ Thus, the Presbyterian church issued a pamphlet expressing disapproval of violent activities as being against the teaching of Christ as well as the law of Human Right.²¹ The MNF, expectedly reacted against the church pamphlet, and issued an order forbidding the issue of any more pamphlet or circular of the kind and warning the church leaders that if they failed to adhere to their instruction, the 'law of the country' would determine their fate.²² However, following the step taken by the Presbyterian church, the

19. The MNF 'Home Minister' Order No. 3.G.M.(H)-Con/67/91 of 3rd January 1967. Source: Ex. MNF 'Ambassador', Lalthangliana.

20. Scholar's interview with Rev. Zairema, dated 16th March 1994, Aizawl.

21. The Presbyterian Church Pamphlet, dated 12th March 1966.

22. The MNF 'Home Minister' Letter to the Presbyterian Church Leaders, Dated 16 March 1966. Source: Synod Office, Aizawl.

Baptist Church Assembly issued a pamphlet and charged the MNF of being responsible for the sufferings of the innocent people, and requested them to stop violent activities.²³

Subsequently, the Presbyterian and the Baptist Churches had a joint meeting on 8th September 1966, and issued a circular to their respective church members expressing that the true spirit and teaching of Jesus did not approve violence to safeguard the religious rights.²⁴ However, the MNF Vice President Lalnunmawia issued another circular and prohibited the use of Indian postal service so as to disrupt the communication system in the district. The MNF also forbade the villagers from entering to the grouping centres, which they called a 'concentration camp', and reiterated that those who violated or disobeyed the instruction should be treated as enemy of the 'government of Mizoram', 'Mizoram Sawrkar' (the MNF).²⁵

The situation in the district thus, become more and more uncertain and the relations between churches and the MNF became somewhat strained. But the church leaders did

23. Zoram Baptist Church Appeal to the MNF, Dated 30th May 1966. Source: Lalzawnga, R.

24. Church Message, "Kohhran Thuchah", Issued by the Church leaders of the Presbyterian and the Baptist, dated 8th September 1966.

25. The MNF Vice President Circular No. MS.3(V-P), Dated 22nd December 1966. Camp: Mobile.

not give up hopes and efforts to bring lasting peace and normalcy. Therefore, a Christian Peace Committee (C.P.C.) was jointly formed by the Presbyterian and the Baptist Churches on 15th July 1966, under the chairmanship of Zairema. The main objectives of the C.P.C. were:

- (i) To restore peace and normalcy in the district.
- (ii) To appeal both the MNF and the Indian army to stop armed fighting.
- (iii) To request both the MNF and the Indian army to have a peaceful settlement of all their misunderstandings.
- (iv) To appeal to both the MNF and the Indian army to renounce violent activities.²⁶

The church leaders worked hard for initiating a peace talk between the MNF and the Government of India. The C.P.C. Chairman Zairema wrote a letter to the MNF President Laldenga stating that church was very much concerned about the state of affairs, and stated that there must be a way of restoring peace. He said, "We are very much anxious as you and your government are to restore peace in our country. I, therefore, have every hope that you will

26. Lalzawnga, R. "Role of Church in Mizoram Politics", M. Phil Thesis submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1990, p. 55.

welcome to meet the church representatives at your convenience for seeking speedy restoration of peace and normalcy...."²⁷ Therefore, a meeting between the MNF President Laldenga and the church leaders was arranged at Sabual village, 39 miles south of Aizawl, where several key points were freely discussed.²⁸

(a) In the meeting, Laldenga informed the church leaders that the MNF wanted to talk to the Government of India as Government to Government.

(b) When the church leaders expressed their unhappiness at violence in the district; the MNF President made it known that they also wanted to achieve their demands by non-violent means, and their act was purely a case of self-defence.

(c) The church leaders reiterated their disapproval of the MNF's attempt to create a Christian state by violent means. In answering this, Laldenga told the church leaders that being a religious body, the church should confine only to spiritual matters. He also stated that while condemning

27. A Letter sent to the MNF President Laldenga by Rev. Zairema, dated 6th September 1966. Camp: Mobile.

28. Scholar's interview with Rev. Zairema, op.cit.

the MNF acts of violence, church leaders should also condemn and criticize the Indian security forces' acts of indiscriminate bombing of civilians, grouping and burning of villages, raping of women, forced labour, killing of domestic animals, unnecessary torturing of civilians and innocents and violation of human rights etc. He requested the church leaders to maintain strict neutrality in the political upheaval in Mizoram. He, however, assured the church leaders that unnecessary killings and intimidation would no more take place from the MNF and requested them to keep him informed if some lawless elements among his partymen committed any undesirable act and crime.

(d) Regarding peace talk and cease fire, the MNF President made it known that unless the Government of India agreed to end all their military operations, they could not accept such proposal, for it would give the Indian troops an opportunity to consolidate their position. He, however, informed the church leaders that if Indian soldiers continued to use force, they, too, would have to resort to the use of arms until they were completely annihilated. However, he did not rule out a cease fire under certain terms. The MNF President also said:

"Our party's demand was self determination for the Mizo people. This does not necessarily mean secession from the Indian

Union. We have attempted to achieve this by constitutional and peaceful means.... We do not want to create the impression that we are all out for violence. We want peace and we shall be prepared to have peace talks with India as between Governments.... We are now compelled to usher for our country...."29

The C.P.C. representatives also met several other MNF leaders viz., Sainghaka, 'Home Minister', Bualhranga 'Senator', Lalnundawta, 'Acting Deputy Commissioner' and Zailiana, 'Commissioner' on 11th April 1967 at Khawrihnm village, 12 miles west of Aizawl. Sainghaka told the C.P.C. representatives about the MNF boycott of the impending Mizo District Council election and added that no political group would be in a position to represent the Mizos other than the MNF.³⁰

After their meeting with the MNF leaders, Zairema, the C.P.C. Chairman rushed to New Delhi in early May 1967 to see the Indian Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was about to go on a holiday and asked him to see the Home Minister, Y.B. Chavan. In their meeting, the Home Minister categorically made it clear that he was not going to talk to the MNF and said, "Let them give up their arms, after

29. Vanlalhluna, Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, Synod Press, Aizawl, 1965, p. 119.

30. Presbyterian and Baptist Churches Report, Dated 15th April 1967. Source: Synod Office File.

that we can talk.... I have to punish my children if they behave badly"³¹ Zairema was disappointed at this and came back home. Later, the C.P.C. wrote a letter to the MNF President Laldenga stressing that "New Delhi would not enter into a negotiation unless and until the MNF laid down their arms first." In their view, the Government was committed to talk to them. The C.P.C. stated: "The Government of India cannot accept any conditional surrender. The MNF should surrender their arms unconditionally and when normalcy returns in the district, their desires and grievances should be listened by the Government."³²

The C.P.C's active effort to create a congenial atmosphere for free exchange of views between the MNF and the Government of India unfortunately, could not gain much ground. Thus, for the next two years, the church remained a helpless spectator of violence which was let loose in the district.

Second Peace Initiative

The church leaders in Mizoram did not give up easily following their first failure. Therefore, on 17th February

31. Scholar's interview with Rev. Zairema, op.cit.

32. A C.P.C. Letter to the MNF President, Laldenga, Camp Silchar, dated 18th May 1967. Source: Synod Office, Aizawl.

1969, the C.P.C. leaders namely, Zairema, Lalngurauva Ralte and H.S. Luaia approached the MNF leaders again. They met Ngurkunga, 'Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Publicity', who told them that unless the MNF knew the probable scope of the term 'political rehabilitation', they were not in a position to make any deal with the Government of India.³³ After one week, on 24th February 1969, the C.P.C. leaders met the MNF Secretary, Lalkhawliana* and discussed the matter of arranging peace talk between the Government of India and the MNF. The MNF Secretary informed the C.P.C. leaders that "the MNF were ready to have a peace talk within the framework of Indian Constitution provided that the Government of India was prepared for a peaceful talk."³⁴ The church leaders were very happy about the development, and rushed to Silchar to inform about the development to B.C. Carriappa, the then Commissioner of Silchar. But there was no favourable reaction from the Indian Government. Meanwhile, the entire Mizo Hills

33. Scholar's interview with Rev. Lalngurauva Ralte, Dated 16th March 1993, Aizawl.

* Lalkhawliana happened to be the relative of Rev. Zairema who was able to impress upon the former the need for talks within the framework of the Constitution of India.

34. Lalzawnga, R. Role of Church in Mizoram Politics, op.cit., p. 66.

District was declared a 'Disturbed Area' for another year.³⁵

Following the C.P.C.'s fresh peace initiative, Laldenga also sent Vanlalngaia to talk to the Government of India to seek reconciliation but with a clear instruction not to consult the Assam Government. He was asked to contact Central agent and return back to the headquarters immediately. Zairema, the C.P.C. Chairman met Vanlalngaia at Karimganj and also the Assistant Joint Director of Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau (S.I.B.). But unfortunately, on his way back home to the Arakan, Vanlalngaia was arrested by the Assam Police.³⁶

However, the C.P.C. continued their peace effort and met several MNF leaders including Lalnunmawia, 'Vice President' of the MNF and Lalhmingthanga, its 'Foreign Minister'. The church leaders also met Indian representatives such as B.C. Carriappa, Assam Chief Minister B.P. Chaliha, Home Minister Y.B. Chavan, Home Secretary etc. on several occasions.³⁷ They exchanged

35. Scholar's interview with Rev. Zairema, op.cit.

36. Ibid.

37. Vanlalhluna. Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 121.

opinion trying to bring a lasting peace and return of normalcy in the district.

Knowing fully the limitation of the undergrounds, the C.P.C. tried to bring about a political settlement of the Mizo problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution. They urged the MNF leaders to make a clear stand on their final political demands. To quote Lalkhawliana, the MNF Secretary, "Knowing fully well that the stand of the Indian Government is different from the church leaders, I am prepared to work and do my utmost to help create condition that would lead to peaceful solution of the present situation, provided of course, that the Government of India is prepared to respond to my appeal."³⁸ However, it was very unfortunate that several MNF leaders who used to meet the church leaders were arrested and some of them were also killed by the security forces. As a result, the MNF alleged that the church leaders betrayed them.³⁹ The MNF group desiring peace, therefore, lost confidence upon the CPC and thus, once again, the prospects of ending the Mizo political crisis through discussion and compromises slipped further away.

38. A C.P.C. Letter to B.C. Carriappa, Commissioner of Cachar and Mizo Hills, Dated 1st March 1969, Aizawl. Source: Interview with Rev. Lalngurauva Ralte, op.cit.

39. Scholar's interview with Rev. Zairema, op.cit.

The failure of C.P.C.'s peace mission might have several reasons:

(i) Ch. Saprawnga, Ex. C.E.M. of the erstwhile Mizo District Council assessed that the C.P.C. being a religious body, did not rely upon God's words and guidance. Instead, they relied much upon their personality rather than on principles.⁴⁰

(ii) It was also alleged that the C.P.C. representatives used to meet the MNF leaders who wanted to surrender to the security forces, which provoked and irritated the hardcore MNF leaders. As a result, the bulk of the undergrounds considered the act of the C.P.C. as an attempt to disgrace to them, and this development made the MNF more rigid and stiff than before.⁴¹

(iii) R. Vanlawma observed that the C.P.C. did not favour the MNF as much as the Naga Peace Committee did the Nagas. He also stated that the C.P.C. approached the Indian Government with 'fear and favour' while they urged the MNF to accept a settlement within the framework of Indian Constitution, which irritated the MNF.⁴²

40. Saprawnga, Ch. Ka Zin Kawng (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, 1990, p. 282.

41. Ibid.

42. Hriatna Weekly (in Mizo) Magazine, Aizawl, Dt. 6th-12th July 1993, p. 6.

(iv) Moreover, their failure was also due to the arrest of those MNF leaders who were usually approached by the C.P.C. representatives. In the MNF leadership, several people had a liberal outlook. Most of them were graduates, and were called 'intellectuals'.⁴³ The 'intellectuals' were in favour of peace talk with the Government of India. But as stated, several 'intellectuals' were arrested by the Indian army while some were killed. This had, in fact, adversely effected the C.P.C's peace effort and it ultimately led to the failure of their peace initiative in their second attempt.

(v) Besides, it was quite unexpected that both the Government of India and the MNF could not have complete trust upon the church leaders. The hardcore MNF regarded the CPC's peace initiative as being responsible for the disunity in their party organisation, which was in fact, the beginning of factionalism in the underground organisation. The Government of India on its part looked upon the C.P.C. with distrust since the MNF were their own people. Therefore, the C.P.C. could not gain much ground to influence the Government of India to come to terms with the MNF.

43. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics 1976-1986 (in Mizo), Lenchhawng Press, Aizawl, 1993, p. 192.

Though the C.P.C. failed to bring both the warring parties together at the negotiation table, yet, their tremendous efforts have paved a way to both the MNF and the Government of India realising the need for peace talk in future. The MNF were aware of the weakness, that sooner or later, they would have to accept a peace talk within the framework of Indian Constitution to solve the Mizo problem. On the other side, the Government of India also realised that a repression measures alone would not solve the Mizo problem and that they needed tender care to heal the wounded heart of the Mizos. Despite the failure in their effort, there was no denying the fact that all those appeals and efforts had certain influence over those having a liberal outlook in the MNF leadership who realised the growing desire among the people for peace and thereby compel the MNF to come out of their hide out. Moreover, the church leaders have always been discouraging violent activities and endlessly prayed in the church for the return of peace and normalcy in Mizoram, which had some impact upon the undergrounds.

Third Peace Initiative

The church leaders kept silent for several years except endless praying in their respective church to God for the return of peace and tranquility. Following the

failure of their first and second attempts, the church leaders felt it necessary to keep silent for the time being.⁴⁴ Since the hardcore MNF leaders and the Government of India did not pay heed to their peace initiatives, it could well be said that church leaders were discouraged and probably afraid of being arrested or killed. The church leaders realised that their peace effort through the C.P.C. was insufficient, that a wider church organisation was needed to exert more pressure upon the two warring parties. Therefore, a "Mizoram Church Leaders Committee" (MCLC) was formed by nine church denominations comprising of the Presbyterian, the Baptist, the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic, the United Pentecostal Church, the Seventh Day, the Assembly of God, the Lairam Baptist, and 'Isua Khrista Kohhran'.⁴⁵

In early 1976, Laldenga was brought to New Delhi to have peace talk. Subsequently, the MNF had an emergency meeting at Calcutta known as "Calcutta Convention", from 24th March to 4th April 1976. At the Convention, all the MNF top ranking leaders were present with assurances of safe passage given by the Government of India. After a long

44. Scholar's interview with Rev. Lalngurauva Ralte, op.cit.

45. Vanlalhluna, Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 123.

deliberation, the Convention passed a resolution proposing to have a peace talk within the framework of Indian Constitution, and an Agreement was signed on 1st July 1976 on the following points:

- (a) The MNF acknowledged Mizoram as an integral part of India, and accepted to solve the Mizo problem within the framework of Indian Constitution.
- (b) That the MNF would cease violent activities.
- (c) That the MNF agreed to collect all their arms and ammunitions within one month in a mutually agreed camp.
- (d) The Government of India also decided to suspend all their security operations.
- (e) It was also agreed to continue further talks.⁴⁶

The Government of Mizoram celebrated the 'Agreement' made by the MNF and the Government of India by declaring the 7th July 1976 as a 'Thanks Giving Day'. All churches in Mizoram prayed with joy and offered thanks to God. But unfortunately, the joy and jubilations were short lived,

46. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, Ex. MNF President, Dated 23rd March 1993, Luangmual, Aizawl.

because the July 'Agreement' was not acceptable to a number of undergrounds. While negotiation was going on in New Delhi and assurances were given about suspension of all hostile activities, some hardcore MNF volunteers resorted to violence and collected taxes forcibly in some cases through intimidation. At one time, Laldenga also said that the July 'Agreement' was only an 'Understanding'.⁴⁷

In course of time, there was a change at the Central Government when Congress (I) ministry was replaced by the Janata party in 1978. In March 1978, the new Home Minister Charan Singh announced that, "We have come to the conclusion that no useful purpose will be served by continuing talks with Laldenga.... He was only delaying peace talk for his own reason...."⁴⁸ Laldenga was thus, put into jail which resulted hostile activities and guerrilla warfare in Mizoram.

When the Congress (I) came back to power in 1980, the case against Laldenga was withdrawn by the CBI on 30th June 1980 and the talks resumed. However, in early 1982, the peace talk was terminated again due to deadlock in the negotiation. Consequently, Laldenga was directed by the

47. Ibid.

48. Ray, Animesh. Mizoram Dynamics of Change, Pearl Publishers, Calcutta, 1982, p. 238.

Central Government to leave India at his earliest convenience and he reached London on 21st April 1982. It was followed by several ugly incidents caused by both the MNF and the security forces. Therefore, the bulk of the innocent people were once again drawn to the vortex of political uncertainty.

Therefore, circumstances once again compelled church leaders to pursue their peace effort for the restoration of peace and normalcy in the Union Territory. First of all, the MCLC resolved to have a special prayer service on the first Sunday of every month for peace. It appointed three persons namely, Lalsawma, Lianzuala and V.L. Rawna as the MCLC representatives.⁴⁹ The MCLC meeting on 13th September 1982, decided to visit the MNF headquarters to talk to them. Accordingly, on 22nd November, the MCLC Secretary went to London to see Laldenga. In the meantime, other MCLC members were busy contacting Indian officials in New Delhi. While the MCLC Secretary and Laldenga were discussing as to how to resume peace talk, it was reported that New Delhi was not interested in resuming peace talk with Laldenga.⁵⁰

49. The MCLC Third Committee Minute Book, Dated 13th August 1982. Source: Synod Office, Aizawl.

50. Lalzawnga, R. Role of Church in Mizoram Politics, op.cit., p. 85.

However, the MCLC representatives took further steps and convened an all-party meeting at Aizawl on 31st May 1983 which was attended by 12 persons from four political parties viz., the People's Conference, the Mizo Union, the Mizo Convention and the Mizoram Congress (I). In the meeting, the party leaders expressed their willingness to act according to the advice of the MCLC for the peace purpose, and also accepted the church leaders' draft memorandum to be submitted to the Central Government.⁵¹ Accordingly, a memorandum was submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the MCLC. In the memorandum, the MCLC pleaded with the Central Government to have fresh talk with the MNF. It also stated that all sections of the people living in Mizoram were ready to create a conducive atmosphere for the peace talk.⁵²

The MCLC representatives also called on the Lt. Governor of Mizoram several times and discussed the ways of resuming peace talk. They also requested Lt. Governor to press the Central Government for fresh negotiation with the MNF.⁵³ But the indirect contact with the Central Government

51. Ibid.

52. Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the MCLC, Dated 15th June 1983. Source: Synod Office, Aizawl.

53. Lalzawnga, R. Role of Church in Mizoram Politics, op.cit., p. 92.

through the Lt. Governor did not bring a favourable outcome. Therefore, all executive members of the MCLC met the Prime Minister in New Delhi by themselves and requested to resume peace talk with the MNF.⁵⁴ In another consecutive move, the MCLC called a second all party meeting on 29th March 1984, which passed a resolution among other things, to postpone the 1984 Assembly election to put more pressure on the Central Government for the peace process.⁵⁵

When Prime Minister India Gandhi visited Mizoram in April 1984, she underlined the need to have peace and normalcy in order to promote development. But she did not mention about the resumption of peace talk. However, the Mizo people had new expectation from the contents of her speeches. The MCLC also met her and submitted another memorandum requesting resumption of peace talk with the MNF. The memorandum stated: "We have reason to believe that Laldenga and his co-leaders are willing to have a fresh negotiation with you within the framework of Indian Constitution."⁵⁶

54. The MCLC Committee Minute, Dated 6th February 1984.
Source: Synod Office, Aizawl.

55. Ibid.

56. Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, on 18th April 1984 by the MCLC.

Though the all party meeting convened by the MCLC resolved to postpone the 1984 Assembly election in Mizoram to hasten peace process, the same was held as scheduled, and was won by the Mizoram Congress (I). There was a mutual understanding between the MNF and the newly formed Congress (I) Government in the Union Territory led by Lalthanhawla, which paved a new way for the peace talk.

In Aizawl, the MCLC leaders called on the new Government several times and discussed the issue of resumption of peace talk. Therefore, Lalthanhawla, the new Chief Minister told the press men at Aizawl on 5th September 1984, that the MNF and the Central Government were expected to resume peace talk within a month or two. He further announced that K.C. Pant and G. Parthasarathy have been appointed to represent the Central Government.⁵⁷ But unfortunately, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 31st October 1984, stagnated the prospects of peace talk. However, when her son Rajiv Gandhi became the next Prime Minister, the Mizo people had high expectation that he would follow the footprint of his late mother.

57. Fortnightly Report of the Government of Mizoram, Dated 1st to 15th September 1984, Directorate of Information and Public Relation, Aizawl.

On 12th December 1984, the MCLC sent condolences to Rajiv Gandhi for the loss of his mother. Along with that, the church leaders requested him to fulfil his late mother's commitment to the process of peace talk to solve the Mizo problems.⁵⁸ In order to keep alive their activities, the church leaders passed a resolution to have a mass prayer in the first Saturday of January 1985. The MCLC also appointed new church representatives for the peace mission consisting of Lalsawma as Chairman, Hrangvunga and P. Lianzuala.⁵⁹ On 28th March 1985, the MCLC representatives went to New Delhi to urge upon once again the Prime Minister for peace talk. The Prime Minister assured them that negotiation would resume soon. Shortly afterwards talks resumed in course of which all important points, except the one relating to the High Court provision were settled.⁶⁰

At last, after a long wait and interrupted discussions spreading over one decade, Peace Accord known as "Memorandum of Settlement" was signed between the Government of India and the MNF on 30th June 1986. To show

58. The MCLC Record File, Dated 12th December 1984. Source: Synod Office, Aizawl.

59. Scholar's interview with Rev. Lalngurauva Ralte, op.cit.

60. Lalzawnga, R. Role of Church in Mizoram Politics, op.cit., p. 98.

their happiness, the MCLC circulated a pamphlet to every church and offered a Thanks Giving Service throughout the whole territory on 11th July 1986.

The principal aim and objective of both the C.P.C. and the MCLC was to restore peace and normalcy in Mizoram. For that purpose, the church leaders were busy contacting both the MNF and the Government of India from time to time, trying to create a congenial atmosphere for peace talk between the warring parties. Quite often, the church leaders were looked up on with suspicion both by the MNF and the Central Government. It is to be noted that churches in Mizoram were not under the influence of the MNF nor the Central Government.

Though the role of church was not the main reason for the return of peace and normalcy in Mizoram, yet, one cannot neglect its significances in the peace process. Being a religious body, their endless prayer to God for the return of peace and normalcy, as well as their earnest appeals to the Government of India and their free exchange of views with the MNF leaders in fact, pave a way for a peaceful settlement of Mizoram political problems.

ROLE OF THE STUDENTS

One of the important dimensions of student politics in India is the role of political parties in politicising

students. "For the political parties, students constitute an attractive power contingent and a strategic base for political operations ... the students are also easily mobilisable population."⁶¹ Students and politics constitute an interesting and relevant field of investigation in social sciences, especially in a state where the student phenomena had started to emerge and establish itself. "In many developing countries, students are one of the key modernising elements in the society as the students' objectives are often taken seriously by the government officials."⁶²

Student politics has been one of the most important subjects for investigation especially since the 1960's. They are one of the most important strata in any society whether in the developed or developing countries. "On many occasions, the students expressed massive discontent with, and opposition to, the existing social and political order."⁶³ The students have resorted to various means to fight against the establishment by pointing out lapses,

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61. Roy, A.B. Students and Politics in India, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1977, p. 185.
62. Lipset, Seymour Martin. "University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries", in Student Politics, New York, 1967, p. 32.
63. Bottomore, Tom. Political Sociology, P.I. Publication, New Delhi, 1983, p. 45.

irregularities and errors, and thus, "the student community are haunting the government and they become a source of interest, concern and fear of nation."⁶⁴

The students have also manifested to be highly receptive and some have fallen easy prey to political parties, who have sought to build students' political movement both as a means of opposition to the Government and also to recruit political leadership.⁶⁵ It has been found that the student movement is often backed by the left wing politicians. 'It is particularly important to notice that the radical and extremist attitudes and action occurred frequently among highly politicised students.'⁶⁶ This encouragement to participate in issues other than campus-oriented ones has been an important characteristic of the student group in the present day. In some cases, students have been established as wings of political parties.

The students also act as a pressure group and their agitational behaviour can be expression of the will of the

64. Gandhi, Kishore. "The Emerging Student Power and Social Response", in Mumsukhani, G.S. (Ed), Student Politics in India, Oxford and IBH, New Delhi, 1975, p. 65.

65. Weiner, Myron. The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India, University of Chicago Press, Bombay, 1963, p. 196.

66. Lipset, Seymour Martin, in Student Politics, op.cit., p. 32.

others. Albach pointed out that,

"For more than a century, students' movements have had an important place among the agents of social change. In some places, students have succeeded in toppling Government of changing policies. In other place, they have been instrumental in various kinds of cultural revivals. In the new nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America, students are often instrumental in political, social and cultural development."⁶⁷

Students' involvement in Indian politics are seen during the time of the Indian Independent Movement against the British. In 1921, during the time of the Non-Cooperation Movement, and in 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement, and also Quit India Movement in 1942, Indian students were extremely involved.

It is against this background that the present chapter attempts to analyse the political role of Mizo students as student political activity had emerged as a dynamic force in counter-balancing the role of Governmental policies, during the time of crucial phase of disturbance and the subsequent peace talk in Mizoram politics.

Emergence of the Mizo Students Union

It should be noted that the introduction of education by the Missionaries among the Mizos changed their

67. Ibid., p. 74.

outlook and traditional way of life in different ways. As a result, the newly educated people came to know of the need and importance of social organisation for the upliftment and safeguard of their interests and society. Consequently, "Mizo Zirho Pawl" (Mizo Students Association or Union) was formed on 24th October 1946.⁶⁸ But due to its weak organisation, it gradually became defunct without having proper functions and proceedings.

After eleven years, a "Lushai Zirlai Pawl" (Lushai Students Association or Union) was formed on 27th October 1935 by the Mizo students.⁶⁹ The latter date of establishment of the association was recognised as its official establishment. Later, the name of the association was changed into "Mizo Zirlai Pawl" (MZP).⁷⁰ Several other student organisations or associations existed in Mizoram, like All Mizo Students' Federation, Mara Students Association, Hmar Students Union, Lai Students Association, Siamsin Pawl Pi etc., but MZP was the largest and the most popular students' union because any Mizo student could become a member of it. It had its headquarters in Aizawl and sub-headquarters in several places.

68. Lalsawmliana, J. Student Politics in Mizoram (A Case Study of the MZP, 1972-1986), M. Phil Thesis Submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1992, p. 21.

69. Ibid.

70. MZP Chan Chir Bu (MZP News in Mizo), MZP Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1985, p. I.

The MZP had three aims and objectives:

- (i) Students' welfare.
- (ii) Welfare of the society and social welfare.
- (iii) Reviewing the governmental policies and decisions.⁷¹

Thus, apart from the students' welfare, it aimed to preserve social heritage and cultural identities and values. Besides, the MZP also aimed at cooperating with the government in developmental schemes. Apart from their three main aims, protection, safeguard, as well as promotion of Mizo dignity, rights and culture were their subsidiary aims.⁷² However, the Mizo students were also interested in the day to day governmental programmes affecting society's welfare and interest and as a result, they could hardly keep themselves aloof from politics, which led to their involvement in the forefront of political process especially since 1980.

Mizo Student Activities in the Political Process

The Mizo students' involvement in the political process dates back to 1959, when some people suffered death

71. MZP Constitution Article No. XIV.4, (1977 Amendment).

72. Ibid., Article II, 7 & 8.

due to the 'Mautam' famine. The Mizo students felt agitated due to the slow economic rehabilitation of the famine stricken people. Therefore, to show their disgruntled feeling against the Assam Government, Mizo students launched a fasting in Shillong.⁷³ During the attainment of a Union Territory, the Mizo students also launched an agitation to protest against the governmental decision of uplifting the Mizo district into a Union Territory in 1971. The Government intention was strongly opposed by the Mizo students because they regarded it as an insult to the Mizo people. The central proposal of upgrading it into a Union Territory was to break the backbone of the MNF movement. It was pointed out that while their neighbouring districts were given statehood even though they did not demand secession as the Mizos did. On the other hand, the Mizos, who fought for independence were offered only a Union Territory. The Mizo students, therefore, regarded it as an insult. Therefore, they organised a procession in Shillong on 31st July 1971,⁷⁴ and also submitted a Memorandum to the Indian Prime Minister. The students stated:

73. Scholar's interview with P. Siamliana, Former Mizo Students' Union President, Dated 6th April 1993, Place: Aizawl.

74. Ibid.

"Permanent and peaceful settlement of the Mizo problems could only be attained through peaceful talk and negotiation between the MNF and the Government of India.... The offering of a Union Territory would not solve, but multiply the Mizo problems...."⁷⁵

Since then, Mizo students' involvement in political field has been an important phenomenon. Initially, it was the Mizo students who wanted to preserve and protect the legitimate interest of the Mizo people. But later some of the student leaders became the main instrument of the politicians.

Students in the Restoration of Peace

The role played by the Mizo students during disturbance, particularly during the crucial time of negotiation was quite noteworthy. In fact, it was due to the critical role of the students that finally a peaceful settlement could be reached. It should be noted that there were numerous obstacles, drawbacks and deadlocks during the time of peace talk between the MNF and the Central Government. In those critical situations, the students, as a pressure group, pressed a number of demands on the authorities which included participation in the political

75. Memorandum, to the Indian Prime Minister by All Mizo Students' Convention, Dated 31st July 1971, Shillong. Source: J. Lalsawmliana.

process and resumption of peace talk. They have contributed much to the goal of attaining a fullfledged statehood of Mizoram and also took active part in society for social reforms. When peace talk began in 1976, the Mizo students looked forward to an honourable settlement. They sent their leaders to New Delhi several times to submit Memorandum to the Government of India as well as to the MNF President, Laldenga for hastening the peace talk.

The Mizo students' direct involvement in the peace effort dates back to 1979, when the MZP leaders namely, Lalthangliana Sailo, K. Hrangthankima, Vanupa Zathang and C. Thuamluaia went to New Delhi to meet the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi and the MNF leader, Laldenga.⁷⁶ In their meeting, Laldenga tried to impress upon the student leaders that Brig. T. Sailo Ministry in Mizoram was the main obstacle in the peace process. The Prime Minister also reportedly informed the student leaders that "T. Sailo Ministry in Mizoram is not my party ministry and I cannot simply ask them to step down or dissolve because it would be unconstitutional.... I understand Laldenga.... So you may know what to do as students...."⁷⁷ The students felt

76. Scholar's interview with K. Hrangthankima, Former Student Union Leader, Dated 7th April 1993, Luangmual, Aizawl.

77. Ibid.

that it was an instigation and a hint to them to make a movement for restoration of peace. Chaltuahkhuma also stated that "Laldenga requested the student leaders to launch agitation in Mizoram to demonstrate their wish in favour of an agreement as well as to hasten the peace talk."⁷⁸

At that time, there was an impression in Mizoram that peaceful settlement could not be made because Brig. T. Sailo Ministry was not willing to step down in favour of peace settlement. Therefore, the Mizo students were enthusiastic to make a movement. When they came back to Mizoram, they openly exhibited their support to the MNF stand in the peace talk through press release and circulars; and also requested the Mizo people to comply with their view. The MZP General headquarters issued a press release which stated that, "If the negotiation failed due to the non-cooperation with the MNF stand, the consequence would be fatal and many young men may go underground...."⁷⁹ Thus, it could be stated that the main reason leading the Mizo students entering the peace efforts was that the students regarded the MNF movement as a Mizo

78. Chaltuahkhuma, Political History of Mizoram (in Mizo), L.B. Press, Aizawl, 1981, p. 370.

79. MZP General Headquarters Press Release, 1980, (Date not mentioned).

national movement, and the problem as Mizo national problem, which concerned each and every one.

However, the P.C. Ministry in Mizoram led by Brig. T. Sailo warned the students not to be misguided by the ambitious politicians for their selfish end, and requested them to maintain strict neutrality in political matters and also asked them not to indulge in state politics.⁸⁰ Therefore, there was a strong confrontation in Mizoram between the students and the P.C. Government on certain issue; and the students were of course, instigated by the opposition political parties who provided them with financial supports.⁸¹

The situation deteriorated when the Government of Mizoram selected three non-Mizo candidates for B.Sc. (Agriculture) seats in 1981, which was opposed by the MZP.* As a result, there was a serious confrontation between the students and the State Government. Taking advantage of the T. Sailo-students misunderstanding, some pro-MNF student leaders carefully exploited the situation and demanded the

80. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, Ex. P.C. Minister, dated 21st January 1995, Aizawl.

81. Scholar's interview with R. Hrangthankima, op.cit.

* The MZP General Conference on 25th to 27th September 1980 passed a resolution that non-Mizo should not be selected to undergo technical training sponsored by the Government of Mizoram.

resignation of T. Sailo Ministry for alleged failure to keep law and order in the territory under control. Their main aim was, however, to topple the P.C. Ministry which they thought was standing on the way of peaceful solution.⁸²

The MZP convened a public meeting at Aizawl on 27th July 1981 and passed a resolution demanding resignation of T. Sailo Ministry.⁸³ But the P.C. Ministry reiterated that the students have been misguided by 'some elements', and also circulated a press release condemning their attitude and requested their parents as well not to support the movement.⁸⁴ Brig. T. Sailo also urged the teachers to enforce disciplinary action against misguided students, and also warned the teachers about the consequences flowing from such indiscipline.⁸⁵ However, the students mobilised themselves and continued their agitation and boycotted the 1981 Indian Independence Day celebration. The MZP also sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India with full condemnation of Brig. T. Sailo, and explained their

82. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, Ex. P.C. Cabinet Minister, op.cit.

83. Lalsawmliana, J. Students Politics in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 54.

84. Press Release issued by the P.C. Ministry, August 1981. Source: P.C. Office, Aizawl.

85. "Tawrh Bawm", Daily (Mizo), Aizawl, dated 25th July 1981.

non-cooperation of the Governmental programme in the celebration of what they called a "joyous day". They accused T. Sailo as 'anti-students, anti-teachers and anti-peace settlement.'⁸⁶

It may be noted that there were several Mizo students who did not want to involve in the political affairs. Such students were accused of being pro-T. Sailo. It was also reported that the pro-MNF student leaders took advice from the MNF personnel in Aizawl and some student leaders, were reportedly equipped with arms by the MNF. It should also be mentioned that the opposition parties in Mizoram, viz, Mizoram Congress (I) and the Mizo Convention etc. were keen in toppling the T. Sailo Ministry. The students and the opposition parties also arranged a joint meeting at Aizawl on 30th July 1981 to take joint step against the Ministry.⁸⁷

Earlier, on 14th March 1980, the MZP convened a joint meeting of different social organisations at Aizawl to deal with the foreigner issue. A "Students Action Committee" (S.A.C.) was formed to mobilise public support

86. Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, Dated 11th August 1981. Source: MZP Office, Aizawl.

87. "Tawrh Bawm" Daily (Mizo), Newspaper, dated 31st July 1981, Aizawl.

against foreigners' infiltration in Mizoram.⁸⁸ However, the S.A.C. extended its activities gradually apart from its initial intention and announced openly their support of the MNF and also demanded the dissolution of the P.C. Ministry.⁸⁹ As a result, the Government initiated action against the students accusing them as 'anti-national element'.⁹⁰

Under the critical situation, Laldenga from New Delhi contacted the Mizo students and asked them to urge all Mizoram MLAs to tender their resignation in order to hasten the peace process and also to demand resumption of peace talk. Subsequently, the students approached Mizoram MLAs and requested them to resign. Four MLAs from the Steering Committee tendered their resignation to the Lt. Governor of Mizoram on 12th August 1981 in response to the students call.⁹¹

On the night of 4th November 1981, Pachhunga University College and five other High School buildings

88. S.A.C. Memo. No. S.A.C./Cir/10/80/2. Source: S.A.C. Office, Aizawl.

89. S.A.C. Committee Minute Book, Dated 15th August 1980, Aizawl.

90. Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India by the MZP Headquarters, Aizawl, dated 11th August 1980. Source: K. Hrangthankima.

91. The MZP General Secretary Reports, 1980-1983. Source: K. Hrangthankima.

were burnt down to ashes in Aizawl. However, the real culprits were unknown to the public because both the students and the P.C. Ministry accused each other of being responsible for it. The P.C. Ministry accused the misguided students responsible for the incident. In Aizawl, it was generally believed that some misguided students were responsible for the incident.

When peace talk between the MNF and the Government of India was called off on 12th January 1982, students' unrest and agitation came to standstill. It was a fact that several student leaders were imprisoned due to their anti-government activities. Besides, the State Government did not permit the establishment of the MZP branch in any schools. As a result, several pro-MNF students joined the underground, while some other student leaders joined Mizoram Congress (I), and few of them joined the ruling P.C. Meanwhile, the Mizo Students' Union (MSU) and the All Mizo Post Graduate Students Union (AMPGSU) leaders in Shillong jointly formed a students' forum called 'Mizo Peace Forum' (MPF) on 30th December 1982. It was formed primarily to influence the existing political attitude of the various groups of people, and also to mobilise the people along the MNF lines.⁹² But shortly afterwards, the

92. Scholar's interview with P. Siamliana, Founder President of the MPF, Dated 6th April 1993, Aizawl.

MPF converted itself into a political party "due to public pressures".⁹³ It aimed at maintaining permanent peace and tranquility. Thus, from its initial stage, the MPF was a pro-MNF forum.

When the Central Government and the MNF resumed peace talk in 1984, the Mizo students once again woke up from their slumber in the form of a Student Joint Action Committee (SJAC), which was formed at Aizawl on 7th May 1985, so as to play more effective role.⁹⁴ After several rounds of discussions, a preliminary draft of the peace settlement was completed in December 1985. However, the final peace agreement could not be effected. It was an open secret that in Aizawl, that Mizoram Congress (I) Government led by Lalthanhawla was the main obstacle because he could not vacate his Chief Ministership in favour of the peace process, which led to a deadlock following which Laldenga went to London to spend Christmas in late December 1985. Before his departure, the Prime Minister informed him that he would be summoned around 10th January 1986.⁹⁵

93. The MPF Pamphlet No. 5, MPF/Hq/Azl-1983/3, Dated 6th August 1983, Aizawl. Source: P. Siamliana.

94. Lalsawmliana J. Students Politics in Mizoram, op.cit., p. 62.

95. Scholar's interview with Lalduhawma, Ex. Congress (I) President, dated 25th March 1974, Luangmual, Aizawl.

But Laldenga was not asked to come back to New Delhi till February 1986. Therefore, the SJAC sent delegates namely, R.F. Muana and Lalhmingliana to New Delhi to urge the Prime Minister to call Laldenga back to New Delhi to conclude the peace talk. But the SJAC delegations could not get an appointment to see the Prime Minister. However, after the SJAC delegation threatened to start fasting in front of the Parliament building, they were given an appointment to see the Prime Minister on 10th March 1986, when the SJAC delegates urged him to bring back Laldenga from London to finalise peace settlement.⁹⁶

In Aizawl, the SJAC organised a public procession on 12th March 1986 to hasten the peace negotiation. They also launched a state-wide agitation and called for a total bandh for two days on 3rd and 4th June 1986.⁹⁷ They also requested the ruling Congress (I) led by Lalthanhawla to step down to enable a peaceful settlement. Further, the SJAC sent letters to all Mizoram MLAs requesting them to resign for hastening the peace settlement,⁹⁸ which was

96. Scholar's interview with K. Hrangthankima, op.cit.

97. The SJAC Press Release No. 10, Dated 27th May 1986. Source: Interview with K. Hrangthankima, op.cit.

98. The SJAC Letters to all Mizoram MLAs, An Appeal, Dated 28th May 1986, Aizawl. Source: Ibid.

however, not heeded by the MLAs. Therefore, the SJAC organised a relay fasting in front of the State Secretariat building starting from 23rd June 1986 which was joined by opposition MLAs and the students.

Finally, after a long delay and endless agitation by the students, a peace settlement was signed in New Delhi by the MNF and the Government of India on 30th June 1986, which ended twenty years of political extremism in Mizoram.

CHAPTER V

MIZORAM ACCORD AND THE MNF IN POWER

At the time of formation of the MNF, its leadership skilfully vindicated the sentiment of nationalism in order to obtain popular support from the Mizos. But the bulk of the people who supported the MNF did not imagine the consequences and hardship they had to suffer for their movement. In the words of Lalthanhawla, "In those days, it was shameful not to be with the MNF".¹ After the MNF resorted to violent activities, and when the Indian security force adopted 'Operation Security' to suppress the MNF movement, untold sufferings and hardship followed which were never imagined by the people. Circumstances therefore, compelled the MNF to look for a peaceful settlement to end their movement.

The present chapter will thus, highlight the compulsive factors which led the MNF to seek negotiation for a peaceful settlement of the Mizo problems within the framework of Indian Constitution, and particularly how the MNF President Laldenga tried to contact Indian officials for a peaceful settlement. An attempt will also be made to deal with the various phases of negotiations which were

1. Sen, Sumanta quoted Lalthanhawla's Speech in India Today, dated 31st May 1984, p. 30.

followed by frequent deadlocks, and finally the Accord was signed bringing an end to the twenty years of political extremism.

FACTORS HASTENING THE DESIRE OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT

After several years of hard working and contemplation, the leaders of the MNF came to realise that their movement would not be successful unless they had any super power help, which was in fact, impossible to obtain, and all their efforts to obtain such help were in vain. Therefore, the MNF had no choice but to enter into a peaceful negotiation with India. Let us thus, stress what circumstances exactly compelled the MNF to enter into a negotiation to solve their political demands.

(a) The rigorous counter attack of the Indian security forces and their superiority in armaments was an important factor. After the Indian army took over control of the whole district, it was difficult for the local people to support the undergrounds. "The popular support in favour of the MNF and their movement began to decline gradually with the march of time and their morale became down."² The local people suffered too much from economic

2. Scholar's interview with R. Haleluia, Ex. MNF 'Colonel', Dated 25th February 1994. Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

hardship and miseries due to the disturbance. Besides, the people were also fed up with forceful and constant collection of money, and intimidation, agonising and lingering guerrilla combat by the volunteers as well as the atrocities of the security forces. As a result, the objective of the MNF was narrowed down and it ultimately boiled down to statehood.

(b) The grouping of villages had handicapped the local villagers from supporting and feeding the undergrounds as they were under constant watch and spying of the security forces. The grouping, therefore, to some extent prevented the undergrounds from obtaining food and shelter from the villagers. Under those critical and miserable circumstances, the MNF could no longer bear the consequence of disturbances which ultimately forced them to seek for a peaceful settlement within India.³

(c) Limited foreign aid and insufficient assistance from other countries was also another main reason which forced the MNF to enter into a peaceful settlement.⁴ Due to

3. Hluna, J.V. "Peace in Mizoram" in Proceedings of North East India History Association, 8th Session, Kohima, NEHU Publication, 1989, p. 502.

4. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, Ex. MNF President, Dated 25th March 1993. Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

the rigorous counter attack and the prevailing unsettled conditions and hardship plus non-availability of sufficient help and support from any big power and dampened the spirit of rebellion.

(d) After East Pakistan acquired independence with the help of Indian army, it was no longer appropriate for them to host the rebel group in their territory. Consequently, the MNF had to shift their base and headquarters to the Arakans, where they were hosted by the Burmese Communist Party (BCP). There were also several rebel groups who had frequent encounter with each other. Besides, some of the rebel groups were not too friendly with the MNF. To make the situation worse, the MNF could not contact other countries directly from the Arakans. As a result, many undergrounds got discouraged and surrendered to the Indian security forces. Thus, the birth of Bangladesh had crippled the MNF movement which indirectly hastened the desire for peaceful settlement.⁵

(e) Another important factor was the lack of 'political aid'. According to Tlangchhuaka, "Of the three important aids viz: arms aid, economic aid and political

5. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, Ex. MNF Vice President, Dated 25th February 1994, Place: Aizawl.

aid, we could easily obtain the first two. However, the last and the most important one, the 'political aid', to champion our cause was quite difficult to obtain and no one was ready to offer us."⁶ As a result, several MNF leaders realised the futility of their movement without a proper 'political aid' and support from other countries no matter how hard they may have tried. A close study of the MNF movement, therefore, reveals that in the absence of political aid, they were in a desperate condition.

(f) After the disturbance, the Indian security forces intensified combing operations within the whole district, patrolling along the route to former East Pakistan boundaries and closed all the accessible routes. Some of the MNF volunteers were captured while crossing the boundaries, and the remaining found it extremely difficult to operate under adverse situation. To make life more difficult for the undergrounds there were numerous unforeseen problems like illness, diseases and absence of proper medical treatment.⁷ As a result, some MNF personnel, inside and outside the district became disillusioned and wanted to lead a normal life.

6. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

7. Scholar's interview with Thangmawii, Ex. MNF Medical In-charge, Dated 24th October 1994. Place: Kolasib.

(g) Differences of opinion within the MNF leadership due to the Church Peace Committee's (CPC) peace effort also severely affected its organisation and the movement resulting in compromising the independence slogan. 'Intellectuals' within the undergrounds realised the futility of their movement and expressed openly in favour of a peaceful settlement with the Government of India. However, the hardcore leadership remain irreconcilable. The CPC's peace initiative convinced several MNF intellectuals including Lalkhawliana, Sainghaka and Lalnunmawia to make a peaceful settlement and they were thus prepared to work for it.⁸

(h) Laldenga's opinionated nature was another factor responsible which led the MNF to reconcile to the Government of India. R. Zamawia's comment describing Laldenga as 'ambitious, selfish, opinionated who never took or accepted advice from others,'⁹ which used to cause internal wrangling within the MNF organisation. C. Rochhinga, one of the original founders of the MNF also called Laldenga as 'dictatorial, selfish and ambitious'

8. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

9. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, Ex. MNF 'Army Chief', Dated 17th April 1993. Place: Chawnpui, Aizawl.

which went against maintaining good and spontaneous cooperation in the MNF.¹⁰

(i) Apart from the lack of cohesion and internal weakness, the MNF President, Laldenga himself started making overtures for a peaceful settlement with the Government of India. It seems that he had lost hope in Mizoram independence. Once, he stated that, "I led you out from India.... perhaps I may not be the best leader to lead you inside again.... In a dramatic volta-face, he later admitted, "Our party's demand was self determination for the Mizos which does not necessarily mean secession from Indian Union...."¹¹ Laldenga also said that, "When I look twenty years ahead, I cannot see any international opinion in favour of us...."¹² The above statements clearly indicate that Laldenga no longer firm faith in the movement which was initiated by himself.

Further, fresh recruitment and collection of taxes became more and more difficult. As a result, the MNF maintained their operation on extremely low key resulting

10. Scholar's interview with C. Rochhinga, one of the Founders of the MNF and the First MNF Treasurer, Dated 15th May 1993, Aizawl.

11. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

12. Ibid.

in some cracks inside the MNF set up. It appears, therefore, that Laldenga was losing his grip on the set up that he built.

CONTACT WITH INDIA

It should be noted that prior to the official contact with the Indian Government by the MNF headquarters, its President Laldenga personally made a clandestine link with Indian officials for the purpose of a peaceful negotiation, which was proved from his letter known as "Mizoram Credential" dated 18th December 1971. It reads:

"The under mentioned gentlemen were commissioned as special Envoy of President to act and speak on behalf of the 'Government of Mizoram':

1. Mr. R. Zamawia
2. Mr. Lalnunmawia."¹³

Moreover, in late 1973, Laldenga sent a letter to the Prime Minister of India to seek a peaceful negotiation with India. He said:

"... Since November 1973, my officials have been meeting your representatives to discuss the question of restoration of peace and normalcy... I would request for the facility of my coming to India which I am prepared to

13. "Mizoram Credential", No. M/7/71/139, Dated 18th December 1971. Source: Interview with R. Zamawia, op.cit.

do so... only if strict secrecy is about my colleagues without the feeling I am working under my duress...."¹⁴

In September 1973, Laldenga sent his aide Zoramthanga to Karachi to get a clearance from Pakistan to go over to Afghanistan to carry on talks with the Indian officials. Zoramthanga managed to contact them to convey the desire of their leader to go to New Delhi.¹⁵ However, in the Camp, without knowing that their leader was planning to make a peace negotiation with India, the underground preparation was going on in full swing. During 1973 itself, there had been some nineteen encounters including ambushes, killing etc. On 10th March 1974, the vehicle of Mizoram Lt. Governor was also ambushed near Zanlawn village about 55 kilometres north of Aizawl. Thus, Laldenga's secret feelers to the Central Government were in vain due to the continuation of ambushing, looting, arsoning and killing etc. Among the ugly incidents that occurred during the time was the killing of a D.I.G., I.G.P., and S.P. of the high ranking senior police officers on 13th January 1975.¹⁶

14. Laldenga's Letter to the Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Dated 20th August 1973. Source: R. Zamawia.

15. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, the MNF President, Dated 26th July 1973. Place: Ramhlun Veng, Aizawl.

16. Lahnuna, C., Lalliana, K.C. Mizoram G.K. (in Mizo), Bethesda Printing Press, Aizawl, 1971, p. 64.

However, there was an encouraging gesture both from the MNF and the Government of India in the middle of 1975, after Laldenga took another initiative to approach the Central Government. Subsequently, unofficial discussions took place between Laldenga and the Government. In Mizoram, all political parties, church leaders as well as social organisations welcomed Laldenga's initiative to approach the Government of India.

In pursuance of the peace effort, Laldenga's aide Zoramthanga flew to Bangkok to meet Indian official to inquire where official talk could be initiated.¹⁷ In the second week of September 1975, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), which directly dealt with the MNF paid Rs. 15,000/- to the MNF leader Laldenga to leave Pakistan for further talks. Ultimately, Laldenga came to India from West Germany on 24th December 1975. After about two months 'Press Statement' was signed between the MNF leaders and the Indian officials on 18th February 1976 at New Delhi. According to the 'Press Statement', the MNF agreed to solve the Mizo problems within the framework of Indian Constitution and the Government of India also agreed to give facilities to the MNF to hold a meeting in Calcutta in

17. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

in the second week of March 1976. Both the MNF and the Government of India also agreed to stoppage of all their activities.¹⁸

However, the MNF leaders in the Arakans had a different perspective and insisted that their President Laldenga should come over to their headquarters for a convention and to draft a peace proposal. The leaders in the Arakans felt that it was not convenient to have a meeting in an 'alien nation'.¹⁹ But after a long discussion, Zoramthanga managed to convince the other leaders for they were assured of a safe conduct by the Central Government and thus, the MNF convention was held at Calcutta.

CALCUTTA CONVENTION

The Calcutta Convention was held on 24th March to 1st April 1976. At first it was named a "National Emergency Convention", which was attended by 35 MNF leaders comprising of all the MNF Executive Committee Members, senior 'Army' officers, 'Cabinet Ministers' and several 'Civil' Officers. Zoramthanga, Chawngzuala and Biakchhunga

18. An Agreement signed between Indian officials and the MNF leaders on 18th February 1976, New Delhi. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

19. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, Ex. MNF President, Dated 15th July 1993, Place: Khatla, Aizawl.

were entrusted with the collection of the MNF delegates from their places.²⁰

As stated, the MNF officials were not too enthusiastic to attend the convention at Calcutta for fear of surveillance or arrest. However, the MNF leaders left their headquarters on 15th March 1976 to have a meeting in Calcutta. The MNF leaders left for the Arakan and reached Calcutta on 23rd March 1976. They stayed at Bullyganj S.I.B. Office where the Convention was held, while Laldenga stayed at Park Hotel.²¹

On the first day of the meeting, Chairman Laldenga read out the Holy Bible and prayed and gave a brief report of his activities. The meeting ended without further discussion. The next day, the Chairman made it known elections held in the Arakans in his absence* were illegal and the meeting again ended without proper discussion.

The third meeting held on 26th March, elected a new leader for the MNF following the demand of Laldenga.

20. Interview with R. Haleluia, op.cit.

21. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, op.cit.

* It should be mentioned that Laldenga rarely stayed and visited the MNF Headquarters in the Arakans. Elections were held according to their Constitution in his absence which dethroned from the MNF Presidentship. The details of the MNF Organisation set up are mentioned in Chapter VI.

Obviously, he was elected once again as the President of the MNF. On the fourth day of the meeting, Laldenga gave a detailed report about how he contacted Indian officials for negotiation and also stressed vehemently the needs to have peace talk with the Indian Government. While some members supported Laldenga's idea, several members strongly opposed it. As a result, the atmosphere of the meeting became very tense, but Laldenga was very calm and allowed every one to express his opinion freely. But he also said that the room/place where they held the meeting was having 'ears', which surprised all the members.²² Malsawma Colney stood up and said: "In 1971-72, we arrested some of our own colleagues accusing them of trying to initiate a peace settlement with India and we humiliated them calling them as enemy of our nation. To me, it is unacceptable and unreasonable to express urgent need to make a peaceful settlement only after three years of those sufferings..."²³ As Malsawma was supported by several members, the fourth day of the meeting ended without any decision. Laldenga's opponent alleged that opinion could not be voiced because of the "veiled and thinly concealed threats held out by their leader."²⁴

22. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

23. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics (in Mizo), Lenchhawng Press, Aizawl, 1993, p. 14.

24. Nibedon, Nirmal. Mizoram: The Dagger Brigade, Lancer Publisher, New Delhi, 1981, p. 216.

On 29th March 1976, amidst high tension and after a long deliberation and discussion, Laldenga, using his oratory convinced his colleagues in favour of negotiation with the Government of India within the framework of Indian Constitution.²⁵ It was the triumph of Laldenga's charisma and as a result, his critics had to submit to his leadership.

Thus, the Calcutta convention opened a new dimension by deciding to negotiate within the framework of Indian Constitution. The convention appointed three persons namely, Laldenga, Rualchhina and Biakvela to form the MNF delegation to pursue the peace effort. The delegation proceeded towards New Delhi while the other MNF leaders went to their respective places.

THE 'JULY AGREEMENT' AND THE FIRST ROUND OF TALK

After the Calcutta convention, some preliminary discussions took place between the MNF delegation and the Indian Government in New Delhi. As a result, an agreement was signed between the MNF leader and the Indian officials on 1st July 1976, which was known as the 'July Agreement' of 1976. According to the 'July Agreement of 1976', the MNF acknowledged Mizoram as an integral part of India, and

25. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 16.

agreed to surrender arms and abjure violence. The MNF agreed to solve the Mizo political problems within the framework of Indian Constitution. The Central Government also agreed to suspend all security operations to create a climate of understanding for the peace process and both sides agreed to hold further talks.²⁶

The 'July Agreement of 1976' sent a wave of jubilation throughout the territory in no time and the strife-torn people were filled with new hopes. It was also welcomed by different political parties in Mizoram. The Mizoram Congress (I) President sent a telegram to S.L. Khurana welcoming the Agreement and also wishing permanent peace in the territory.²⁷ The People's Conference sent a telegram to the Prime Minister of India welcoming the 'July Agreement' and hoping for a lasting peace in Mizoram.²⁸ Mizoram Chief Minister, CH. Chhunga also sent a telegram to congratulate the Prime Minister.²⁹ In pursuance of the 'July Agreement', the Lt. Governor of Mizoram issued an

26. Provision of the 'July Agreement of 1976', signed between Laldenga and the Indian Official, S.L. Khurana on 1st July 1976, New Delhi. Source: M.S. Lalrinthanga.

27. Hranggaia, MPCC President's Telegram to S.L. Khurana, Home Secretary, Dated 5th July 1976, Aizawl. Source: Ibid.

28. Thangridema, Acting P.C. President's Telegram to the Prime Minister of India, Dated 6th July 1976. Source: P.C. Office, Aizawl.

29. CH. Chhunga, Mizoram Chief Minister's Telegram to the Prime Minister of India, Dated 8th July 1976. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

order of suspension of security operation in Mizoram on 6th July 1976 for a period of three months to facilitate establishment of a camp for the collection of arms from the MNF.

Optimism, however, did not last long. Hardly had the ink of the 'July Agreement' dried, when Laldenga informed his followers in Mizoram not to surrender their arms to the authorities because nothing tangible had been agreed yet. He also called the 'July Agreement' as a 'press statement', and only an understanding between the MNF and the Government of India.³⁰ Therefore, the undergrounds continued their guerrilla activities and in retaliation, hostile military operations were again undertaken by the Indian security forces.

However, Laldenga once again pleaded for suspension of military operations and reiterated his willingness to solve the Mizo problem within the framework of Indian Constitution. The Government, therefore, called off the security operations on 24th December 1976, and thus, the talks resumed.³¹

30. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 20.

31. Sareen, V.I.K. North East India in Flame, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, p. 160.

But there was hardly any progress at the negotiations. Therefore, Laldenga was accused of buying time and the Central Government threatened to call off the talks. Defending Laldenga's activities, Zoramthanga said that, "Laldenga was careful not to rush things because the future of the Mizo nation rested upon the talks. If he made a wrong commitment, the survival of the Mizo nation will be at stake and he would have to pay for the consequence.... that was why he was buying time...."³² However, it was reported that Laldenga made a fresh suggestion that he should be installed as head of an interim Government in Mizoram without holding an election. But the Central Government turned down such suggestion saying that such proposal was undemocratic and unconstitutional.³³ According to Zairemthanga, it was the main cause of the deadlock in the first round of talk. However, in a press report, which appeared in the Times of India, Laldenga was said to have stated,

"When I met Prime Minister Morarji Desai in February 1977, the P.M. Morarji Desai told me that he could not accept the MNF problem as a Mizo political problem and had insisted that

32. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit., and R. Haleluia also said the same thing.

33. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, Ex. P.C. Cabinet Minister, Dated 21st January 1995. Dawrpui Vengthar, Aizawl.

the MNF should lay down their arms unconditionally. Unless the Central Government accepted our problem as a political problem, there could be no solution. I do not believe that military power can solve the Mizo problem."³⁴

One thing was certain that during the time of Morarji Desai, the MNF and the Government of India could not discuss the Mizo political problems amicably.

As there was hardly any progress in the peace talk, Laldenga was asked to leave the country by 6th June 1977. But Laldenga was hesitant to leave and once again reiterated to abjure violent activities and agreed to implementation of the 'July Agreement of 1976'. Therefore, peace negotiation resumed once again. Laldenga drafted a peace proposal for the implementation of the agreement and sent it to the MNF headquarters for further discussion and consideration. According to the draft proposals, a peace camp was to be set up in a transborder post in extreme south-west of Mizoram. But the draft proposals were modified by the MNF headquarters and sent back to their President in New Delhi with a new scheme. But the Central Government rejected the new proposals of the MNF. Consequently, the talks collapsed dramatically and Laldenga

34. The Times of India, Dated 9th November 1979.

was again asked to leave India on 24th November 1977.³⁵

Laldenga clarified the reason for the failure of the first round of talks and stated that the Indian Government did not want to make an honourable settlement, and only intended to dishonour the MNF. He further said, "While we want to make a peace camp to create conducive atmosphere for the talks, the Government of India only intended to drive us out and store up us in a so called peace camp, so that they could be able to do whatever they want after we were being captured...."³⁶ Differences of opinion about the proposal of a peace camp was thus, the main cause of the collapse of the talks.

In early 1978, Laldenga wrote a letter to the Home Minister of India proposing to resume a peace talk and also reiterated his readiness to surrender arms by the Republic Day of 1978. He, however, made it plain that the implementation of the agreement would be possible only if the forthcoming Mizoram Assembly elections were stayed.

It was an open secret in Mizoram that Laldenga at that stage wanted only a full fledged state with himself as

35. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, Ex. MNF President, op.cit.

36. Laldenga's Letter to Sakhawliana, P.C. Vice President, Aizawl, Dated 10th October 1977. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

the Chief Minister of an interim Government. But the authorities in New Delhi were not ready to fulfill Laldenga's demand. Moreover, it was a fact that Mizoram Chief Minister Brig. T. Sailo was reluctant to step down in favour of Laldenga. As a result, it was alleged that T. Sailo opposed the idea of reopening a peace talk which created a strained relationship between the MNF and the P.C. and it ultimately led to a split of the P.C. into two groups, P.C. and P.C.'B' in late 1978. The dissident group of the P.C. who later become P.C.'B' alleged that the P.C. Ministry led by T. Sailo had gone astray from the party's main aim and objective, that is 'to restore peace and tranquility in the territory'. However, due to strained relationship between the ruling P.C. and the MNF, the undergrounds resorted to violent activities and in retaliation, the security forces also intensified measures to keep law and order in the territory. Laldenga was thus, categorically informed by the Indian Government that the idea of an interim Government with him at the helm of affairs was constitutionally impossible to consider.³⁷

Laldenga asked the hardcore MNF leaders in the Arakans to come over to New Delhi to discuss their future

37. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, Ex. P.C. Cabinet Minister, op.cit.

course of action. But the MNF leaders refused to go to New Delhi and instead, insisted on Laldenga's coming to the MNF headquarters.³⁸ But he was detained in New Delhi and kept under 'home arrest' by the Government of India and was not allowed any movement outside the capital.³⁹ Therefore, Laldenga sent a letter to his Vice President Tlangchhuaka stating, "... The Government of India has been persistent in their stand that no further talks are possible unless the arms held by us are brought out ... I, therefore, feel the time has come to make an arrangement ... before the end of 31st March 1978."⁴⁰

Simultaneously, Laldenga sent another letter to the Home Minister Charan Singh and said,

"... Sir, I am requesting my headquarters to take necessary steps for bringing overground and depositing our arms.... I have also given them a time bound programme.... A copy of my letter to my Vice President is also enclosed.... If this meets your approval, I shall now send our party General Secretary Zoramthanga to the Headquarters for further discussion...."⁴¹

38. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, op.cit.

39. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

40. Laldenga's Letter to the MNF Vice President Tlangchhuaka, Dated 25th February 1978. Source: Tlangchhuaka.

41. Laldenga's Letter to Indian Home Minister, Charan Singh, Dated 28th February 1978, Source: Zoramthanga.

Therefore, Zoramthanga was sent to the MNF headquarters and he reached Aizawl on 10th March 1978. As the Central Government could not provide him a Helicopter to go over to the MNF headquarters in the Arakans, he went to Champhai, his home town to pay a visit to his relatives on 13th March 1978.⁴² However, on the next morning, he was beguiled back to Calcutta on the ground that Laldenga wanted to see him, and was given a forged message. But without taking him directly to New Delhi, he was detained at Calcutta for ten days at the S.I.B. rest house and all his important documents were confiscated.⁴³

The reason behind this attempted confusion was nothing but a plot against Laldenga for toppling him from the MNF presidentship. Taking advantage of the misunderstanding between T. Sailo, the Chief Minister of Mizoram and Laldenga, the Government of India thought that they might be able to overthrow Laldenga with the help of some discontented MNF leaders. This explains Zoramthanga's disappearance for some time.

When Laldenga came to know what had happened, he was furious and in a long letter to the Prime Minister of India he said,

42. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

43. Ibid.

"... Sir, I never imagined that a Government worth the name would ever stoop so low as to forge a message in other's name.... If the Government back out of their words of honour and start wrongful detention of the member of peace delegation, who would ever dare come to Delhi to talk with the Government of India in future. I am afraid this unholy tactic will scare away any chance of peaceful solution...."⁴⁴

Consequent upon this development, the peace talk between the MNF and the Government was called off. Subsequently, Laldenga was arrested on 8th July 1978. Following the calling off of the peace talk, the MNF 'National Council Meeting' unanimously passed a resolution to reject the 'July Agreement' of 1976, and stated: "We are compelled to do this and if any untoward incidents happen, it will be the responsibility of the Indian Government."⁴⁵ Thus, the MNF once again intensified their violent activities in the territory. Moreover, the MNF Vice President issued a 'Quit Mizoram Order' in May 1979,⁴⁶ which was followed by several ugly incidents. The MNF targets were mainly government employees, police, para-military forces and the non-Mizos. According to the

44. Laldenga's Letter to the Prime Minister of India, Dated 27th September 1978. Source: Zoramthanga.

45. MNF National Council Meeting Minute, Dated 20th April 1979, Camp: Arakans. Source: Tlangchhuaka.

46. "Quit Mizoram Order", Issued by the MNF Vice President, Dated 24th August 1979. Camp: Arakans. Source: Zoramthanga.

"Quit Mizoram Order", all non-Mizos staying in Mizoram were to quit before 1st July 1979.⁴⁷

The MNF had been carrying out their operations effectively with acts of violence and depredations. On being questioned by some visitors as to why he has allowed killing of innocent people, Laldenga replied thus, "It is painful but this is war. Killing of security personnel does not create much impact in Indian Parliament. Soldiers are to die. Even if a hundred soldiers get killed, more replacements are despatched. But when we kill civilians, it created a storm in the Indian Parliament." He further added that, "In a war, killing has to be done and killing is not a murder. The main thing is an 'Order' to quit Mizoram. Those who disobeyed the 'Order' are to be eliminated."⁴⁸

In June 1979, an alliance called 'Steering Committee' was formed at Aizawl by Mizoram political parties including Mizoram Congress (I),* Mizoram Janata,** P.C.'B', Mizoram Democratic Front and Mizo Union. The main

47. Ibid.

48. Mizoram Towards Peace, Published by DIPR & T, Government of Mizoram, 1980, p. 39.

* Congress (I) in Mizoram was better called Mizoram Congress (I). Congress (I) in Mizoram has also a separate Constitution in line with the main Party Constitution.

** Mizoram Janata was a party recognised by the Election Commission and was aligned to the Janata Party of the Centre.

purpose of the Steering Committee was to maintain a congenial atmosphere for the peace efforts following the strained relationship between the ruling P.C. and the MNF.⁴⁹ The Steering Committee felt that T. Sailo led P.C. Ministry was the main reason for impeding peace settlement. Therefore, they urged the Central Government to comply with all the demands made by Laldenga including dissolution of the T. Sailo Ministry, and also requested the Centre to solve the Mizo problem in an amicable manner.⁵⁰

Laldenga was aware that the bulk of the Mizos were desperately longing for the return of peace and normalcy in the territory, and found another moral support in the Steering Committee which openly demanded of the Central Government to dissolve the T. Sailo Ministry. Thus, Laldenga requested all Mizoram MLAs to resign, which created a new wave of political pressure. The P.C.'B', who had four MLAs tendered their resignation honouring Laldenga's request. Hence, Mizoram Congress (I) MLAs refused to comply with Laldenga's request and thus, withdrew from the Steering Committee. Besides, the Central Government ruled out the Steering Committee's request to

49. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 102.

50. Steering Committee Convention Resolution, Dated 24th November 1979, Aizawl, Dawrpui M.E. School. Source: K. Hrangthankima.

dissolve T. Sailo's Ministry in Mizoram. Therefore, the undergrounds resorted to violent activities and in retaliation, the security force also intensified measures to keep law and order in the territory. Although the Steering Committee accused T. Sailo led P.C. Ministry of standing on the way of peaceful settlement, the Ministry denied the allegation stating that it was all the time ready to step down if it helped the settlement of peace. In their opinion, the MNF or the Central Government did not urge them to step down or resign to enable the peace settlement.⁵¹ Therefore, P.C. Ministry did not succumb to the local political pressure to resign to facilitate Laldenga's coming to power through back door. The P.C. Ministry made it clear that they had nothing to do with the talks, and that it wholly depended upon the warring parties.⁵²

With the return of India Gandhi to power, efforts to find a settlement of the Mizo problem resumed in 1980. Laldenga met the Prime Minister on 4th April 1980 and both sides agreed to cease fire.⁵³ Consequently, the case

51. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, op.cit.

52. Ibid.

53. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 103.

instituted against Laldenga during the Janata Government was withdrawn by the C.B.I., and thus, the talk resumed on 13th April 1980. The MNF, therefore, issued a cease fire order on 16th June 1980.⁵⁴

After a series of talks between the MNF and the Indian Government, rays of hope appeared when there was a rumour of 'Christmas Gift' to Mizoram that year. Hence, Laldenga was allowed to visit the MNF headquarters at the Arakans to formalise peace proposals by March 1981. He returned to New Delhi on 17th March with 26-point demands made by the MNF 'National Council' and also submitted to the Prime Minister.⁵⁵ The demands listed by the MNF 'National Council' included among other things constitution of a state with special powers on Kashmir pattern, greater Mizoram with contiguous Mizo inhabited areas of Cachar, Manipur and Tripura, dissolution of Brig. T. Sailo led P.C. Ministry in Mizoram and formation of an Interim Government headed by the MNF etc.⁵⁶ At that time, G. Parthasarathy, Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister was the chief negotiator with the MNF on behalf of the Central

54. Zoramthanga, MNF Vice President, Letter No. I/80/16, Dated 16th June 1980. Source: Zoramthanga.

55. Scholar's interview with Aichhinga, the MNF Peace Emissary during the peace talk, Dated 12th April 1993. Place: Aizawl.

56. Ibid.

Government. Since their first meeting on 31st May 1981, a series of talks took place between Laldenga and Parthasarathy. It is said that the Government representatives managed to whittle down several proposals of the MNF. The following were the political demands of Laldenga:

- (a) A new Constitution of India represented by Mizoram and accepted by the MNF.
- (b) A separate flag for Mizoram and dissolution of the P.C. Ministry led by Brig. T. Sailo.
- (c) Formation of an interim Government in Mizoram headed by the MNF till a fresh election.
- (d) Border trade with Bangladesh and Burma (now Myanmar).
- (e) Election of Governor for Mizoram (like the American Political System).
- (f) Special provision to safeguard Mizo customary law.
- (g) Creation of a Greater Mizoram by adding contiguous areas of Tripura, Manipur and Assam Mizo inhabited areas.
- (h) Special Constitution for Mizoram with full fledge statehood.⁵⁷

57. The Sunday (Weekly), Dated 12th July 1981.

All the demands of the MNF were discussed carefully with the Central leaders but no agreement could emerge. Therefore, Laldenga once again went to the MNF headquarters for further consultation with other rebel leaders and returned to New Delhi on 12th September 1981.⁵⁸ With fresh proposals he met the Central Government officials. He reiterated the dismissal of Brig. T. Sailo Ministry and pressed for his installation as an adviser to the Mizoram Government in the interim period, failing which, he threatened to call off the talks and leave India.⁵⁹ The negotiation therefore, took a crucial turn following the ultimate demand made by the MNF chief. As the MNF and the Government could not have an agreement, the 1981 Christmas was thus, over without any 'Christmas presents'. The Home Minister of India, therefore, called off the peace talk in January 1982 and categorically informed Laldenga that "since we cannot make an agreement, there is no use for further negotiation. We talked as friends and we must now be separated as well."⁶⁰ The Central Government was very firm but friendly. As the Government offered to drop

58. Ibid.

59. The Times of India, Dated 25th November 1981.

60. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 135.

Laldenga wherever he liked, Laldenga chose London because he did not want to return to his native place empty handed. As such, Laldenga and his family were dropped in London on 21st April 1982.

With the failure of peace talk, a Memorandum was jointly submitted to the Central Government by the P.C., Congress (I), Mizo Union, Mizoram Janata and Mizo Democratic Front saying that it was beyond the imagination of the Mizo people that the peace talk could break down particularly when an amicable settlement was anxiously expected.⁶¹ The Mizo students belonging to the MZP also sent a Memorandum to the Prime Minister and conveyed that the deadlock in the peace talk would lead young men to join the rank of undergrounds.⁶²

The Mizos were in favour of peace talk and supported Laldenga's stand and demands. Though the P.C. led T. Sailo from time to time announced that they were ready to step down in favour of peace settlement, the people still blamed the P.C. for the break down of the talks in 1982. Laldenga blamed T. Sailo for creating obstacle in the negotiation

61. Scholar's interview with K. Hrangthankima, Secretary, All Party Meeting, Dated 6th April 1993. Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

62. Ibid.

but at the same time, he also blamed the Central Government for not dismissing the P.C. Ministry in Mizoram as they did in Punjab and Tamil Nadu in 1980.⁶³

Following the break down of the talk in 1982, another "Quit Mizoram Order" was issued by the MNF on 1st May 1982, to all non-Mizos in the territory except (a) those employed by the Churches; (b) Assamese; (c) Gorkhals residing in Mizoram before 1966, and (d) any Mongolian tribes, to leave Mizoram before 21st June 1982.⁶⁴ According to the "Quit Mizoram Order", those who disobeyed the 'Order' were to be dealt with by the 'Mizoram Sawrkar'. In London, Laldenga expressed his desire for the resumption of peace talk with the Government of India but it had to be unconditional and only outside India. With the break down of the talks, Laldenga revoked his prior commitment to solve the Mizo problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution and stated that even if talks were to be held, it had to be unconditional and only outside India.⁶⁵

On 31st May 1983, another joint memorandum was submitted to the Central Government by Mizoram political

63. Illustrated Weekly of India, Dated 4th December 1982, and Indian Express, Dated 18th January 1983.

64. "Quit Mizoram Order", Issued by the MNF in May 1982. Source: Tlangchhuaka.

65. The Indian Express, Dated 18th January 1983.

parties comprising of the P.C., Mizo Convention, Congress (I), Mizo Union, urging the Central Government to enter into a fresh negotiation with the MNF.⁶⁶ But the Central Government were in no mood to start a fresh talk with the MNF especially on Laldenga's new term because they were confident that they would be able to solve the Mizo political problem on the strength of normal administrative measures. The territory, therefore, faced another dark period.

The term of the P.C. Ministry was over in early 1984 and the Government fixed 25th April 1984 for the Assembly general elections. During 1984 election campaign, there was a great deal of competition among various political parties in Mizoram to obtain the 'blessing' of the MNF President Laldenga then staying at London. The main reason was that the bulk of the Mizos were fed up with disturbance and were longing for peace and normalcy. Therefore, it was obvious that any party who could obtain Laldenga's blessing or the MNF support only could form a Government in Mizoram which expectedly would help open a new door for peace negotiation. Laldenga was also aware that if he played his

66. Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by Political Parties in Mizoram, Dated 31st May 1983.
Source: K. Hrangthankima.

card with adroitness, it might endorse his dream to sit in the legitimate power centre.

Therefore, Laldenga was quite generous in 'blessing' anyone who came to see him in London. When Mizo Convention (M.C.) sent its leaders to see him, they came home with the 'blessing' of Laldenga. His video tape message given to the M.C. was directed against the P.C. and the Congress (I). In the cassette, Laldenga said, "Mizoram Congress (I) is only a branch of the Indian Congress (I). Let them all go home to Delhi with their luggage...."⁶⁷ He also blamed the P.C. and the Central Government for the break down of the talks.

In order to compete with the M.C., Congress (I) party in Mizoram sent its President Lalduhawma to London to see Laldenga. Somehow, Lalduhawma managed to convince Laldenga, and obtain another 'blessing' from him, which became the deciding factor for Congress (I) to win the 1984 Legislative Assembly election in Mizoram. In his video message to the Mizos Laldenga said: "... The leaders of Mizoram Congress (I) are with me. They assured that they will make their best efforts to restore peace and normalcy

67. Laldenga's Video Cassette (in Mizo) in favour of the Mizo Convention, which was played by the M.C. on the eve of 1984 Assembly General Election, Aizawl. Source: K. Hrangthankima.

and try to press the Central Government to start a fresh talk, and that they will not be used by the Central Government.... As a gentleman, I believe and trust them...."⁶⁸ Consequently, Laldenga sent another tape message to the Mizo people in favour of the Congress (I) stating, "...no single candidate from the P.C. should be elected...."⁶⁹ As a result, Congress (I) bagged 19 out of 29 elective seats. Election in one constituency was countermanded following the murder of P.C. candidate by the MNF. An article in India Today observed thus:

"... It was a tape conversation ... that the Congress (I) had played in every constituencies which seems to have had a greater impact on the electorate than the combing efforts of the Prime Minister and her son, Rajiv, and lesser dignitaries like the Chief Minister of Assam and Meghalaya, who had made a whirlwind tour of the state...."⁷⁰

The voice of the MNF was the deciding factor in Ministry making and the strategies and tactics adopted by the MNF were thus, effective enough in maintaining its image and potential strength. The MNF not only supported

68. Laldenga's Video Tape Message used by Mizoram Congress (I) for their Election Campaign on the eve of 1984 Assembly Election. Source: Congress (I) Office, Aizawl.

69. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 148.

70. India Today, Dated 31st May 1984, p. 30.

the Congress (I) verbally but also adopted violent method and killed a P.C. candidate from Champhai constituency to show that they really meant it. The MNF chief really wished that the Congress (I) should form a Ministry in Mizoram to help him sit in the legitimate power centre. It was therefore, a fact that not only the Mizos were longing for peace, but the MNF too were eager to settle the Mizo problem.

SECOND ROUND OF TALK

Having come to the office largely through the 'blessing' of the MNF, the new Chief Minister Lalthanhawla declared: "My first priority will be to have talks resumed with Laldenga...."⁷¹ He also categorically announced that his party would not repeat the mistake of the former P.C. Ministry and assured: "I will not delay a single second to vacate my seat (Chief Ministership) in favour of the MNF for the implementation of a permanent peace and normalcy...."⁷²

Following the State Congress (I) commitment for the resumption of peace talk, the Central Government also took a positive step in favour of the new Mizoram Congress (I)

71. Ibid.

72. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 149.

Ministry, and reconciliated their relationship with the MNF. Subsequently, Laldenga was brought back to New Delhi from London on 29th October 1984. In order to facilitate a congenial atmosphere for peace negotiation, both the MNF and the Government of India suspended their operations. The MNF also revoked their "Quite Mizoram Order" on 16th October 1984,⁷³ and thus, the second round of peace negotiation started on 17th December 1984, after thirty five months of interval.

It should be mentioned that peace negotiation could not be speeded up in spite of immense pressures from the Mizos, because there were several important points to discuss which obviously needed time. However, the negotiation went on smoothly and the Home Minister of India made it known that the conclusion of peace talk could be expected sometime in December 1985.⁷⁴ Hrangthankima, a peace delegate of Mizoram Regional Party Coordination Committee said that "in November 1985, all important points were finalised except the concluding chapter."⁷⁵ However, peace accord could not be made as expected.

73. Lalhnuna, C., Lalliana, K.C. Mizoram G.K., op.cit., p. 82.

74. Zoeng Weekly (Mizo) Magazine, Vol. IV, No. I, Dated 6th January 1986, Aizawl.

75. Scholar's interview with K. Hrangthankima, Former General Secretary and a Peace Delegate of Mizoram Regional Party Coordination Committee, Dated 7th April 1994, Place: Aizawl.

In Aizawl, there was a rumour that settlement would be delayed and the ruling Mizoram Congress (I), who come to power with the 'blessing' of the MNF were responsible for the delay. In the Assembly, the P.C. President Brig. T. Sailo moved a motion stating that, "This Assembly is the opinion that the Government of India should speedily and successfully concluded peace talk without any further delay."⁷⁶ However, even after a long debate and discussion, the House could not pass the motion as it was the ruling Congress (I) MLAs who wanted to omit the words "without any further delay" because the ruling Congress (I) did not like to shoulder the blame for delaying. As a result, the P.C. MLAs left the House, and the Assembly passed the motion in an amended form stating: "This Assembly places on record its appreciation of the endeavour made by the Government of India and the MNF to bring about peace in Mizoram and urges upon both the parties to speedily and successfully conclude the current peace talk."⁷⁷

The Mizos were hoping that a settlement would be made before the end of December 1985 and watched television hopefully in December to see the signing of peace

76. Proceedings. Third Session of the Fourth Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Aizawl, Dated 20th-29th March 1985, p. 251.

77. Ibid.

settlement. But the hopes were belied when Laldenga made a phone call to some of his friends at Aizawl indicating that the peace accord would take place sometime around 10th January 1986.⁷⁸ Therefore, Laldenga went to London to spend Christmas with his family, while Tawnluia, a member of the MNF peace delegation came to Aizawl. In his press interview, Tawnluia stated: "Talks between Laldenga and the India Prime Minister would be resumed as soon as Laldenga was summoned back to New Delhi."⁷⁹ He did not mention why peace accord was not made before the end of 1985.

Surprisingly, there was adverse political development in Mizoram which shocked many peace loving citizens. No one in Mizoram could ever imagine that Mizoram Congress (I) Chief Minister Lalthanhawla would obstruct the peace process deviating from his political commitment during 1984 Assembly General election. It seems all along that Lalthanhawla was busy in New Delhi trying to preserve his Chief Ministership.⁸⁰ H. Thansanga, then Cabinet Minister of Mizoram Government was quite right when

78. Zoeng, Weekly (Mizo), Vol. IV, No. I, Aizawl, Dated 6th January 1986.

79. Press Interview of 'Brig. General' Tawnluia, the MNF Peace Delegate, Aizawl, Dated 6th January 1986. Source: Zoeng, Ibid.

80. Zoeng, Weekly (Mizo), Vol. IV, No. 23, Aizawl, Dated 9th June 1986.

observed: "It was not an easy task to form a Ministry and it was quite difficult to get even electedvacation of seat before the end of the term must be quite difficult...."⁸¹ There was internal political crisis in Mizoram Congress (I) which resulted in resignation of Lalduhawma, a sitting Lok Sabha M.P. and President of Mizoram Pradesh Congress (I) Committee on 16th March 1986.⁸² However, his resignation was not approved by the Central Congress (I) for some time. A memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by All Party Joint Meeting stated:

"... Had it not been for our firm commitment to peace, we would have eagerly taken advantage of the situation against the Congress (I) Ministry in Mizoram in order to dislodge it. But once committed to the peace effort, we are strongly determined to pursue it on the very end ... we humbly beg to request you to give up party consideration on this issue, and wholeheartedly cooperate with us in our humanitarian endeavour towards peaceful settlement...."⁸³

In another endeavour to the peace process, Mizo students belonging to the MZP in Aizawl started a statewide

81. Ibid., Vol. IV, No. 24, Aizawl, Dated 16th June 1986.

82. Scholar's interview with Lalduhawma, Former Mizoram Congress (I) President, Dated 21st January 1995. Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

83. Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India by the All Party Joint Meeting in February 1986, Camp: New Delhi. Source: K. Hrangthankima.

agitation and organised an impressive public procession on 12th March 1986. On the same day, the All Party Joint Committee and Students Joint Action Committee also organised a procession in New Delhi from Janpath to Boat Club via India Gate. Pressures also mounted in Mizoram against the ruling Congress (I) Ministry to step down to make way for peace. A relay fasting was organised by the Mizo students in Aizawl which was joined by several Mizo prisoners in Tuirial Jail. Further, the students organised a successful total bandh on 3rd and 27th June 1986.

Therefore, the Central Government were curious about the situation in Mizoram and requested Laldenga to ensure his goodwill in calling off students' programme of further agitation. Subsequently, peace dialogue resumed between the MNF and the Government of India. Finally, the prolonged talk was concluded by signing a peace accord known as the 'Memorandum of Settlement' on 30th June 1986. It was signed by Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan on behalf of the Government of India and Laldenga, the MNF President on behalf of the MNF, and also Lalkhama, Chief Secretary of Mizoram on behalf of Mizoram Government. According to the Accord, the MNF agreed to renounce all underground activities and abjure violence and return to normal life within a stipulated time frame. The Central Government, on the other

hand, agreed to rehabilitate the MNF personnel coming overground to resettle. Subsequently, the Government of India lifted the ban on the MNF. With a view to elevating Mizoram to the status of full-fledged statehood, the Central Government introduced the 53rd Constitutional Amendment Bill with special safeguards and having provision of forty elective seats in the State Legislative Assembly.

The Mizos wholeheartedly welcomed the Accord, return of normalcy, and also welcomed their underground brethren who came back home with new hopes. Significantly, Laldenga defended the Accord saying, ".... Our fight was for acceptance as a self-respecting, self-determining and distinct ethnic group within India. Now that we have achieved that the problem is over...."⁸⁴ In pursuance of the Accord, the Chief Minister of Mizoram Lalthanhawla stepped down in favour of Laldenga, and became the Deputy Chief Minister.

It is known that the MNF demanded greater Mizoram with contiguous Mizo inhabited areas of Burma (now Myanmar) and Bangladesh, and those of the neighbouring states of Manipur and Tripura as well as Cachar District of Assam.

84. India Today, Vol. X, No. 13, Dated 15th July 1986, p. 40.

Although the Government of India and the MNF were not in a position to discuss such matter relating to international boundaries, at the same time, the Government of India turned down the MNF's demand of a greater Mizoram comprising of the Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur, Tripura and Cachar District of Assam. The accord only refers to constitutional provisions regarding change of state boundaries.

It is also known that the Government of India ruled out the MNF's demand for 'foreign trade' on the ground that it was a matter involving international affairs. Besides, Government of India also ruled out the MNF's demand for special status as applicable to Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370 of the Constitution. Moreover, the MNF slogan of a 'Christian State' found no place in the Accord. After all, in a secular country no particular state in India is entitled to have its own religion. A critical study of the Accord reveals that it is nothing but a personal triumph of Laldenga, who came to power through the back door without undergoing the acid test of electoral politics.

There is no denying the fact that the return of peace and normalcy were whole-heartedly welcomed by the Mizos. Twenty years of disturbance caused misery, immense hardship and economic insufficiency to the people, which

consequently turned Mizoram to one of the most backward areas in India. Therefore, the Mizos were quite anxious to step forward towards developmental process. It should be noted that developmental process could not be initiated under political extremism and militancy. That is why even the two disquieting features, namely, formal abandonment of 'greater Mizoram' and mere repetition of constitutional guarantees, did not raise any public debate. T. Sailo of People's Conference, however, made a faint reference to those points in the Assembly. The MNF also admitted that the Accord was not perfect and ideal. Laldenga said, "The Accord itself is not an ideal ... no Accord in this world could be an ideal. However, today we have an Accord ... and our hopes and aspirations will be fulfilled within this entity."⁸⁵

Laldenga considered the Accord only 'a beginning' and stated, "We have achieved the first step of what we set out to do."⁸⁶ In a press conference he made it known that he always wanted a 'political settlement' of the Mizo problem. Unlike the Punjab and the Assam Accords, the Prime Minister was not a signatory in the case of Mizoram as the

85. Laldenga's Public Speech at Aizawl Assam Rifles' Parade Ground, dated 5th July 1986. Source: The MNF Office, Aizawl.

86. The Statesman, dated 6th July 1986.

MNF was yet to acquire legitimacy by discarding objectionable features such as 'secession' etc. from its constitution. Laldenga too, admitted that it was not proper for the Prime Minister to sign an agreement with a party which was then underground. However, it goes to his credit that a duly elected government was asked to abdicate its lawful and constitutional position before its term expired only to satisfy a secessionist leader. This was undoubtedly a departure from sound constitutional and political practice. As already explained such a step was dictated by persistent demands in the whole of Mizoram in favour of Laldenga.

Soon after Laldenga's installation in the power centre, a large number of former MNF activists who had come overground between 1968 and 1972 were on collision course and started openly questioning the MNF Chiefs' authority to amend the party constitution adopted in November 1966 without consulting them. They were collectively known as 'Dumpawl' or blue group consisting mainly of the 'intellectuals' who surfaced as a rallying point for those opposed to him in the seventies. Earlier, the group was led by former MNF Vice President Lalnunmawia and R. Zamawia.⁸⁷

87. The Telegraph, dated 31st August 1986.

It may be mentioned that Laldenga got into action immediately after assuming office in the Coalition Ministry. He reiterated his resolve to complete the settlement of over 660 former MNF rank and file. At first, Laldenga ruled out general amnesty but in August 1986, he granted the same to the MNF men.

The MNF decided to go it alone in the polls held in February 1987 and ruled out seat agreement with any other party. The Coalition Ministry that started functioning following the Accord had to run into rough weather as the Deputy Chief Minister Lalthanhawla of Congress (I) found fault with some of Laldenga's speeches.⁸⁸ The understanding between the two politicians belonged to a distant past when they were together in the MNF. A seat adjustment deal between the Congress (I) and the P.C. fell through mainly because of differences over the withdrawal of candidates for different seats. While the Congress (I) stressed on 'development' of Mizoram, the P.C. was bent upon highlighting the long standing demands of the Mizos — establishment of greater Mizoram and dissolution of the Chakma Autonomous District Council.

The poll was dominated by the organisational

88. Ibid., dated 21st January 1987.

strength and tenacity of the 'big three' - the MNF, Congress (I) and the P.C. who were engaged in a fight to the finish. The Congress (I) and the P.C. seemed to evince a stronger penchant for appealing to regional aspiration than the MNF did. The MNF, on its part was biased towards social and economic issues. At least 13 activists of the MNF were in the fray for the elections.⁸⁹ Two former Presidents of the MNF, Laldenga and Tlangchhuaka faced each other in a four cornered tussle in the Sateek constituency. Once comrade-in-arms, the two drifted when the latter, a Mizo from Manipur masterminded a short-lived coup against Laldenga in their camp in Bangladesh. Tlangchhuaka, who surrendered in 1980 contested as a P.C. candidate. Three former 'generals' of the MNF's underground army also contested. The MNF 'Army Chief' for eight years Tawnluia was the party's nominee for Khawzawl constituency. Two other former MNF 'generals' however contested as P.C. candidates. One was Biakchhunga who surrendered in 1979 and the other was Sangkawia, who returned to the mainstream after the Accord. Sangkawia's main rival was his one-time colleague in the underground movement, Thangkima.⁹⁰

The election results show that the MNF making its

89. Ibid., dated 14th February 1987, and The Statesman, dated 20th January 1987.

90. The Telegraph, dated 1st February 1987.

electoral debut was able to win 24 seats which was no doubt a clear verdict in favour of the MNF that bade farewell to arms. There was the MNF 'wave' and the charisma of Laldenga to contend with. Laldenga had sought the mandate of the people as a verdict in favour of the sacrifices made by the MNF during the preceding two decades, and as a mark of protest against their sufferings during that period. The appeal to Mizo self-respect seemed to have dividend.⁹¹ The MNF was also entirely untried as a party and reaped the benefit of euphoria over the Accord. The MNF's promise of a 'clean government' carried great weight among the educated electorate. T. Sailo of the P.C. however, considered the MNF victory as 'the manifestation of youth power'.⁹² The MNF which captured twenty out of the twenty eight seats in Aizawl district did not win a single seat from the minority dominated Chhimtuipui district. The Congress (I) apart from winning four out of five seats in the Chhimtuipui district, also bagged three of the seven seats in Lunglei district with four going to the MNF. The MNF, besides sweeping the Aizawl town constituencies won the majority of its seats from the rest of the twenty-eight constituencies in Aizawl district.⁹³ The Congress (I) which had thirteen MLAs, could

91. The Sentinel, dated 19th February 1987 (Editorial).

92. Ibid.

93. Romei (Mizo) Daily News, Vol. XX, No. 5811, dated 1st June 1987, Aizawl.

capture six seats from Aizawl district. Among the notable defeats were that of all the Congress (I) Ministers in the Coalition Government, the Speaker and the sitting Lok Sabha M.P. and a former Speaker as a nominee of the P.C.

As in Punjab and Assam, the party that signed an Accord with the Central after a prolonged period of obstructiveness was able to win in Mizoram. It marked the transformation of the MNF from a secessionist party to a legitimate political party. The party which had really suffered at the MNF's hands is T. Sailo led P.C. which exposed certain local values while denouncing the MNF method and aims. The Congress (I) had already paid heavy price allowing Laldenga to become the interim Chief Minister. Worst, the Congress (I) decisive claim that the MNF was a tiger (the party's election symbol) that had lost its teeth by signing the Accord turned out to be counter productive.

However, in terms of percentage of votes, the MNF secured 36.62 per cent which meant that majority of the people were not with it. The Congress (I) who captured 13 seats got 33 per cent of the votes and against 23.7 per cent by the P.C.⁹⁴ It is clearly believed that the Mizos

94. The Statesman, dated 23rd February 1987.

had decided not to discard the former extremists without giving them a chance to govern. At the same time, MNF rise to power was as much a vote for change as it was for the latent nationalism preached by Laldenga. Laldenga, on his part, described the success of the MNF as a 'people's victory', and stated that he would maintain 'as close a relation as possible' with the Central. He made it known that Mizoram would not depend entirely on Central assistance as his emphasis would be on self reliance.

Ministry making was not an easy job for Laldenga as the MNF was a conglomeration representing a wide spectrum of interests ranging from gun wielding guerillas and deserters from different established parties including the Congress (I) to activists of the Mizo Convention and Mizo Peace Forum - the two regional parties when the Accord was signed. In addition, there was the powerful Young Mizo Association, having 500 branches over the state, whose general secretary was a 'consensus nominee' of the party's younger cadres. In less than a month following Laldenga's tenure as elected Chief Minister, factional squabbles surfaced which led to second expansion of the Ministry by inducting two more legislators.⁹⁵ Earlier, the first expansion increased the size of the Ministry to eleven from

95. Ibid., dated 14th March 1987.

the initial four and it included among others, Lalruata, Pastor of the United Pentecostal Church.⁹⁶ By September 1987, Laldenga was able to tackle temporarily five dissident MLAs in the party who demanded Ministerial berths.

From the very beginning, the MNF remained committed to weed out corruption in administration and elsewhere. A number of MNF leaders and Ministers were unequivocal in identifying the bureaucracy as the "fountain head of corruption".⁹⁷ A high power anti-corruption cell was formed to look into allegations of clandestine official deals and involvement of government personnel in them. In another drive against the bureaucrats, the MNF Ministry directed 20 senior officials to vacate their official flats as they owned luxurious houses of their own. Zoramthanga, the MNF Vice President and the second man in the Laldenga's cabinet warned corrupt and guilty officials of dismissal and even imprisonment. Thanghuama, the Speaker of the Assembly also considered corruption a major problem. The money that flown from the centre during the previous regimes helped them to prosper within a very short period, "Today, the State is poor, but not the officials" the Speaker added.⁹⁸

96. Ibid., dated 27th February 1987.

97. Ibid., dated 6th May 1987.

98. Ibid.

By the middle of 1987, Laldenga's legend started to fade. Laldenga's versatility was one thing and running the administration of a State with a volatile past and a challenging future was another. He had little experience of dealing with an entrenched bureaucracy which formed the core of the rich elite. Besides, some of Laldenga's followers had questioned his authority and threatened to defect.⁹⁹ This was attributed to his authoritarian style of functioning. Protest within the MNF also extended to matters that were either personal, such as the denial of a ticket to a 'hawk' like 'Col' Lalrawnliana for the Sateek by-election, or collective such as the disillusionment and indignation over the resettlement of the former MNA veterans, many of whom were languishing in Luangmual "Remna Run" camp. In addition, Mizoram bureaucracy was out to engineer defections in the MNF legislature party.¹⁰⁰ Laldenga himself suspecting a 'bureaucratic conspiracy' had to lean heavily on his Advocate-General Swaraj Kaushal who had been helping him for several years. The Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalkhama was asked to keep away from two Cabinet meetings which was unprecedented in administrative history.¹⁰¹

99. The Statesman, dated 18th June 1987.

100. The Shillong Times, dated 7th July 1987.

101. Ibid., dated 6th June 1987.

The Congress (I) victory in Village Council election in Lakher district and the allegation of discriminatory treatment to Pawi District Council skilfully utilized by the Congress (I) also eroded the MNF popularity. Even the threat to Laldenga's life became a political issue, and Mizoram Pradesh Congress (I) President Lalthanhawla described the news "as a plan to refurbish the quick and steady decline of image of Laldenga both at the national and State level and to draw public sympathy."¹⁰² The MNF leader was also charged with nepotism because of inducting his younger brother in the Ministry even though he had snapped connection with the underground set-up since 1970.¹⁰³ The problem of development due to lack of infrastructure and resources had become very apparent and even rehabilitation of underground returnees had become an uphill task.

The MNF Ministry, which committed to maintain a 'clean government' also faced several criticism involving corruption charges. Aichhinga, the P.H.E. Minister was charged with corruption when he allegedly tried to get 50% of profit from one supplier named Jain out of his contract.¹⁰⁴ It was also alleged that Forest Minister,

102. Ibid., dated 3rd November 1987.

103. Ibid., dated 6th June 1987.

104. Zoeng, op.cit., No. 20, dated 20th March 1988.

H. Lalruata celebrated his securing Master's Degree and his daughter's HSLC result by slaughtering a deer from Aizawl zoo.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, the MNF Ministry had another set back following a 'Ciger Scandal' case. It was alleged that three persons namely, Liantluanga, Richard T. Sailo and Lalchungnunga (all happened to be close relatives of Law Minister Saingura Sailo), established a North Eastern Tobacco Company (NETC) in collaboration with the Golden Tobacco Company (GTC) of Bombay at Vairengte village without taking a prior permission from the Central Government. Therefore, the NETC made Panama cigar without payment of any taxes to the Central Government¹⁰⁶ causing a loss of around 40 crores. The Chief Minister Laldenga said that his Government issued only a permission of making a Mizo cigar.¹⁰⁷

Besides, the MNF Ministry also annoyed the Church community by renewing the Excise Act in spite of immense criticism. In 1984, the Mizoram Congress (I) Ministry had

105. Huapzo (Mizo) Weekly Magazine, Vol. III, No. 3, dated 15th April 1988, Aizawl.

106. Sakeibaknei, Weekly (Mizo) Magazine, Vol. II, No. 115, dated 24th November 1987, Aizawl.

107. Zoeng, op.cit., Vol. V, No. 96, dated 3rd December 1987, Aizawl.

introduced Excise Act (Licence for selling liquor), which become one of the important sources of revenue to the Government. It was estimated that Rs. 3,729,000/- were earned by the Government annually.¹⁰⁸ However, the church leaders urged the Government frequently to withdraw the introduction of Excise Act. In their election campaign during 1987 Assembly election, the MNF expressed their commitment to withdraw the Excise Act if the party formed a Ministry.¹⁰⁹ But after the MNF formed a Ministry majority of the ruling MLAs voted in favour of continuance of the Excise Act.¹¹⁰

It should be pointed out that during the underground movement, the MNF opposed any kinds of red tapism, corruption and even expressed their resistance to 'evil practices' in what they called a 'Christian country'.¹¹¹ However, the people's hopes and expectations were belied when it comes overground for displaying their lack of tolerance and high-handedness. During February 1987 and

108. Proceedings, Third Session of the Fourth Mizoram Legislative Assembly, dated 20th-29th March 1985, p. 416.

109. 1987 MNF Election Manifestoes, MNF Headquarters, Aizawl.

110. Proceedings. Fourth and Budget Session of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, dated 11th-16th March 1988, Aizawl.

111. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, op.cit.

August 1988, the MNF Ministry made cases against several editors and press men on certain cases, i.e., (a) On private complaint, five numbers of civil suits were registered, (b) On private complaint, one number of criminal case was registered, (c) On Government and Police complaint, six numbers of criminal cases were registered.¹¹² Therefore, Laldenga was accused of trying to lead the State just like an underground outfit.

No wonder, barely after 19 months, the MNF Ministry collapsed in September 1988 following the withdrawal of 9 MNF MLAs* including the Dy. Speaker of the House of their support to Laldenga's Ministry. As a result, Mizoram was placed under President's Rule by the Governor of Mizoram on 7th September 1988 following the dismissal of the MNF Ministry. Laldenga emphasised that his Ministry collapsed because all the dissident MLAs wanted to become Ministers, and there was no post in the Government for all of them.¹¹³ On the other hand, the dissident MLAs alleged that among other things, Laldenga's Ministry was too much involved in

112. Proceedings, Fifth Session of the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly, Aizawl, dated 16th-22nd August 1988, p. 220.

* Before the 1987 election the MNF legislators had to swear by the Bible that in the event of leaving the party they would resign their Assembly seats (The Statesman, 22nd September 1988).

113. Zoeng, op.cit., Vol. VII, No. 80.

corruption cases and they also accused Laldenga of favouritism and high-handedness. It is well known that Laldenga led a lavish lifestyle and built one of the most expensive houses in Aizawl Republik Veng. The three storeyed house was the target of all opposition who wanted to know how he got the estimated twenty lakhs for the house building and its furnishings. But he was unmoved and stated "I have no idea how much I spent as I never counted."¹¹⁴ It was also alleged that Laldenga's son, Danmawia got involved too in different departmental contracts. Therefore, Laldenga was only himself to blame for the downward trend of the MNF image.

After the MNF Ministry's downfall Laldenga requested the Central Government to hold a fresh general Assembly election immediately. He also threatened that neglecting his request could lead another violent struggle.¹¹⁵ The reason for such warning to the Central Government was that the MNF dissident MLAs and Mizoram Congress (I) were determined to form a Government. Laldenga was so furious that he made it known that the plot against his Government which was

114. Menon, Ramesh. "Laldenga's Test" in India Today, dated 31st January 1989.

115. Ibid.

instigated by the State Congress (I).¹¹⁶ He, therefore, opposed any attempt to form a Government by the dissident MLAs with the State Congress (I). He threatened: "I have to become an outlaw again with a prize on my head if the Central Government does not hold election immediately. I will have to pick up arms again."¹¹⁷

Thus, the MNF that came to power in the State with the promise of a 'model State' and a 'clean Government' collapsed due to its own ill-starred nature and lack of political acumen. The MNF promise of a 'model State', therefore, remained a distant dream for the party failed to win the January 1989 Assembly election, when the State Congress (I) came back to power by capturing 23 out of 40 elective seats while the MNF managed to capture only 14 seats.

In 1989 election, the Congress (I) decided to steal the thunder from the MNF constitution and became 'a party for Christians', knowing well that more than 90 per cent of the Mizos were Christians. The Congress (I) election manifesto promised "to establish a government to tandem

116. Scholar's interview with Lalrinchhana, MLA, dated 15th November 1993, Kolasib.

117. Menon, Ramesh. "Laldenga's Test", op.cit., p. 40.

with Christian principles".¹¹⁸ It also pledged: "As Christians it is our bounded responsibility to proclaim the Gospel". Further, the manifesto stated, "the Congress (I) policy of socialism is based on the Biblical teaching as well as the traditional ethos of Mizos through which alone justice could be established". The Church was also at loggerheads with the MNF and it issued two edicts to the voters which were interpreted as the clergymen's subtle appeal to reject the MNF.

Despite, a division in its ranks in 1989, the MNF headed by Laldenga was still a force to reckon with in Mizoram. The MNF won 34.69 per cent of the total valid votes against its 36.62 per cent in 1987 Assembly election. The Congress (I) polled 35 per cent of the valid votes against its 33 per cent in 1987.

118. Election Manifesto of the Mizoram Congress (I), January 1987.

CHAPTER VI

**THE M.N.F. LEADERSHIP AND PARTY ORGANISATION
IN VARIOUS SPHERES**

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MNF BEFORE THE ARMED REVOLT

Ever since the inception of the MNF, there was difference of opinion as to who should be its President. One of the founders of the party, R. Vanlawma disclosed that he declined the post of Presidentship offered to him, which was then passed on to Laldenga, who became the founder President of the MNF.¹ The first office bearers of the MNF (ad-hoc) were:

President - Laldenga
General Secretary - R. Vanlawma
Joint Secretary - A. Rohnuna.²

On 2nd April 1962, the MNF convened a 'National Convention' at Aizawl and elected the following persons as its leaders, namely:

President - Laldenga
Vice President - J. F. Manliana
General Secretary - R. Vanlawma
Assistant Secretary - Issac Zoliana

1. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, one of the Founders of the MNF, Dated 2nd June 1992. Place: Zalen Cabin, Aizawl.

2. Vanlawma, R. Ka Ram Leh Kei (My Country And I), (in Mizo), Zoram Printing Press, Aizawl, 1972, p. 261.

Treasurer - Rochhinga (Patea)
Financial Secretary - Denghmingthanga.³

Since then, the party launched a campaign throughout the Mizo district and also in the Mizo inhabited areas of the neighbouring states. The policies and programmes of the party were explained with outstanding oratory by its leadership which attracted a large section of the Mizos inside and outside the erstwhile Mizo district.

Fractionalism, for the first time, emerged due to the difference of opinion with regard to the question of contesting the Mizo District Council election in 1962.⁴ Not long after the inception of the MNF, a District Council election was to be held on 5th February 1962. The MNF President Laldenga wanted to participate in the election to popularise the newly party while its General Secretary R. Vanlawma as stated, opposed the idea on the ground that it was not appropriate to participate in any kind of election conducted within the framework of Indian Constitution so long as they aimed at independence from India.

3. Scholar's interview with Rochhinga, one of the Founders and the First Elected Treasurer of the MNF, Dated 25th July 1993. Place: Thakthing Veng, Aizawl.

4. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, op.cit.

Besides, there was also another difference of opinion between the two top leaders in the matter of co-ordination with the Naga rebels. R. Vanlawma's proposal to join hands with the Naga rebels led by A.Z. Phizo was opposed by Laldenga.⁵ Moreover, the replacement of R. Vanlawma's position of Editorship in "Zalenna" (Freedom), a pro-MNF newspaper, by Laldenga in 1962, as stated, strained their relationship. Due to all those reasons, R. Vanlawma quit the MNF and formed a new forum called "Mizo National Council". He was relieved by S. Lianzuala.⁶ On the other hand, Tlangchhuaka recalled that R. Vanlawma was discontented right from the initial stage for he was not the first President of the MNF. "It was his own fault that he quit the party."⁷

The MNF was organised on a hierarchical basis, having its headquarters at Aizawl, area headquarters at sub-divisional level and bloc committee at the village level. The highest authority of the party was the General Assembly, which met once in a year. However, a special assembly could be convened at any time. A governmental set

5. Ibid.

6. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, Ex. MNF General Secretary, Dated 25th July 1993. Place: Dawrpui Vengthar.

7. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, Ex. MNF President, Dated 20th March 1993. Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

up called "Mizoram Sawrkar" was set up by the MNF in May 1965, when the MNF was determined to strike a violent movement. The "Mizoram Sawrkar" had three organs - the legislative, executive and judiciary. The set up of the "Mizoram Sawrkar" was as follows:

President	- Laldenga
Vice President	- Lalnunmawia
Defence Secretary	- R. Zamawia
Foreign Secretary	- Lalhmingthanga Ralte
Secretary of Supply	- H. Thangkima
Secretary of Publicity & Information	- Ngurkunga Palian
Parliamentary Secretary	- Zothanmawia
Home Secretary	- S. Lianzuala. ⁸

Laldenga was thus, President of both the party and the underground government. As all powers were concentrated in his hand, a trend towards autocratic rule developed within the organisation which occasionally threatened the unity and integrity of the party as well as the movement.

Though the cabinet members of the "Mizoram Sawrkar"

8. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, Ex. MNF 'Defence Secretary', Dated 25th July 1993. Place: Chawnpui Veng, Aizawl.

did not have any secretary officially, yet, some persons were enlisted to act as their assistants. For instance, in 'Defence', R. Zamawia was aided by C. Vanlalzika; in 'Foreign Affairs', Lalhmingthanga was aided by Lalhangliana; in 'Supply', H. Thankima was aided by Lalhlira. President Laldenga was also aided by Zoramthanga, and in 'Home', S. Lianzuala was aided by Lalthanhawla.*⁹

A 'National Refinement Court' (NRC) was also set up to act as a Supreme Court. Lalhmuaka was the first 'Chief Justice', who was later replaced by J. Manliana.¹⁰ For administrative convenience, Mizoram was divided into four regions which the MNF called "Bung". Each "Bung" (Region) was placed under a 'Chief Commissioner', which were:

<u>Name of the "Bung"</u>	<u>'Chief Commissioners'</u>
1. "Lurh Bung" (Eastern Region)	Ngurchhina
2. "Dampa Bung" (Western Region)	P.B. Rosanga
3. "Run Bung" (Southern Region)	Hrangchhuana

* Lalthanhawla later on became the Chief Minister of Mizoram after he joined the MPCC (I) following his arrest during the MNF movement.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

4. "Run Bung" Tlangchhuaka.¹¹

(Northern Region)

Including the Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur.

In each "Bung", there were commissioner and Publicity Assistant Director (P.A.D.), such as:

<u>"Bung"</u>	<u>Commissioners</u>	<u>P.A.D.</u>
1. "Lurh Bung"	Lalzika	Liandawla
2. "Dampa Bung"	Thangkima	Lalngenga
3. "Phawngpui Bung"	Lahlira	L. Dawla
4. "Run Bung"	Lalthlamuana	Lalthankunga. ¹²

There was also an intelligent wing, simply called the C.B.I.* The C.B.I. 'Director' was Zahmingthanga and 'Assistant Director' was Ralkapzuala. There were also four 'Deputy Directors' in each "Bung" such as:

<u>Name of the "Bung"</u>	<u>'Deputy Directors'</u>
1. "Lurh Bung"	Robert Liankima
2. "Dampa Bung"	Nghinglova
3. "Phawngpui Bung"	Thansiama

11. Lalrawnliaana. Zoram in Zalenna a Sual (in Mizo), Vol. I, R. M. Press, Aizawl, 1995, p. 100.

12. Ibid., Vol. II, Zorin Compugraphics, Aizawl, 1996, p. 23.

* C.B.I. was later named 'Mizoram Intelligent Service' (MIS), and Vanlalngaia became the first 'Director' of the MIS.

4. "Run Bung"

Ronghinglova.¹³

In the 'Finance Department', the Secretary, who was later called 'Minister', was C. Lalkhawliana, and the 'Assistant Financial Secretary' later called 'Secretary', was Zohmangaiha. The 'Finance Department' had four branches, viz., Accounts, Taxation, Treasury, Trade and Commerce. The officials of the Finance Department were as follows:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Financial Secretary
(Later called 'Minister') | - C. Lalkhawliana |
| 2. Asst. Financial Secretary
(Later called 'Secretary') | - Zohmangaiha |
| 3. Treasury Chief of Accounts | - Thangluaia |
| 4. Commissioner of Taxes | - C. Ngura |
| 5. Treasury Officer | - Lalchungnunga |
| 6. Commissioner of Trade and
Commerce | - Chawnglianthuama. ¹⁴ |

Other heads of the departments were as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Director of Supply | - Biakchhunga |
| Director of Publicity | - Chawngzuala |
| Commissioner of Police | - Lawmthanga |

13. Ibid., p. 21.

14. Ibid.

Commissioner of Health and Education	- Hrangthanga
Chief of Army Staff	- 'Lt. General' Thangzuala
Senate Secretary	- Lalhmachhuana
Director of Zoram Ordinance Factory	- Lalchhawna
Director of Mizoram Intelligent Service	- Vanlalngaia. ¹⁵

The "Mizoram Sawrkar" had a Parliament which consisted of two Houses called "Aiawh In"* (House of Representatives) and "Upa In"** (Senate as they called it). In the "Aiawh In", Chuailokunga was the 'Speaker' and V.L. Nghaka was the 'Deputy Speaker'. There were 28 Members in the "Aiawh In" including its 'Speaker'. In the "Upa In", there were 9 Members including its 'Pro-tem Chairman", Malsawma Colney. In both the Houses, Members were selected by the Executive Committee of the MNF on the recommendation of the President.¹⁶

15. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, op.cit.

* "Aiawh In" literally means "House of Representatives".

** "Upa In" is also a Mizo word and the MNF translated it as Senate.

16. Unpublished Note Book of Lalthangliana, Ex. MNF Ambassador.

The highest authority in the "Mizoram Sawrkar" was with the 'Executive Committee', which consisted of 23 members, headed by Laldenga as a Chairman and S. Lianzuala as Secretary. Other members of the "Mizoram Sawrkar" Executive Committee were namely, Lalnunmawia, J. Manliana, Sainghaka, R. Zamawia, Lalhmingthanga Ralte, C. Lalkhawliana, Ngurkunga Palian, Kapthanga, Thangkima, Lalnundawta, Rochhinga, Duma, Zanenga, Vanlalliana, Rohmingthanga, Lalchhawna, Kapthanga, Zamanthanga, Challiana, V. Rangkhuma, Pachhunga, Thanglawra, P.B. Rosanga and Vankunga.¹⁷

At the beginning, the MNF volunteers were called Mizo National Volunteers (MNV). But after the armed revolt, the MNF were divided into two forces - the combatant force called Mizo National Army (MNA), and the reserved force called Mizo National Volunteers (MNV). The MNA were fully armed with different calibres of arms including sophisticated weapons, while the MNV was a body organised throughout the whole Mizo district, but politically and militarily trained or indoctrinated to propagate party's programmes.¹⁸

17. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, op.cit.

18. Unpublished personal Note Book of Lalthangliana, op.cit.

The MNV was further divided into three groups. Group 'A' consisted of young men who underwent military and political training and were ready to join combatant force whenever necessary. They were appointed on voluntary basis and indoctrinated with party's propaganda, as well as cultural values to spread it. Group 'B' consisted of women, trained in nursing, signalling and were also trained to use arms in the case of emergency. Group 'C' of the MNV comprised of children and aged people who were always ready to render free services in any possible manner. They remained in the village.¹⁹

Thus, the MNF had civil as well as army set up even before the armed revolt. Consistently, the party organised its base in village for a hold on the entire area of operation. Before the armed revolt, the MNA were recruited only from the party, and the local MNV units were the mainstay of the underground government.

Within the organisation discipline was strictly enforced. The volunteers were always afraid of being branded as traitors. Anyone who frequently absented from his camp without permission was likely to be treated as a

19. Scholar's interview with Thangmawii, Ex. MNV Medical In-Charge, Dated 24th October 1994. Place: Kolasib.

traitor or a spy. Severe punishment was inflicted on those who disobeyed any order. The morale of the volunteers was always kept high by the vigilant machinery of the party and recognition of their services rendered to the party causes. The MNF civil and military forces were not given regular pay. They largely depended upon collection of rations, taxes and donations from the local people.

The MNF had its own flag in sky-blue colour with a cross printed in the middle in red. It was usually hoisted on party ceremonial occasions. The MNA were divided into seven battalions and were named after Mizo heroes as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Chawngbawla | - 'CH' Battalion |
| 2. Vanapa | - 'V' Battalion |
| 3. Taitesena | - 'T' Battalion |
| 4. Lamaira | - 'L' Battalion |
| 5. Zampuimanga | - 'Z' Battalion |
| 6. Khuangchera | - 'K' Battalion |
| 7. Neuva | - 'N' Battalion. ²⁰ |

Later on, the 'N' battalion was renamed as 'S'- Saizahawla battalion. Each battalion was placed under the command of

20. Scholar's interview with R. Haleluia, Ex. MNF 'Colonel', Dated 21st March 1993. Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

'Lieutenant Colonel'. However, after the armed revolt, another new battalion, 'E' - Engzapauva 'Battalion' was raised from Mizo inhabited area of Manipur.²¹ These battalions were grouped under two 'Brigades' viz., 'Dagger Brigade' and 'Lion Brigade' or 'Arrow Brigade'. Each Brigade consisted of four battalions commanded by 'Brig. General'. The figure in the table below shows the MNA structure before the armed revolt:

<u>Lion or Arrow Brigade</u>	<u>Dagger Brigade</u>
<u>'Commanders'</u>	<u>'Commanders'</u>
'Brigadier General'	'Brig. General' Muankima
Sapzova	
'Brig. General' Sangkawia	'Brig. General' Lalngura
'Brig. General' Thangkima	

<u>Name of the 'Battalion'/'</u>	<u>Name of the 'Battalion'/'</u>
<u>'Commanders'</u>	<u>'Commanders'</u>
'V' - 'Lt. Col.' Lalliana	'K' - 'Lt. Col.' Chuaudinga
'CH' - 'Lt. Col.' Lianhnuna	'T' - 'Lt. Col.' Vanthanga
'L' - 'Lt. Col.' Kapthuama	'S' - 'Lt. Col.' Biakvela
'E' - 'Lt. Col.' Demkhawsiak	'Z' - 'Lt. Col.' Haleluia ²²

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

It should be mentioned that the 'V' battalion comprised of young boys around 14-16 years of age. They appeared to be a motley outfit of sorts, destined to fight for the cause that they were indoctrinated. But Laldenga chooses to create another force called the 'Special Force' (S.F.) an estimated fifty tough-ones under secretive but modern banner. The S.F. personnel were directly under the command of the President, Laldenga, solely for the MNF chief's personal security. They never left Laldenga unprotected and were instructed to open fire if there was any attempt to subdue, kill or arrest the MNF chief. Before the outbreak of disturbance, the 'Vice Chief of the Army Staff' was 'Major General' Vanlalhruaia; 'Adjutant General' was 'Major General' Thangkima; 'Quarter Master General' was 'Brig. General' Sapzova, and 'Chief Medical Officer' was 'Colonel' Lalzuia.²³

It should be mentioned that many Mizo women joined the underground movement and also held high ranking position in the organisational set up. As volunteers, women acted as intelligence personnel, passing vital information from one place to another. Besides, they were also trained for nursing and looking after sick and wounded persons in

23. Lalrawna, 'Colonel'. Zoram in Zalenna a Sual (in Mizo), Vol. II, Zorin Compugraphics, Aizawl, 1996, p. 22.

their hideout after the armed revolt. During the outbreak of violence in March 1966, young women volunteers supplied food, medicine and clothings etc. to the MNA while they were in action.²⁴

A signalling system was also introduced in the Mizo district prior to the armed revolt, for passing messages and other information from one village to another at night using battery torches by morse-code.²⁵ It should be noted that a typical Mizo village was located on the hill top and a duty post was run by the villagers day and night. On the night of the 'Zero House', the MNF volunteers could easily pass information to every village through this signalling system. The 'Chief Signal Officer' was 'Colonel' Biakchhunga.²⁶ Any volunteer who joined the MNF had to take oath in the name of God and sign his name using his own blood. The MNF created a number of positions among the rank and file for keeping them involved in religious matters. The appointment and declaration of the MNF carried the sign of Holy Cross.

24. Scholar's interview with Thangmawii, op.cit.

25. Saprawnga, Ch. Ka Zin Kawng (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, 1990, p. 119.

26. Biakchhunga. Hnam Kalsiam (in Mizo), L.V. Arts, Aizawl, 1996, p. 7.

Such was thus, the MNF organisational set up and the party structure before the armed revolt. It, therefore, appears from the party structure and organisation set up that the MNF had a hierarchical structure in which, power was concentrated at the top. Decisions were taken at the top and lower units just carried out the such decisions of the high command.

THE M.N.F. STRUCTURE IN THE INTER PERIOD

After the armed revolt, the MNF high command decided to send its President Laldenga to erstwhile East Pakistan (Bangladesh) to seek foreign aid. Accordingly, Laldenga proceeded to East Pakistan and left behind the whole volunteers without delegation of any power. It created unhealthy atmosphere in the MNF organisation. The Vice President of the MNF, felt that his Vice Presidential power was not enough to look after the whole underground movement under such prevailing critical circumstances without special power conferred on him and he felt it imperative that proper power ought be conferred on him during the absence of the President from the headquarters.²⁷ Basically, it was one of the main causes of misunderstanding between the MNF President Laldenga and Vice President Lalnunmawia.

27. Personal Note Book of Lalthangliana, Former MNF 'Ambassador', Aizawl.

The MNF 'Parliament Session' at Sialsir

The Sialsir 'Parliament' session was important in the MNF movement because many important issues were openly discussed. Besides, it was the first MNF 'Parliament' session, and also for the first time their internal problems were openly discussed. Sialsir is a Mizo village about 165 kilometres to the south east of Aizawl, connected only by footpaths. The MNF parliament session was held in December 1966. As stated, the MNF President Laldenga went to East Pakistan soon after the outbreak of violence in March 1966, and stayed in Dhaka. Therefore, President Laldenga also came from East Pakistan to attend the parliament session. Several important resolutions and bills were discussed and passed by the meeting. Among other things, the "Mizoram Sawrkar Hnathawktute Kaihhruaina Dan 1966" (Rules and Regulation of Mizoram Government Employees 1966), and the "Mizoram Danbul" (Mizoram Constitution) were passed.²⁸

It should be stated that the "Mizoram Sawrkar" imitated the American Presidential form of government, and the MNF also claimed that the "Mizoram Sawrkar" was a

28. Mizoram Sawrkar Hnathawktute Kaihhruaina Dan 1966 and the Mizoram Danbul, Issued by the MNF Headquarters, Chhantlang, 1971. Source: The MNF Headquarters, Aizawl.

'Presidential form of government'.²⁹ However, in Sialsir 'Parliament,' there was a proposal to switch over from the 'Presidential' to the 'Parliamentary Form of Government,' because several members felt that the 'Presidential form' was rather dictatorial and they preferred collective responsibility of the parliamentary form. It was a fact that Laldenga's long absence* from the MNF headquarters at the initial stage of disturbance had an adverse effect on the movement as no important decision could be made and there was no direct contact with him. Consequently, the proposal of switching over to the 'parliamentary form of government' was put forward in the Sialsir session. Several members felt that the 'Presidential form' was inconvenient and had complicated the underground movement.

But Laldenga loyalists felt that it was an attempt to remove Laldenga from his presidentship, and they were afraid that the introduction of a parliamentary form might reduce Laldenga's power. Vanhela, the then 'Speaker' of the MNF 'Parliament' felt that it was only an attempt to stamp out President Laldenga because of personal enmity between him and the Vice President Lalnunmawia.³⁰ Therefore, after

29. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, *op.cit.*

* Laldenga went to East Pakistan in April-November 1966.

30. Vanhela, *Mizoram Exodus* (in Mizo), Kawlani Brothers Publication, Aizawl, 1986, p. 7.

a long discussion, they resolved that the MNF President Laldenga would be in-charge of foreign affairs while he stayed outside the MNF headquarters, and in the meantime, the Vice President would be in-charge of all internal administration with full Presidential powers.³¹

The Sialsir 'Parliament' also officially appointed Vanhela as the 'Speaker' of the MNF Parliament, "Aiawh In". Besides, a 'High Power Committee' (HPC) was also constituted which composed of two members each from the "Aiawh In" and the "Upa In", and other two representatives from the party. The 'Speaker' of the 'Parliament' was an Ex-Officio Chairman of the H.P.C.³²

Lungpho Parliament Session

By the end of September 1967, a joint 'Parliament Session' was called at Rullam village. But due to the interruption of Indian army, the meeting was shifted to Lungpho village only four kilometres away from Rullam village. The 'Session' lasted for twenty days without any break.

Lungpho 'Parliament Session' faced two major issues put forward by the Vice President. The first contained the

31. Ibid., p. 11.

32. Ibid., p. 22.

proposal of one man one post, and the second was a petition to upgrade him to the President.³³ In the discussion, the members who favoured the motion expressed that one person should not hold the office of the presidency of "Mizoram Sawrkar" and the party at the same time. It should be remembered that Laldenga was both the President of the MNF as well as the President of the "Mizoram Sawrkar". The supporters of the motion suggested that the Vice President should be uplifted to the President of the party as per the constitution.* It should be mentioned that soon after the Sialsir 'Parliament Session' was over, Laldenga went to East Pakistan again and stayed there continuously more than six months away from the MNF headquarters. Therefore, his opposition insidiously took advantage of his long absence from the MNF headquarters and move a motion in the 'Parliament' to oust him. Hectic discussion took place. However, after a long deliberation, the motions were dropped as the supporters and loyalists of Laldenga won over the debate.³⁴ Thus, Laldenga somehow survived due to

33. Ibid., p. 12.

* The MNF Constitution (in Mizo) Part V, Chapter II, Article No. 5 stated that "Vice President shall become President of the party automatically if the President vacated his office due to death, or impeachment, or if the President could not hold the office continuously for a period of six months for any reason whatsoever". (Translated into English by the Scholar).

34. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

his ardent loyalists. However, the rift within the top ranking leadership became wider more and more.

The 'Lungpho Parliament Session' altered the title 'Secretary' into 'Minister', which the undergrounds felt more publicity oriented in their movement. Besides, the title of 'Chief Commissioner' was also changed into simply 'Commissioner'. Lalthlamuana was appointed the 'Commissioner' of "Rung Bung" (Northern Region) in place of Tlangchhuaka who was appointed "Upa In" member³⁵ (Senate member).

High Power Committee (HPC) at Ruallung

In early December 1967, the HPC meeting was called at Ruallung village by the Vice President. In the meeting, the Vice President proposed to make an operation in Chin Hills in Burma (Myanmar). Justifying his proposal, the Vice President Lalnunmawia stated "The work of liberation should take place altogether in all Mizo occupied areas."³⁶ But majority of the members opposed the proposal on the ground that it would not be a good idea to annoy a neighbouring country for the time being. Therefore, the Vice President's proposal was ruled out. However, Lalnunmawia sent a special

35. Ibid.

36. Vanhela. Mizoram Exodus, op.cit., p. 22.

messenger, 'Brig.' Sapzova to Laldenga who was staying in East Pakistan, Dhaka. But Laldenga also refused to give his approval, saying that it would not be a good idea to encounter two countries at one time. The President suggested that following the Greek practice the place should be kept as 'irridenta'.^{37*}

However, in spite of President's disapproval and against the HPC meeting resolution at Ruallung, Lalnunmawia led several MNA towards Burma for Chin Hills operation in May 1968. It had in fact, widened the gap between Laldenga and Lalnunmawia. Following this operation, the Burmese Government become hostile towards the Mizos. Therefore, life in the Chin Hills for the Mizo inhabitants became insecure because the Burmese Government mistrusted all the Mizos and looked upon them as enemies.³⁸

High Power Committee at Khuangthing

In early 1968, a H.P.C. meeting was held at Khuangthing village, which was attended only by around ten members. The meeting was started before the due date owing to the fear of interruption of the Indian security forces.

37. Ibid., p. 23.

* The word 'Irridenta' is taken from a Greek word which means 'a reserved place for future' as the MNF explained.

38. Ibid., p. 26.

Therefore, several members could not attend the meeting in time. Among other things, the HPC meeting at Khuangthing resolved that Vice President Lalnunmawia should be the President of the party. It was also resolved that Lalhmingthanga Ralte would replace 'Speaker' Vanhela on the ground that he was too pro-Laldenga, and he was to become the party's 'Financial Secretary'.³⁹ But the Khuangthing HPC meeting resolution was not acceptable to several MNF officials on the ground that it was unconstitutional to make such a reshuffle of the high ranking party officials and the government without obtaining prior approval from the party General Assembly or the "Mizoram Sawrkar" parliament. Therefore, the 'Khuangthing HPC meeting resolutions were not implemented and besides, the bulk of the underground had to move to East Pakistan following the Indian security forces' counter attack.

HEADQUARTERS SHIFTED TO EAST PAKISTAN

Since April 1966, the Indian security forces adopted 'Operation Security' involving mounting pressures and combing operations in all sectors of the Mizo district on the highest ever key. The Indian army was in full control of the situation. As a consequence, the MNF reeled through

39. Vanlawma, R. Karam Leh Kei, op.cit., p. 324.

a number of reverses and losses. The tightened security precautions had forced the MNF to shift their headquarters to the jungle of East Pakistan from where they undertook their operations sneaking into the Mizo district from time to time.

When the bulk of the MNF crossed Mizoram border, they landed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of East Pakistan and finally set up their camp at Sajek range in September 1968. Chhippui, a Mizo village was used as their first headquarters. They used to have a 'Parliament Session' at Mahmam village, which was only three kilometres away from Chhippui. Lawngkawr, around 15 kilometres from Chhippui was also used as their 'Brigade headquarters'.⁴⁰

After they shifted to East Pakistan, there was a slight reshuffle in "Mizoram Sawrkar" by the end of 1968. R. Zamawia, a 'Defence Secretary', now 'Defence Minister' was promoted to 'Army Chief' or 'Chief of Army Staff' and he replaced 'Lt. Gen.' Thangzuala. Sangkawia was also appointed as 'Adjutant General', he replaced 'Maj. Gen.' Thangkima; and Sawmvela also relieved 'Chief Justice' J. Manliana in the 'National Refinement Court'.⁴¹

40. Scholar's interview with S. Lianzuala, op.cit.

41. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, op.cit.

General Assembly at Chhippui

On 14th August 1969, the 10th MNF General Assembly was held at Chhippui village in their new headquarters. The Assembly condemned the Chin Hills operation, which was led by the Vice President on the ground that it was launched against the decision of the HPC meeting as well as the wishes of the MNF President.⁴²

There was a rumour that in East Pakistan Laldenga lived a luxurious life at the expense of the MNF fund in Dhaka. Therefore, the General Assembly at Chhippui constituted a 'Public Accounts Committee' (P.A.C.), to make an inquiry on the allegation of President Laldenga, and also to audit the MNF fund from time to time. K. Thangphunga was appointed Chairman of the P.A.C.⁴³

Parliament Session at Mahmam

By the end of August 1969, a joint 'Parliament Session' was held at Mahmam village in which, several portfolios were reshuffled. According to the new arrangement, the following were the new leaders of the party:

President

- L.H. Lalmawia

42. Personal Diary of Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

43. Vanhela. Mizoram Exodus, op.cit., p. 46.

Vice President	- Tlangchhuaka
General Secretary	- Lalnunmawia
Assistant Secretary	- Kawlchhawna

Thus, the MNF at last, decided to incorporate one man one post in their set up and Laldenga then became only the President in the "Mizoram Sawrkar". However, L.H. Lalmawia did not join the MNF in East Pakistan due to his personal problem and Lalnunmawia did not accept his new post. Therefore, the MNF office bearers were rearranged accordingly:

President	- Tlangchhuaka
Vice President	- Chawngzuala
General Secretary	- Kawlchhawna
Treasurer	- Lianhnuna. ⁴⁴

The new General Secretary Kawlchhawna was shot dead by the Indian security forces on 7th June 1971 in an encounter. Thereafter, R. Khawpuithanga became the MNF General Secretary.

CHHANTLANG HEADQUARTERS

After staying one year at Chhippui and Mahmuam, the MNF set up by themselves a new village and named it

44. Personal diary (Note Book) of Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

"Chhantlang" in 1969. It was used as their headquarters and all important departments were located. The MNF also set up another camp called "Maikhawr", which was around 2 kilometres from 'Chhantlang'. Laldenga and his 'Cabinet' stayed at Maikhawr.⁴⁵

Chhantlang Parliament Session

After they settled in Chhantlang, a joint 'Parliament session' was called. A private motion put forward by "Upa In" member (Senator) Bualhranga demanded fullfledged statehood within the framework of Indian Constitution. However, the 'Speaker' Vanhela rejected the motion and refused to discuss it in spite of some pressure from a few members, on the ground that such kind of demand was too cheap and would degrade their prestige.⁴⁶ It is to be noted that by this time, Mizoram church leaders had already approached the MNF leaders in their endeavour to secure peace. Zairema, a Presbyterian Church leader and a church 'peace' delegate also sent a letter to the MNF 'Finance Minister', C. Lalkhawliana and informed him that India was willing to offer them a State.⁴⁷ As a

45. Scholar's interview with Ex. MNF 'Colonel' R. Haleluia, op.cit.

46. Vanhela. Mizoram Exodus, op.cit., p. 55.

47. Scholar's interview with Rev. Zairema, Churches Peace Delegate, Dated 16th March 1994. Place: Zarkawt, Aizawl.

consequence, several MNF leaders could visualise the futility of their movement without proper political support from big powers. It, therefore, created a lot of confusion in the MNF organisation. Several hardcore* MNF leaders resented it very much and also accused Zairema of trying to break the MNF movement.

Party Election of 1971

As the term of the party leaders was over, a fresh election was held in February 1971. In the election, there were two candidates for the post of President. Tlangchhuaka was the MNF official candidate while 'Supply Minister' H. Thangkima contested from the floor. In the MNF organisation, there never was a floor candidate to contest the presidential election against the official candidate. However, by that time, there was a floor candidate, belonging to the intellectual** group with anti-Laldenga

* The 'hardcore' denoted the MNF leaders who did not want to reconcile with Indian Government, especially under the framework of Indian Constitution.

** Among the MNF leaders, there were several graduates, and majority of them were in favour of changing the MNF leadership. They were simply called 'Intellectuals' and anti-Laldenga group. They were in favour of making an adjustment with Indian Government within the framework of Indian Constitution after realising the futility of their senseless movement.

disposition. In the election, the official candidate Tlangchhuaka defeated his counterpart by a margin of only three votes.⁴⁸ Due to the small margin of votes, anti-Laldenga group become more and more aggressive. In fact, the official candidate was challenged by a cabinet member, which was highly irregular and unusual in the MNF organisation. It clearly exposed disunity of the party, and several members wanted to change the top leadership.

In 1971, the term of the "Mizoram Sawrkar" was also over and a fresh election was held. In spite of his shaky leadership, Laldenga was once again re-elected President of the "Mizoram Sawrkar". but before forming a new 'cabinet,' he had to leave the MNF headquarters on 'official duty' on 21st March 1971.⁴⁹

After the departure of Laldenga towards Dhaka on 21st March 1971, the MNF organisation had to face two definite shades of opinion, one in favour of independence demanded by the hard-core leaders and the other, for a peaceful negotiation with the Indian Government sponsored by the 'intellectuals' within the set up. The 'intellectual' group favoured a peaceful negotiation with

48. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

49. Ibid.

the Indian Government and were known as "Dumpawl"* (Blue).⁵⁰

Taking advantage of Laldenga's absence his old 'cabinet', in which majority were anti-Laldenga, tried to challenge his leadership. The 'Army Chief' R. Zamawia was alleged to be conspiring against Laldenga and planning a military coup which was later disclosed.⁵¹ It was perhaps, the most critical moment for Laldenga, as most of his old 'cabinet' members, except Ngurkunga Palian were on the 'intellectual' group. However, the attempt to dislodge Laldenga was deterred. R. Zamawia denied the allegation and made it known that Laldenga's dictatorial attitude needed to be checked by the 'army', and that there was no question of coup.⁵² However, anti-Laldenga feeling remained a potential threat to the MNF organisation.

* "Dumpawl" (Blue) denotes those 'intellectual' MNF leaders who were in favour of a peaceful negotiation with the Government of India. The 'hard-core' MNF leaders simply called them as "Dumpawl" (Blue) just because they wanted to make an adjustment within the framework of Indian Constitution.

50. Zokhumi. Political Diary of Ngurkunga (in Mizo), Published by Zokhumi, Shillong (Press not mentioned), 1988, p. 11.

51. Biakchhunga, Hmam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 16.

52. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, op.cit.

EVACUATION OF EAST PAKISTAN

The Bangladesh freedom struggle of 1971 resulted in a serious set back to the MNF movement, because their main supply route was interrupted by the Bangladesh revolutionary army. Therefore, the MNF 'Cabinet' meeting on 4th April 1971 decided to evacuate their headquarters and move towards the Arakans.⁵³

On their way to the Arakans, it was alleged that the "Dumpawl" faction planned to surrender to the nearest Indian army camp. Consequently, the "Dumpawl" faction was arrested and disarmed by the hard-core MNF and Laldenga loyalists on 13th May 1971 and were imprisoned in a temporary jail for some time.⁵⁴

There were several reasons which lead a major split in the MNF organisation. Firstly, the peace mission of Zairema inculcated a tendency towards differences of opinion. Since then several 'intellectuals' within the MNF organisation realised the futility of their movement for independence of Mizoram. Therefore, the 'intellectual' group proposed another solution, formation of Statehood within the framework of Indian Constitution through

53. Zokhumi. Plititcal Diary of Ngurkunga, op.cit., p. 12.

54. Biakchhunga. Hnam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 19.

peaceful means. But the hardcore leaders with their blind followers went on a war path along the path of independence.'

Secondly, Laldenga combining both de jure and de-facto power in himself often exercised it in an authoritarian manner and over-ruled most of the suggestions by 'intellectual' group. He had scant regard for autonomy and privileges of his colleagues and norms of collective responsibility. Therefore, the 'intellectuals' wanted to drift away from the hardcore leaders which resulted in a major blow of the party organisation.

Special Assembly at Rangamati

On their way to the Arakans, they reached Rangamati and a 'Special Assembly' was held on 2nd June 1971 to resolve the internal problems of the MNF. Among other things, the 'Special Assembly' resolved to have a 'unicameral legislature' and also constituted a judicial body to pursue matters relating to their internal functioning.⁵⁵ However, several leaders of the 'Dumpawl" faction including C. Lalkhawliana, 'Financial Minister', Thangkima, 'Commander' of the Dagger Brigade, Lalhmingthanga, 'Foreign Minister', Thangphunga, Chairman of PAC, Sangkawia, Lion or Arrow Brigade 'Commander', Muankima

55. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, Ex MNF 'Ambassaor'. Place: Khatla, Aizawl.

Dagger Brigade 'Commander', and Rolala, Lalhmachhuana, Lalsanga, Hrangzuala, Lalhrima, Lalthangliana, and Laichhinga escaped from the temporary jail and surrendered to the Indian army camp on 11th October 1971.⁵⁶

In Rangamati, the MNF were totally isolated from the outside world as they were surrounded by Bangladesh revolutionary army. Their main problem was how to survive. Being in despair, they decided to hoist a white flag and surrender to the nearest Indian army camp by the middle of December 1971.⁵⁷ They also set free all the prisoners kept in a temporary jail because they were not in a position to keep in that critical circumstances. But before surrendering on 16th December, they had a mass prayer. During the mass prayer, surprisingly, a Pakistani army speed boat arrived near their camp. A Pakistani army Major who escorted the speed boat informed them that the route to the Arakans was safe. To the MNF, it was an angel sent opportunately and following the suggestion, the bulk of the MNF moved towards the place via Tatkawng river amidst heavy fighting of the India backed Bangladesh revolutionary army and Pakistan soldiers on 17th December 1971. Those of the 'Dumpawl'

56. The MNF "White Paper" issued by the Vice President, MNF, "Mizoram Sawrkar", Camp: Mobile, 1972. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

57. Vanhela, Mizoram Exodus, op.cit., p. 92.

faction who could not escape were reinstated after the MNF President pardoned them. However, before reaching the Arakans, the MNF decided to send home some women and children as well as weak and sick persons. They also allowed anyone willing to go back home giving up the underground life. It was also arranged that Ex. Vice President Lalnunmawia and ex-'Army Chief' R. Zamawia were to lead their surrender. In his farewell message, Laldenga apologised for arresting his colleagues and bagged their forgiveness. Explaining the reason why he had arranged Lalnunmawia and R. Zamawia to lead the surrender, Laldenga stated that those two leaders were dependable to deal with the Indian Government. He reportedly observed, "Under the critical circumstances, our future is uncertain. Therefore, it is necessary to have our own people to give us moral support from overground. You will be in-charge and responsible to deal with Indian Government as well as Mizoram U.T. Government on behalf of us as needed".⁵⁸ At one stage, 'Speaker' Vanhela suggested wholesale surrender. But Laldenga expressed that he would not be a good leader to lead them back to India and ordered the MNA to shoot him down should he stepped towards India.⁵⁹

58. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, op.cit.

59. Ibid.

Thus, 356 men and women including children, weak, sick and wounded headed towards Indian army camp to surrender under the leadership of Lalnunmawia and R. Zamawia. It was also an open secret among the MNF that those two leaders were despatched for their allegiance to the "Dumpawl" faction of the 'intellectuals'. Being in the anti-Laldenga group, their presence was a potential threat to Laldenga's leadership. In an apparently conciliatory note, Laldenga said, "... we appreciated your valuable service for our nation ... being underground is not the only means to fight for our freedom ... you can be also most valuable at home...."⁶⁰

R. Zamawia was replaced by Lalrinchhana who become the MNA 'Army Chief'.⁶¹ In Mizoram, R. Zamawia and Lalnunmawia pursued their mission of meeting several Indian officials, who promised them any status short of independence. However, shortly afterwards, they received an instruction from the MNF headquarters to discontinue their mission.⁶² Subsequently, Lalnunmawia was brutally murdered on 25th June 1973 at Aizawl Civil Hospital while he was on

60. Vanhela, Mizoram Exodus, op.cit., p. 101.

61. Scholar's interview with Lalrinchhana, Ex. MNF 'Army Chief', dated 20th September 1993. Place: Kolasib.

62. Scholar's interview with R. Zamawia, op.cit.

medical treatment. The ugly incident confirmed the strategy of despatching the two leaders to Mizoram as 'special envoy' of the MNF President only as an excuse to remove them permanently. R. Zamawia felt that it could be no other than the MNF on duty in Aizawl town.⁶³

National Emergency Council

In fact, before they reached their destination, a high level committee was held under the chairmanship of Laldenga on 19th December 1971, which constituted a 'National Emergency Council' (NEC), to take over the control of the administration and movement in his absence. The NEC was to be presided over by the Vice President of the MNF. The meeting also promoted 'Colonel' Biakchhunga into 'Brigadier General' and appointed him as the new 'Army Chief' to replace Lalrinchhana. The meeting decided to send Laldenga to Pakistan in search of foreign aid as well as to resume their relationship.⁶⁴

When the Government of India proposed to uplift the Mizo district into a Union Territory on 21st January 1972, the MNF resolved to request Mizoram party leaders to oppose

63. Ibid.

64. Biakchhunga, Hnam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 23.

the proposal on the ground that it was too 'cheap', and besides, according to the MNF, the Constitution of India was an 'imposed constitution' upon the Mizos and hence any form of administration was unacceptable.⁶⁵

ARAKANS HEADQUARTERS

The MNF reached the Arakans base of Arengthawsi on 26th February 1972. In Arakans, as stated, they were hosted by the Burmese Communist Party (BCP), who were willing to give them base area in exchange of their friendship and cooperation, in addition to using the MNF forces in their operations. After reaching the Arakans, Laldenga prepared to leave for Pakistan as already decided. He took ten thousand Kyats* from the BCP leaders without consulting his colleagues under a promise of giving them in return of the services of the Mizo army in their operations.⁶⁶ The borrowing had upset several MNF leaders. They felt that it was improper to take such an amount of money without consulting his colleagues or prior permission of his 'Cabinet'. What was more, they had to repay it by helping the BCP in their dangerous operations in which, they could get hurt or even killed. As they had no other choice, the

65. 8th NEC Meeting Resolutions. Camp: Mudok, dated 25th February 1972. Source: S. Lianzuala.

* Kyats is Burma currency.

66. Ibid.

NEC meeting held on 23rd March 1972 decided to help the BCP in their operations. Consequently, some MNF lost their life while giving a helping hand to the BCP and several others got injured.⁶⁷

N.E.C. Meeting

On 6th November 1972, the 12th NEC meeting was held at Leiphah village. The meeting decided to send its Chairman S. Lianzuala and Chawngzuala to Mizoram. The main purpose of their mission, among other things, was to ask for the moral support of the Mizoram Government, in initiating peaceful negotiation with the Indian Government but being unconditional and held only outside India.⁶⁸ The hardcore MNF leaders were in favour of the peace negotiation with the Government of India but not within the frame-work of Indian Constitution. But there was no favourable outcome. Moreover, one of the delegates the NEC Chairman S. Lianzuala, who was also the then Vice President of the MNF surrendered to the Indian army. Therefore, Malsawma Colney took over the Chairmanship of the NEC.⁶⁹

While they were staying in the Arakans, Laldenga's message from Karachi arrived at the MNF headquarters written

67. Ibid.

68. 12th NEC Meeting Resolution. Camp: Leiphah, dated 6th November 1972. Source: S. Lianzuala.

69. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, Ex. MNF NEC Chairman, Dated 25th July 1993, Place: Aizawl.

on 17th September 1973. In his letter, Laldenga mentioned that there was no country big or small willing to help their movement except offering words of sympathy. He, therefore, suggested a peaceful negotiation with the Indian Government within the framework of Indian Constitution.⁷⁰ It was for the first time that Laldenga expressed his disappointment among his colleagues. It should be noted that prior to this letter, Laldenga secretly contacted Indian Officials to make adjustment within the framework of Indian Constitution.* The hardcore MNF leaders felt disappointed when their leader suggested such negotiation. They thought that their leader was working sincerely in Pakistan for foreign support in their movement. They felt that Laldenga had gone astray from the MNF constitution.⁷¹ As stated, the hardcore MNF leaders hesitated to make any adjustment within the framework of Indian Constitution. Thereafter, the NEC was dissolved on 17th September 1974.⁷²

Headquarters shifted to 'Bawm' areas

In the Arakans, their mutual understanding with the

70. Laldenga's letter to the MNF Headquarters, Arakans, Dated 17th September 1973. Source: Tlangchhuaka.

* Please see Chapter V, "Mizoram Accord and the MNF in Power", for details of the MNF contact with Government of India

71. Scholar's interview with Lalthangliana, op.cit.

72. Ibid.

host BCP became strained gradually because the MNF could not always help the BCP in their operations, and it was not possible either to lend weapons all the times. Therefore, they had to vacate the Arakans Headquarters on 10th January 1975 after staying three years. At first, they headed towards Upper Chindwin. However, they came to learn that the Prime Minister of Bangladesh was assassinated. His successor was an old supporter of the MNF. Hoping that the new Government of Bangladesh might be generous towards them, they moved towards 'Bawm' areas at Rimaiphaw.⁷³ After settling in their new base, the MNF geared up to undertake more intensive operation inside Mizoram. They also recruited several new volunteers and gave them guerrilla training. However, the undergrounds suffered a set back when a group of 54 MNF led by Demkhawsiak Gangte, former 'Commander' of 'E' battalion surrendered to the Indian army on 10th September 1975.⁷⁴

RANDEZVOUS AT COLOGNE

In early November 1975, Laldenga sent a letter to four of his trusted colleagues at the MNF headquarters namely, Vice President Tlangchhuaka, party President

73. Scholar's interview with Lalrinchhana, op.cit.

74. Ibid.

Chawngzuala, 'Army Chief' Biakchhunga and 'Cabinet' Secretary Lalhlira asking them to meet him at a 'Randezvous', which would be intimated to them by the Indian S.I.B.⁷⁵ Laldenga's letter took them by surprise. They felt astonished at Laldenga's attitude and wondered why they had been asked to go to the Indian army camp. They had a hunch that some deep understanding was there between their President and the Government of India, and they were thus anxious to find out what it was all about. They, however, blindly followed the instruction of their leader.⁷⁶ They left the headquarters on 14th November 1975 and reported to the nearest Indian army camp at Parva, Mizoram. From Parva, they were taken to New Delhi by a special flight by the S.I.B. In New Delhi, they were told that Laldenga was waiting for them at Cologne, West Germany.⁷⁷

In Cologne, Laldenga gave a brief report as to how he dealt with foreign countries and reiterated that no state was available to help them to the end. He emphatically stressed the urgency of making a negotiation

75. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Tlangchhuaka asked whether he had become demoralised and Laldenga replied, "I could not foresee an international opinion in favour of us in the near future".⁷⁸ They stayed for nine days in Cologne. Laldenga tried to convince his colleagues to enter India within the framework of Indian Constitution. However, without making any tangible result, they came back to India.⁷⁹

In New Delhi, Laldenga still tried to convince his colleagues to accept his proposal. But the hardcore MNF leaders were reluctant to agree without consulting the MNF headquarters. But Laldenga assured, "Any agreement or accord made with the Indian officials is subject to the approval of the MNF headquarters. If the headquarters disapproved, then automatically it is liable to be rejected".⁸⁰ Thus, using his great talent of influencing others, Laldenga was once again able to convince his colleagues to accept his proposal. Subsequently, an agreement was made with the Government of India on 18th February 1976, followed by Calcutta convention of MNF personnel.

78. Ibid. Laldenga's speeches in Cologne, West Germany, retold by Tlangchhuaka.

79. Biakchhunga, Hnam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 106.

80. Ibid.

During the Calcutta Convention, there was a fresh election of the "Mizoram Sawrkar" as its term was over. The Convention resolved that the presidentship of both the party (MNF) and the MNF government called "Mizoram Sawrkar" would be held by one person - Laldenga.⁸¹ Following the Calcutta Convention, an Agreement was made between the MNF and the Government of India in July 1976, which was known as the 'July Agreement'. However, as stated, the provision of the agreement could not be materialised in spite of several efforts from both sides. The MNF headquarters was unable to comprehend the agreement on the ground that while they had to give up arms, there was no provision for the Central Government's commitment to the restoration of peace in Mizoram.⁸² As things could not be speeded up, Laldenga was busy seeking clearance from the MNF headquarters. But the Central Government was mounting pressures on him to comply with the 'July Agreement'. In the meantime, the MNF headquarters demanded Laldenga's immediate visit to the place for discussion on their political demands. But the Government of India was in no mood to allow Laldenga slip out from New Delhi. Therefore, Laldenga requested his

81. Scholar's interview with Lalrinchhana, op.cit.

82. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney and Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

'Cabinet' to come over to New Delhi. However, the MNF headquarters declined Laldenga's request and instead, sent Zoramthanga to see Laldenga in New Delhi on 11th December 1977.⁸³

Differences of opinion grew amongst the underground rank and file in connection with a peace dialogue. It was alleged that Laldenga was submissive to the Central Government which he later denied. Laldenga also sent a letter to the Vice President of the MNF and emphatically stressed the need to have a peace settlement with the Government of India, and pleaded for its endorsement by the MNF headquarters.⁸⁴ In his plan, Laldenga proposed dissolution of Mizoram Government led by Brig. T. Sailo and his installation as Chief Minister in an interim Government. But the MNF headquarters opposed such demand on the ground that it was not honourable.⁸⁵

Therefore, the MNF Aizawl town Commander 'Colonel' Vanthanga called for an 'officers' meeting' in Aizawl on 28th February 1978, which was attended by nine MNF Officers on duty inside Mizoram. The meeting unanimously resolved

83. Scholar's interview with Zoramthanga, President of the MNF, Dated 15th August 1993. Place: Ramhlun Veng, Aizawl.

84. Laldenga's letter to the MNF Vice President, Tlangchhuaka, dated 25th February 1978. Source: Tlangchhuaka's Diary.

85. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

that Laldenga had gone too far in dealing with the Government of India a development which called for his replacement by some one to deal effectively with the Indian Government.⁸⁶ It should be pointed out that only nine MNF officers led by a 'Colonel' were not entitled to discuss such important political matter of replacing Laldenga.

As stated, Brig. T. Sailo led P.C. had formed a Ministry in Mizoram. T. Sailo was allegedly reluctant to step down from Chief Ministership. The strained relation deteriorated when T. Sailo informed the Central Government that Laldenga had only a handful of followers and requested the Central Government a free hand as well as more security forces to curb the MNF,⁸⁷ which the Central Government was ready to give.⁸⁸ Besides, there were several hardcore MNF leaders who wanted to remove Laldenga from Presidentship. Therefore, taking advantage of T. Sailo - Laldenga's strained relation as well as the latter's shaky position in the MNF organisation, the Central Government announced that they were always ready to talk to the MNF except

86. Biakchhunga. Hnam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 143, and Tlangchhuaka's Personal Diary.

87. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics (1976-1986), (in Mizo), op.cit.

88. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, Dated 9th August, 1979.

Laldenga.⁸⁹ Consequently, the MNF headquarters rejected the agreement and commitment the MNF leadership had made with the Indian Government, and also announced their intention to resume the movement.⁹⁰

Reshuffle of the MNF Leadership

After the break down of talks in 1978, political upheaval in the MNF continued. In the organisational set up of the MNF the top leadership reshuffled some of the 'officers'. On 9th March 1978, Zoramthanga arrived at Aizawl from New Delhi with an order of dismissal of 'Brigadier' Biakchhunga on the ground that he was responsible for instigating the volunteers to conspire against Laldenga.⁹¹ Subsequently, Laldenga sent another order of dismissal of some senior MNF 'officers' including 'Colonel' Vanthanga, Aizawl town Commader, 'Major' Biakzama, 'Major' Laldinthara, and 'Captain' Lalsangliana on the same ground.⁹² At the same time, 'Colonel' Zamana was appointed as Aizawl town Commander, and 'Lt. Colonel' Kawlvela as the new Lion Brigade Commander.

89. All India Radio, News Telecast, Aizawl Station, dated 1st March 1978.

90. 34th MNF National Council Meeting Resolution. Source: Tlangchhuaka.

91. An Open Letter to Mizoram Party Leaders by 'Col' Vanthanga, dated 1st May 1978. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

92. Ibid.

However, on 27th June 1978, the MNF Vice President Tlangchhuaka called for a National Council meeting in the MNF headquarters, which was attended by 41 MNF high ranking officers. The meeting unanimously disowned Laldenga's initiative.⁹³ Indeed, internal wrangling within the MNF had been there ever since its inception. Laldenga was responsible to a great extent for having created a vile atmosphere resulting in a major set back in their movement. It was also no secret that the ousted 'Brigadier' Biakchhunga and his band of dedicated supporters were out to displace the MNF chief.

NEW LEADER IN THE "MIZORAM SAWRKAR"

While Laldenga was staying in New Delhi, the MNF had a General Assembly in their headquarters on 27th June to 4th July 1978. On the fifth day of the meeting i.e., 1st July 1978, a 'no confidence' was moved against the MNF President Laldenga. Sixteen members voted in favour of the motion while six members abstained. Thus, the Assembly declared that 'President Laldenga had deserted the MNF policy'.⁹⁴ Therefore, new election was held for choosing

93. 16th MNF National Council Meeting Resolutions. Camp: Arengthawsi. Source: tlangchhuaka Note Book, Dated 27th June 1978.

94. Biakchhunga. Hnam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 153.

the leaders of the "Mizoram Sawrkar" on 3rd July 1978, and the following persons were declared elected:

President	- 'Brig. Gen.' Biakchhunga
Vice President	- Malsawma Colney
Cabinet Secretary	- Lalthawmvunga
Defence Minister	- Lalhlira
Health & Publicity Minister	- Chawngzuala
Finance & Supply Minister	- Vanhlira. ⁹⁵

The Assembly also elected new National Council Members such as: Tlangchhuaka, Chawngzuala, Vanhlira, Lalhlira, Lalrinchhana, Thangkima, Rualchhina, Ropianga, and Vanlalmuana. Besides, the Assembly appointed 'Colonel' Vanthanga as the new MNF 'Army Chief' which was approved by the National Council on 25th July 1978.⁹⁶ Therefore, it can be seen that in the election, most of the pro-Laldenga group as well as his loyalists were excluded. They included Zoramthanga, Zamana, Aichhinga, Khawngchinga, Ngurchhina, Lalrinchhana and Kawlvela etc.

95. Ibid.

96. Unpublished personal note book of Lalthangliana. The same was also corroborated by Tlangchhuaka.

Non-Cooperation with the New Leaders

After Laldenga was removed from presidentship, there was political turmoil in the MNF headquarters. The ousted President Laldenga, however, had several sympathisers among the rank and file of the undergrounds, who could not accept any one except Laldenga as their leader. It was reported that some MNA officers did not want to cooperate with the new leaders without any proper reason. Therefore, on 1st August 1978, several MNA officers led by 'Lt. Colonel' Kawlvela, Lion Brigade Commander submitted a letter of no confidence against the newly elected leaders.⁹⁷ Besides, they also submitted a petition on 2nd August 1978 urging appointment of a court or tribunal to enable them to defend Laldenga.⁹⁸ The ardent followers could not accept that Laldenga had deserted the MNF policy and also accused the anti-Laldenga group of being power hungry. However, it was difficult to overthrow the newly elected leaders or press them to resign unless they were found to be inefficient. Besides, the new leaders were constitutionally elected which was also approved by the National Assembly.

97. Ibid.

98. Letter and Petition of 'Lt. Col' Kawlvela and 'Capt' Lalkhawngginga to the MNF President, Biakchunga, Dated 2nd August 1978, MNF Headquarter. Source: Tlangchhuaka's Diary.

Hence, the newly elected President Biakchhunga convened a National Convention on 7th August 1978 to resolve internal political problem in an amicable way. In the meeting, some members proposed to suppress the anti-government activities by force before it was too late. However, the new President expressed his desire to adopt a policy to win over the heart of the rank and file of the undergrounds for he thought that it would be more lasting and reasonable than using force.⁹⁹

But all their attempts to pacify the dissident group (pro-Laldenga) were in vain. Indeed, Laldenga's charisma and leadership had deep rooted influence on the rank and file of the MNF organisation. Day by day, pressures got mounted on the newly chosen "Mizoram Sawrkar" leaders for resignation. They did not care as to whether it was legal or illegal, constitutional or unconstitutional. All their demands were directed to restore Laldenga's supremacy.

Later, President Biakchhunga called a National Council Meeting on 18th August 1978.¹⁰⁰ The Council meeting agreed that President Biakchhunga alone should resign

99. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, op.cit.

100. Biakchhunga. Hnam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 154.

without dissolving the whole newly elected 'Cabinet'. Before tendering his resignation, Biakchhunga said,

"....It is a pity that I have to go just because I am not Laldenga.... I decided to go rather than being an obstacle in our freedom movement.... It could be understood if you had found my inefficiency.... What hurts me most is that I cannot hold the presidency just because I am not Laldenga...."¹⁰¹

Thus, Biakchhunga's presidency came to an end dramatically only after two months. Presidential charge was taken by Vice President Malsawma Colney. A fresh presidential election was held on 26th October 1978, by the 17th MNF National Convention. When the result was announced, Tlangchhuaka, a former Vice President was declared elected.¹⁰²

However, the newly elected President also faced the same fate as the former President Biakchhunga, because the ardent supporters of Laldenga were not satisfied with the replacement. Obviously, there was tremendous pressures from the pro-Laldenga group to secure resignation of the newly elected President Tlangchhuaka. Laldenga's followers openly expressed their determination to launch an aggressive move

101. Biakchhunga's Farewell Message retold by Tlangchhuaka.

102. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

until and unless Laldenga was installed back to power.¹⁰³ Thus, circumstances once again compelled President Tlangchhuaka to vacate only after two months in December 1978. Tlangchhuaka stated that he stepped down just because he did not want to break up the MNF organisation.¹⁰⁴

Following the resignation of Tlangchhuaka, another election was held on 24th January 1979. Malsawma Colney was declared elected "Mizoram Sawrkar" President. He took an oath on 29th January 1979. However, like his predecessors, he too had to step down due to same type of pressures on 11th March 1979.¹⁰⁵

Keeping in view the underground organisation, it was a fact that the loyalists and ardent supporters of Laldenga could not have faith in the leadership of others. Their blind faith in Laldenga could not be shaken even by his authoritarian and dictatorial attitude and betrayal of their constitution. A close study of the political imbroglio of the MNF organisation and leadership structure exposed that the Calcutta Convention of 1976 had disheartened many hardcore MNF leaders when they

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid.

105. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, op.cit.

reluctantly decided to talk within the framework of Indian Constitution. For the hardcore, such kind of peace talk after several years of desperate fighting for independence was only 'humiliating and self defeating'¹⁰⁶ and more so because many volunteers had been killed. Besides, prolonged uncertainties had brought nothing but sufferings and misery. Consequently, disintegration and dissatisfaction grew up resulting in removal of Laldenga from his presidentship which in turn caused confusion in the MNF camp.

RESTORATION OF LALDENGA

Laldenga with his aides Zoramthanga and Tawnluia were under house arrest following the break down of the peace talk in early 1978, during the Janata Government. As soon as they heard the political turmoil in their headquarters, Zoramthanga and Tawnluia sneaked from New Delhi and directly went to their headquarters on 10th January 1979.¹⁰⁷

With the help of Laldenga loyalists in the MNA, they arrested the ousted President Biakchhunga and some of his close supporters and expelled them from the MNF

106. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney and Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

107. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 87.

headquarters towards Mizoram boundary at gun point on 21st January 1979.¹⁰⁸ In his last farewell message, Biakchhunga said, "It is so sad that we have to go back home against our will, and without fulfilling our pledge. I don't blame you because you are soldiers and you only obeyed orders. But just one thing, please don't come home without fulfilling your pledge".¹⁰⁹ Subsequently, Colney and his close friends were also expelled from the MNF headquarters at gun point on 17th March, while Tlangchhuaka was expelled in December 1979.¹¹⁰

Zoramthanga and Tawnluia could easily apprehend and expel anti-Laldenga group because according to Tlangchhuaka and Colney, they did not want to protect their presidentship using forceful means and they were not 'reactionary' either.¹¹¹ Laldenga and his dedicated followers did not hesitate to use force for weeding out opposition as well as for the restoration of Laldenga's supremacy. It is also said that Zoramthanga and Tawnluia were helped by MNA personnel who were supposed to be

108. Biakchhunga. Hnam Kalsiam, op.cit., p. 161.

109. Ibid.

110. Scholar's interview with Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

111. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney and Tlangchhuaka, op.cit.

neutral in party politics. Therefore, after removing the opponents of Laldenga, the MNF headquarters once again reinstated Laldenga as the President of the "Mizoram Sawrkar" as well as President of the MNF on 19th April 1979.¹¹² It should be noted that Tlangchhuaka was expelled after the restoration of Laldenga. Subsequently, Zoramthanga was appointed Vice President of the party, while 'Major' Tawnluia was promoted to 'Brigadier General' and made the 'Chief of Army Staff'. Lalrinchhana was also appointed the General Secretary of the MNF, Thangkima the 'Supply Minister', Rualchhina the 'Finance Minister' and Chawngzuala, of the former anti-Laldenga group, after he apologised for his act, was appointed 'Health Minister'. Those new appointees were approved by Laldenga from New Delhi on 1st May 1979.¹¹³

It was rather inexplicable and interesting that Laldenga, even after deviation from the chosen path could still manipulate the respect and honour of the MNF undergrounds. Since the inception the MNF, the party did not prevent a trend towards personality cult which eroded its democratic functioning. As a result, strength always

112. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 89.

113. Ibid., p. 90.

remained with the pro-Laldenga extremists and there was no place for others. Besides, Laldenga had not skillfully bridged the gap between the antagonistic waves within the party and simply kept them together by his charismatic leadership, which occasionally created confusion among the rank and file of the party. Had there been a collective leadership in the organisation, all the antagonistic forces could have been united.

ORGANISATION OF THE MNF AFTER THE ACCORD

After two decades of disturbance, the MNF decided to follow the constitutional path by accepting statehood for Mizoram. The MNF, after becoming a legitimate overground party, pledged to achieve its new aims and objectives within the framework of Indian Constitution through constitutional and non-violent means.

The new MNF set up in the post Accord period has a pyramidal structure, starting at the bottom from the village unit up to the top called the Headquarters which is in Aizawl. A General Headquarters comprises of the General Assembly, the National Council, the National Executive Committee, the National Youth Front, Women and Senior Front.¹¹⁴ Office bearers of the party comprise of a

114. The MNF Constitution, 1986. Published by the MNF Headquarters, Aizawl. Dated 22nd August 1986. Source: The MNF Office, Aizawl.

President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer and five other Secretaries appointed by the President for a term of three years.

The General Assembly is the highest body of organisation which meets once a year normally. Next to the General Assembly, there is a National Council which is supposed to meet twice a year. The National Council is a large body, composed of the General Headquarters office bearers, National Executive Committee members, all MNF MLAs and MPs, all office bearers of National Youth, Women and Senior Fronts of the Headquarters, Divisional Headquarters office bearers and, President of the Block Headquarters, and one representative from each Block appointed by the General Headquarters, Chief Executive members and Executive members of the party, 40 members appointed by the National Executive Committee, and five other members appointed by the MNF President, and also Deputy Chief Organiser of the party.¹¹⁵

The National Executive Committee acts as a standing body of the Headquarters and looks after all important matters. It consists of the General Headquarters office bearers, 24 members appointed by the National Executive

115. Ibid.

Committee itself, any MNF Minister and Speaker and Deputy Speaker (if it has), MNF MPs, Assembly Chief Whip (if it has), Deputy leaders, Secretaries, Presidents of the Youth, Women and Senior Front, Presidents of the Divisional Headquarters and Chief Organiser of the General Headquarters.¹¹⁶ The National Executive Committee is thus, the highest executive organ of the party and exercises a large measure of influence and power in deciding party's policies and programmes. It has power to carry out policies adapted by the General Assembly, and also to supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the Divisional Block Headquarters Committee.

It is thus clear that this strength of the MNF leadership rested on the organisational structure of the party which from the very beginning was organised in a planned manner. Even before the 'declaration of independence', the party network had spread to the different parts of Mizoram in such a way that the MNF leadership could take a decisive step. The hold of Laldenga over the party was challenged from time to time but the overwhelming support always went in his favour. Factionalism within the MNF grew from its very inception and in course of the movement Laldenga's absence from the

116. Ibid.

MNF headquarters contributed towards misunderstanding within the organisation. However, Laldenga was able to exercise the weight of his personality factor and keep the house in order. After the MNF laid down their arms, factionalism once again raised its ugly head and the party disintegrated even during Laldenga's life time.

CHAPTER VII

THE M.N.F. IN RELATION TO OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES
IN MIZORAM

During the two decades of political turmoil (1966-1986) in Mizoram, the MNF factor played an important role in politics. Any party, whether local or national, was too eager to obtain the blessing of the MNF for its functioning which significantly highlighted the indispensable influence of the MNF in Mizoram politics. It is also significant that the opposition parties by supporting students' unrest in Mizoram during the peace negotiation mobilised public opposition to the ruling party which helped the MNF to press for its installation in the corridors of power. Therefore, keeping in view the political development in Mizoram, the present chapter will chiefly stress the role of various political parties in upholding bargaining potential in relation to the undergrounds and the incumbent authority.

THE MIZO UNION (M.U.) AND THE MNF

The influence of the Mizo Union on the Mizos was strong mainly due to its success in abolishing the traditional chiefship. As the first political party in Mizoram, it was able to maintain its supremacy in the District Council (1952-1971) except for a short interregnum period during 1970-'71 when the Congress formed a shaky

Government by a small margin of seats. When the Mizo District was elevated to the status of Union Territory in 1972, the M.U. was back to power capturing 21 of the 30 elective seats in the Mizoram (U.T.) Legislative Assembly. The M.U., while in power held a strong opinion that the welfare and modernisation of the Mizos would be achieved best within the Indian Union.¹ Earlier, the M.U., in its first General Assembly, held at Aizawl on 24th September 1946, resolved to demand "full self-determination within the province of Assam."² The assembly was opposed to the idea of the erstwhile Lushai Hills being treated as Excluded Area.³

However, the desire to join India through Assam was not without conditions. It should be remembered that they toyed with the possibility of "revision according to the future trend of events even to the extent of seceding after two years."⁴ However, after the M.U. held power in the District Council for more than a decade, it gradually

1. Lalchungnunga. Mizoram: Politics of Regionalism and National Integration, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p. 73.

2. Memorandum of the Case of the Mizo by the Mizo Union, Aijal, Assam, September 1946. Source: J.V. Hluna, MLA, Aizawl.

3. Scholar's interview with R. Vanlawma, Founder of the M.U., Dated 24th November 1993, Place: Zalen Cabin, Aizawl.

4. Memorandum of the Case of the Mizo, op.cit.

became more and more preoccupied with status quo and did not care to reconsider the question of political future of the Mizos. True to its pro-Indian stand, it becomes highly instrumental in checking the secessionist movement of the MNF, which resulted in a serious antagonism between the M.U. and the MNF.

Another cause of their antagonism was that while the MNF was formed with the aim of Mizo independence, the M.U. aimed at a Hill State at first along with some other tribes of the north east and later, a full-fledged statehood for the Mizos. The M.U. leaders used to criticize the MNF objective exposing the futility of the Mizo independence demand. At one stage, Ch. Chhunga, President of the M.U. also warned the Mizo people against the activities of the MNF.⁵ There was also a confrontation between the MNF and the M.U. when the later organised a procession at Aizawl on 24th October 1961, demanding a Hill State.⁶ However, there was no serious clash between the two before the disturbance.

But after the disturbance, as stated, the MNF announced that it did not allow and recognise any

5. Saprawnga, Ch. Ka Zin Kawng (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, 1990, p. 202.

6. Ibid.

representative of the Mizos other than the MNF themselves. Therefore, the underground demanded resignation of all Government servants as well as Members of District Council (MDC). However, the MDCs ruled out the demands of the MNF on the ground that their presence was imperative to bespeak for the Mizo people.⁷ Consequently, the MNF kidnapped several officials of the District Council on 16th June 1967. Moreover, Thangsuma, a MDC from Ngopa constituency, and Hrangvunga and Chawngbawiha both M.U. leaders of Champhai village, and Tlawma, the M.U. President of Kolasib Block were killed by the underground.⁸ The underground used to inflict exemplary punishment to those whom they thought were anti-MNF.

During the time of the District Council general election on 23rd April 1971, there were two major political parties in the District viz. the M.U. and the Congress. For the first time in Mizoram politics, 'peace and tranquility' became the main issue of electoral politics in the District. The Congress won the election capturing ten seats while the M.U. captured nine and independents three. The strained relation between the MNF and the M.U. was a

7. Scholar's interview with C. Pahlira, Former M.U. President, dated 23rd January 1993. Place: Republic Veng, Aizawl.

8. Saprawnga, Ch. Ka Zin Kawng, op.cit., p. 227.

blessing for the Congress. The Congress, however, formed a shaky government and was hardly able to maintain law and order.

When the Mizo District was elevated to the Union Territory in 1972, the first Mizoram Legislative Assembly (U.T.) general election was held on 18th April 1972. 'Peace and tranquility' continued to be the main issue of electoral politics of both the M.U. and the Congress. The two parties also promised to bring about a peace dialogue between the Government of India and the MNF undergrounds to solve the Mizo political problems.⁹ The election result brought the M.U. back to power as it captured 21 of the 30 elective seats of the Mizoram (U.T.) Legislative Assembly. According to Zalawma, the Congress lost the election mainly because of the scramble for leadership inside the party, which disintegrated themselves.¹⁰

Ch. Chhunga, the first Mizoram (U.T.) Chief Minister was optimistic about the settlement of Mizo political problems by peaceful means. He was looking for an opportunity to implement the election promise to bring

9. Ibid., p. 253.

10. Scholar's interview with Zalawma, Ex. Chief Executive Member (CEM), Dated 21st January 1994. Place: Zarkawt, Aizawl.

about a congenial atmosphere between the MNF and the Government of India. Therefore, on 9th February 1973, the Chief Minister, accompanied by Ch. Saprawnga MLA and Lalthanhawla, President of the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee flew over to Parva, a small town in the extreme south west of Mizoram near the boundary, to meet Malsawma Colney, Chairman of the MNF 'National Emergency Council'.¹¹ Malsawma Colney was taken to Aizawl where he was hosted by the Mizoram Government for two weeks.

During his stay at Aizawl, they discussed several important matters and in particular how to have a negotiation with the Central Government. In fact, Mizoram Government had nothing to do except to seek a solution through a peace dialogue between the warring parties. Colney also categorically expressed that at that stage it was the Indian Government whom the MNF really wanted to talk to, unconditionally and outside the framework of Indian Constitution and not the Mizoram Government.¹² Therefore, without achieving any tangible result, Colney went back to their headquarters on 23rd February 1973.

11. Vanlawma, R. Karam Leh Kei (in Mizo), Lenchhawng Press, Aizawl, 1969, p. 379.

12. Scholar's interview with Malsawma Colney, Ex. MNF 'National Emergency Council' Chairman and Ex. MNF President, Dated 15th July 1993. Place: Khatla, Aizawl.

While the Mizoram Government was busy creating a congenial atmosphere for peaceful negotiation between the MNF and the Central Government, on 10th March 1973, the Lt. Governor of Mizoram was ambushed by the MNF militants near Zanlawn village in the Aizawl-Silchar road. Following the incident the peace effort of the M.U. Ministry was deferred. The M.U. lost its chance to make a reconciliation because shortly afterwards, it merged with the Congress on 23rd January 1974.¹³

The M.U. was regional in form but pro-Indian and pro-Congress in character,¹⁴ especially after the leadership had passed to the educated elite since November 1946. It also joined the Assam Congress Legislature Party at the State level in 1952. A. Thanglura, founder of the Congress in Mizoram stated that Ch. Saprawnga, one of the most prominent M.U. leaders appeared to be ready to follow the Congress from the very beginning.¹⁵ The merger of such a popular and prominent regional party with a national party was explained by the erstwhile M.U. leader as a 'move

13. Thanglura, A. Zoram Politics Lumlet Dan (in Mizo), Thakthing Bazar Press, Aizawl, 1983, p. 269.

14. Lalchungnunga. Mizoram: Politics and Regionalism and National Integration, op.cit., p. 77.

15. Thanglura, A. Zoram Politics Lumlet Dan, op.cit., p. 151.

to obliterate the feeling of antagonism between the Chief and their descendants'.¹⁶ Another argument was that the Centre could not have full confidence in any regional party. Thus, it was thought better to merge with a national party in order to have more weight and confidence of the Central Government and thereby to speed up the process of peaceful settlement of the Mizo problems.¹⁷

However, the merger with the Congress was not so welcomed by several M.U. leaders, especially in the villages. Therefore, on 4th March 1974, several hardcore Unionists revived the M.U. under the leadership of C. Pahlira as its President.¹⁸ But the revived M.U. could not play a major role any more and it gradually ceased to exist after the name was transformed into Mizo Union Christian Democratic Socialist (MUCDS).

THE PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE (P.C.) AND THE M.N.F.

The emergence of the P.C. could be traced to the period when Mizoram was at the peak of disturbance. It was the time when innocent people and the undergrounds had been

16. Lalchungnunga. Mizoram: Politics of Regionalism and National Integration, op.cit., p. 78.

17. Ibid.

18. Scholar's interview with C. Pahlira, op.cit.

subjected to atrocities when rigorous 'Operation Security' was adopted by the Indian army to keep law and order in the territory. At that critical juncture, Brig. T. Sailo (Retd) came to the forefront of Mizoram politics. In view of the misery and sufferings of the innocent people, he felt that he had a role to play in restoring mutual understanding and good will and cooperation between the Mizos and the Indian security forces. In his words:

"... On seeing the condition of the people in Mizoram, I felt impelled to intervene and take certain steps for ameliorating their difficulties. The greatest problems faced by the people at the time was the excesses committed by the security forces during their operations...."¹⁹

To this end, he initiated a Human Rights Committee (H.R.C.) in Mizoram on 22nd June 1974.²⁰ It was in fact, the right time to form such Committee to bring about mutual understanding and cooperation between the security forces and the people, as well as to protect and sustain the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

The H.R.C. was formed as non-political organisation. It was popularly welcomed by the common people especially

19. Speeches and Writings of Brig. T. Sailo, AVSM (Retd), Chief Minister of Mizoram, Government of Mizoram, Directorate of Information, Public Relations & Tourism, Aizawl, Mizoram, (Year not mentiond), p. 21.

20. Hluna, J.V. A Search For Mizo Identity (in Mizo), Synod Press, Aizawl, 1983, p. 135.

those who suffered the brutalities and atrocities of the Indian army. The H.R.C. also filed cases in Gauhati High Court against the shifting of villages and demanded compensation for the loss and damage of properties from the Central Government.²¹ The H.R.C. was, therefore, largely successful in creating some understanding between the local people and the Indian army.

Having gained some popularity, the H.R.C. was converted into a regional political party called the People's Conference (P.C.) on 17th April 1975. Commenting upon the formation of the P.C., T. Sailo, its founder President said that:

"I had neither any background nor interest in politics... but the common people express the desire that a political party should be formed to carry on the task which was started by the H.R.C. ... and to voice and achieve the aspiration of the Mizos... In consequence of these desires, P.C. came into existence."²²

The P.C. pedged to work for bringing about a climate of understanding and gave it a priority 'to prepare grounds for the peaceful solution of the Mizo political problems '²³

21. Ibid., p. 140.

22. Speeches and Writings of Brig. T. Sailo, AVSM (Retd), op.cit., p. 21.

23. Constitution of the P.C., P.C. Office, Aizawl, 1975.

in their objectives. The party's ideology and programme as reflected in its election manifestoes included its endeavour to prepare ground for the peaceful solution of the Mizo political problem. It claimed 'peace and tranquility' to be the prime need of the people. As such the party outwardly maintained that whatever be the outcome, an agreement arrived at, between the MNF and the Central Government could be the best for Mizoram.²⁴

At the inception of the P.C., it was reportedly 'working solidly behind the underground and maintained close contact with the MNF chief Laldenga. The MNF too sought T. Sailo's advice in carrying out underground activities.^{25*} The P.C. was thus, regarded as a pro-MNF. People had the impression that it was having a friendly relation with the MNF because T. Sailo's son was a 'Captain' in the MNF. A leadership which could assert itself and boldly speak against the army's brutalities and atrocities thus, maintained good relations with the MNF and also enjoyed some advantages to fulfill the need of the

24. Third Bulletin of the People's Conference, Published by the P.C. Headquarters, Aizawl, Dated 8th August 1978. Source: P.C. Office.

25. The Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, Dated 5th September 1975.

* The same was corroborated by F. Malsawma, Ex. P.C. Cabinet Minister in an Interview, Dated 19th January 1995, Aizawl.

hour. The P.C. was thus, just the type of a regional party in Mizoram the people were longing for.

The P.C. had the first test of its strength at the whole Mizoram level Village Council election in early 1976 and it had won in 20 out of 22 villages. Moreover, only two years after its inception, the P.C. candidate for the lone Lok Sabha seat won the election in March 1977. The P.C. also won the May 1978 Assembly general election by an overwhelming majority, capturing 23 of the 30 elective seats with 53.93 per cent of votes in their favour. Zairemthanga, a Church Elder who joins the P.C. and later on became a Cabinet Minister in the P.C. Ministry stated that there was no organisation or association in Mizoram to bespeak for the people against the brutality of the Indian security forces before the inception of the P.C. When the P.C. was formed under the leadership of a high ranking Indian army officer of a Brigadier rank, people had high expectation. What more, there was a deep understanding between the undergrounds and T. Sailo. Therefore, the Mizos gave a tacit support to the P.C. and the victory of the P.C. was possible mainly because of its tacit understanding with the MNF.²⁶ 'A peaceful solution of the political

26. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, Ex. Cabinet Minister in the P.C. Ministry, Dated 19th January 1995. Place: Dawrpui Vengthar, Aizawl.

problem of the Mizoram by reconciliation' was the main theme of the election manifesto of the P.C.²⁷

But barely five months, after it came to power, 8 MLAs including the Speaker withdrew support to the P.C. Ministry on 13th October 1978. Nothing particular was mentioned as explanation of their withdrawal of support except that it was 'unavoidable'.²⁸ However, the dissident MLAs informed the press later that the P.C. Ministry had gone astray from the party's policy number one viz., to prepare the ground for peaceful settlement of the Mizo political problem.²⁹ Referring to that issue, Zairemthanga, a P.C. leader explained: "There was no time for considering the political issue because the Ministry had to settle first. The real reason was personal ambitiousness because all the dissident MLAs wanted to become Ministers which the U.T. Government could not afford."³⁰ In his letter to the Prime Minister, Chief Minister T. Sailo stated that, "The Speaker and other MLAs hoping to find a place in the

27. The People's Conference Election Manifesto, 1978, Issued by the P.C. Headquarters, Aizawl, 1978. Source: P.C. Office.

28. Letter sent to the Lt. Governor of Mizoram by Eight P.C. MLAs, Dated 13th October 1978. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga, Zoram Politics.

29. Lalchungnunga. Mizoram: Politics of Regionalism and National Integration, op.cit., p. 91.

30. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, op.cit.

State Ministry became disgruntled, and the Speaker, Thangridema was not satisfied with it but wanted to be a Minister."³¹ He also stated that the dissident group was abetted and instigated by Sakhawliana, Vice President of the P.C., who had his own scheme of becoming the party's president.

As there were two group in the P.C. since October 1978, T. Sailo's group came to be known as P.C., and the dissident group was called P.C.'B'. Consequent upon the withdrawal of support by 8 MLAs, the P.C. Ministry was dissolved on 11th November 1978 and President's Rule imposed in the Territory, and a mid-term election was held in April 1979. The P.C. once again won the election with reduced majority, bagging 18 seats, while P.C.'B' captured 4 seats and the Congress (I) 5 seats. Addressing the people on the assumption of Office of the Chief Minister, T. Sailo said:

"... Peace and tranquility in this strife torn land of Mizoram is the most important aspect in all our thinking Today, the situation is in a fluid state. We shall leave no stone unturned to restore complete normalcy in Mizoram in the near future."³²

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31. Lalhminganga, F. People's Conference Party: A Study, M. Phil Thesis, Submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1985, p.36.
32. Speech of Brig. T. Sailo on 8th May 1979, after mid-term election victory, Aizawl. Source: J.V. Hluna, A Search For Mizo Identity, op.cit.

However, unexpectedly, a rift between T. Sailo and the MNF chief Laldenga became wider as the P.C. became more and more popular. It is significant to analyse the causes that encouraged T. Sailo to turn his back against the MNF suddenly, who assumed his great political career and status in Mizoram only as a pro-MNF at the initial stage.

It should be noted that T. Sailo, then a pro-MNF was one of the victims of M.I.S.A. in 1976, and was arrested along with his several colleagues on 3rd June 1976. After his release in December 1976 he began to criticize the MNF chief. In his letter to the P.C. Vice President, Laldenga said, "I believe that it was since after he was released from jail that he had turned against us. He was in fact, a sincere Indian army officer till his retirement but now, he is no more reliable to us."³³ Referring to this, F. Malsawma, Ex. P.C. Cabinet Minister and one time right-hand man of T. Sailo disclosed that just before the Calcutta Convention of 1976, there was a rumour that T. Sailo had advised Laldenga not to lay down arms for nothing specially without any good reason, for it would weaken and demolish their strength and potentiality. But somehow, Indian intelligence came to know about T. Sailo's advice to

33. Laldenga's personal letter to the P.C. Vice President, Sakhawliana, Aizawl, Dated 10th October 1977. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

Laldenga, and it was believed that T. Sailo was arrested under M.I.S.A. for that reason.³⁴ Therefore, after his release from prison, the first task of T. Sailo was to negate the allegation for which he was misunderstood. It was assumed that since then, T. Sailo mistrusted Laldenga for disclosing his friendly advice. T. Sailo, therefore, tried to establish his loyalty to the Indian Union, reflecting that he would have never mentioned to anybody that could endanger the national security.³⁵

However, anti-Sailo group charged that T. Sailo made a 'volte-face' and turned against Laldenga all on a sudden. But on the other hand, pro-Sailo group said that Laldenga was by nature intolerant of any rival and he was making attempts to dislocate T. Sailo by any means.³⁶ The P.C. always made it clear in public that it could not understand why the MNF continued killings after having undertaken that it would seek settlement within the framework of Indian Constitution.

It was also alleged that T. Sailo himself used to participate in some talks between the Central Government

34. Scholar's interview with F. Malsawma, Ex. P.C. Cabinet Minister, Dated 19th January 1995. Place: Chaltlang, Aizawl.

35. Ibid.

36. Lalchungnunga. Regionalism in Mizoram Politics, Ph.D. Thesis, Submitted to NEHU, Shillong, 1987, p. 182.

and the MNF. It could well be that Laldenga and T. Sailo had differences in regard to the modalities of settlement for peace and normalcy in Mizoram. But T. Sailo denied the allegation and said that he only participated on those talks because Prime Minister Morarji Desai invited him with the approval of Laldenga.³⁷ The P.C. in their Central Working Committee also resolved to give full support to peace efforts made by the MNF and the Central Government.³⁸

One of the main reasons of their misunderstanding, according to Lalrinthanga was the matter of Mizoram Legislative Assembly election. It should be noted that soon after the inception the P.C., the party had gained wide popularity in Mizoram. But the MNF was opposed to hold Assembly election on the ground that they did not accept or recognise any Mizo representatives other than the MNF themselves. But it was also said that Laldenga informed the P.C. leaders in New Delhi on 9th August 1977 that the MNF was not opposed to the State Assembly election, and wished the P.C. to form a Ministry in Mizoram.³⁹ Therefore, the May 1978 election was held as scheduled and the P.C. came

37. Hluna, J.V. A Search For Mizo Identity, op.cit., p.191.

38. The P.C. Central Working Committee Minutes, Aizawl. Source: The P.C. Office, Aizawl, Dated 25th September 1976.

39. Hluna, J.V. A Search For Mizo Identity, op.cit., p. 194.

to power. However, as stated, with the growing of popularity of the P.C., personal enmity between T. Sailo and Laldenga began to rise.

When an Agreement was signed between the MNF and the Indian Government in July 1976, difficulties arose over the implementation of the commitment envisaged in the Agreement. As stated, the undergrounds did not give up their guerrilla activities following the Agreement. T. Sailo, therefore, accused Laldenga of indulging in the game of double dealing. T. Sailo observed that Laldenga appeared to be more sincere and genuine in front of the Central leaders at New Delhi although at the same time he sent contrary message by using subtle means.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Laldenga made it know that the P.C. had been pressing him to implement the July Agreement of 1976, without understanding the problems behind it specially in the handing over of arms to the Indian Government. He accused T. Sailo for having acted as a tool of the Central Government over the MNF.⁴¹

Thus, rift between the P.C. and the MNF widened day

40. Lalhmingsanga, F. People's Conference Party: A Study, op.cit., p. 83.

41. Laldenga's personal letter to the P.C. Vice President, Rev. Sakhawliana, Dated 10th October 1977. Source: Lalrinthanga.

day by day. On 21st January 1979, a large chunk of 104 undergrounds led by Ex. MNF President Biakchhunga including several 'officers' surrendered and joined the P.C. at Aizawl, T. Sailo led P.C. organised a big 'welcome home' function at the Assam Rifles' parade ground. In the function, Biakchhunga declared that, "Once a commitment is made it must be honoured", and that was the main reason they had come home.⁴² He, however, did not mention that they were expelled from the MNF headquarters at gun point.

Relation between the two parties deteriorated when T. Sailo informed the Central leaders that Laldenga had only a handful of followers. Therefore, taking advantage of the strained relationship between the MNF and the ruling P.C., T. Sailo was assured by the Central Government that the security forces would be fully at his disposal and could be deployed whenever needed to curb violence.⁴³ As a result, the doors of violence were widely open, and the MNF target during that time was mainly the ruling P.C. Ministry which aimed at discrediting the MNF.

As the rift widened, the P.C. undertook a series of

42. Speeches of Ex. MNF President Biakchhunga at the Welcome Function held on 14th August 1979 at Aizawl A.R. Ground. Source: J.V. Hluna.

43. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, Dated 9th August 1979.

measures to mobilise public opinion against the MNF. Whenever any incident took place in the Mizo Hills, the P.C. Ministry would make a strong condemnation through radio and newspaper, circulated pamphlets etc. and called for protest procession against the MNF activities. At one time, Chief Minister Brig. T. Sailo said in the Radio that:

"... What is your target? What is your goal? Your leadership have told you that settlement of Mizoram political problems will be made within the Constitution of India. Then why are you still killing people? You should know that the Mizo people in general are completely fed up with your nonsense killing...."44

However, it was felt that every incident that occurred may not have been done by the MNF. Anti-Sailo group generally believed that it was carried out by the 'Special Forces' of Mizoram Armed Police according to the order of T. Sailo, to disgrace the MNF to the public. Referring to this, the Indian Express commented that:

"The MNF, having a hand in every violent incident was not true. For instance, the much publicised attack on All India Radio Station in Aizawl is alleged to have been made by the MNF. If this was true, how is that not a single Mizo rebel was arrested or injured in the attack on the Radio Station which is well protected by the Security Forces?"45

44. An Appeal to the MNF by Brig. T. Sailo, Chief Minister of Mizoram, All India Radio, Aizawl Station, Dated 19th June 1980. Source: A.I.R. Aizawl Station.

45. The Indian Express, New Delhi, Dated 28th August 1979.

Referring to the strained relation between the ruling P.C., led by T. Sailo and the MNF, the *The Times of India* also exhorted that, "The P.C. party led by T. Sailo should change its attitude towards the MNF... instead of pursuing a policy of confrontation."⁴⁶

In fact, it remains uncertain as to whether the strained relation between the P.C. and the MNF in general, and between T. Sailo and Laldenga in particular, was due to T. Sailo's plan to marginalised Laldenga, or was the consequence of Laldenga's tactic to dislocate T. Sailo before he came overground, in order to make his way safe and easy for power centre. Whatever the case may be, T. Sailo's effort to curb the underground movement accelerated the strained relation between them and it was one reason hastening the breakdown of peace talk in 1982. T. Sailo subdued the Prime Minister of India through Parthasarathy by saying, "The MNF were only a handful of insurgent group. It is not necessary to give them political concession. If you provide us more arms and army, I can eliminate all of them."⁴⁷ Due to this reason, the MNF issued a press release and stated: "The Mizoram P.C. Ministry led by T. Sailo

46. The Times of India, New Delhi, Dated 28th August 1979.

47. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics (1976-1986), Lenchhawng Press, 1993, Aizawl, p. 128.

declared war against us. Even though, we must not treat them as our enemy, we should pray to God for their misdeed for one day, they may realise their mistake and feel the same as we do."⁴⁸

Though the MNF said that they would not ill-treat the P.C. for their alleged misdeed, yet, there were several ugly incidents to cripple the P.C. Ministry. As a result, law and order situation deteriorated with mutual distrust.

In this political turmoil by-election to four seats in Mizoram Legislative Assembly was held following the resignation of four sitting MLAs belonging to the P.C.'B' on 19th May 1982 in response to the MNF call. The ruling party, the P.C. won three seats while one seat went to its ally, the M.U. The election result, however, endorsed the public support for T. Sailo's approach to stability as against MNF demand for resumption of peace talk on Laldenga's term.

Significantly, the controversial role of 'special forces' of Mizoram Armed Police had worsened the situation. In the special forces, the P.C. Ministry used to recruit MNF returnees, and the family members or relatives of the

48. Press Release issued by the MNF 'Lt. Col.' Malsawma (U.T. Commander), Dated 3rd December 1981. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

victims of the MNF etc. The main purpose of the 'special forces' was to give security and protection to the State VIPs as well as to check and suppress the underground movement. Many a time, the 'special forces' used to overdo their duty and harass and intimidate innocent people, working side by side with the Indian security forces.

On the night of 14th June 1982, Z.A. Kapmawia, Editor of "Chhawrpial" (Mizo), a daily newspaper, was shot dead by the MNF. Lalhnuna, a contractor of Aizawl was also shot by the MNF. Both of them were the P.C. workers. Besides, R. Zadinga, a newly elected P.C. MLA from Phuldungsei Constituency was also shot dead by the MNF on 15th June 1982 while he was on tour. Due to those ugly incidents, fear and grief rocked Mizoram and many people sympathised with the victims and bereaved families.

As the situation in the Mizo Hills moved from bad to worse, the MNF accused the ruling P.C. Ministry of being an obstacle to the peace process due to their unwillingness to step down from power to make way for Laldenga.⁴⁹ In this connection, Zairemthanga stated: "There was no question of stepping down because no one has requested or asked us to step down from power for the peace process. However, we

49. Scholar's interview with Lalrinchhana, former MNF Cabinet Minister, Dated 20th September 1993. Place: Kolasib.

have made it clear to the public that we were always ready to make way for peace."⁵⁰ In order to build up mass support, the Chief Minister T. Sailo expressed thus:

"... Laldenga's sole aim during the course of negotiation was to become the Chief Minister of Mizoram without going through election... they tried to gain political power for themselves in Mizoram through violence by the use of weapon."⁵¹

Therefore, the MNF, failing to dislodge T. Sailo from power, undertook another method against the P.C. Ministry. This time, they issued an order, known as "Ram Tibuaitute Bantirna"* (RTB)⁵² - an order which was signed by the MNF Vice President on 10th August 1982, but issued on 1st May 1982, allowing forceful method to eliminate any 'trouble makers' in the peace process. According to the 'RTB Order', all P.C. leaders including T. Sailo were to be killed. But the Village Council Members who belonged to the

50. Scholar's interview with Zairemthanga, op.cit.

51. Speeches of Brig. T. Sailo, Chief Minister of Mizoram on All India Radio, Aizawl Station, Dated 18th June 1982. Source: AIR Aizawl Station.

* "Ram Tibuaitute Bantirna" (RTB) order was a Mizo phrase, literally meaning an order to eliminate trouble maker. In a desperate move, the MNF issued an 'RTB' Order by which they undertook a forceful method to eliminate all the 'trouble makers' in the peace process in Mizoram.

52. "Ram Tibuaitute Bantirna Order" issued by the MNF Vice President Zoramthanga, Dated 1st May 1982, MNF Headquarters, Camp: Chhantlang. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga, Zoram Politics. Also interview with Zoramthanga, op.cit.

P.C. were spared provided that they were willing to resign. Following the 'RTB Order', a P.C. candidate for north Vanlaiphai constituency Lalthawmvunga was shot dead by the MNF on 11th April 1984. The MNF also intimidated several P.C. workers and leaders. However, they could not kill any P.C. Minister or MLA because they had taken precautionary measures.

Due to the issued of the "RTB Order" by the MNF, the Government of India also intensified their security operation in Mizoram. By the end of February 1982, two additional Mountain Brigades were inducted to assist the existing armies in Mizoram. During the period between 20th January to 1st February 1982, 191 MNF undergrounds were apprehended by the security force while 14 surrendered with arms.⁵³ By October 1983, the security force killed 21 MNF volunteers and 298 were captured while other 478 surrendered to the Indian security force.⁵⁴

Thus, the P.C. which came to power in the Territory with the promise of peace and normalcy, failed to give effect to their commitment to the people. Unfortunately, the P.C. led the Mizo people into two antagonistic groups,

53. Tlangchhuaka's personal diary (unpublished).

54. Ibid.

- pro-P.C. and pro-MNF who virtually waged war against each other. As a consequence, F. Malsawma, a P.C. Cabinet Minister resigned from the P.C. in May 1983. Answering to the question as to why he resigned, he later admitted that, "It was not because of my being pro-MNF or my belief and support to the MNF movement. I have not lost the confidence of the P.C. Ministry either. It was purely because of the fact that I disliked any sort of political vendetta, violent confrontation of the Mizos between ourselves."⁵⁵

Though the MNF created an impression that the P.C. Ministry was a stumbling block in the peace process, it should be noted that "the P.C. never committed itself to step down from Ministry to the people during the time of election. Besides, the democratically elected government could not be easily dissolved unconditionally."⁵⁶

However, in the 1984 Assembly general election, the P.C. was able to retain only 8 seats while its main opponent, Congress (I) bagged 19 seats. The defeat of the P.C. was due to the fact that from London Laldenga sent an audio cassette to the Mizo electorate in favour of the

55. Scholar's interview with Ex. P.C. Cabinet Minister, F. Malsawma, MLA, op.cit.

56. Proceedings. Third Session of the Fourth Mizoram Legislative Assembly. Speeches of Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister, Dated 29th March 1985.

Congress (I) in Mizoram, asking them not to vote for any candidate from the P.C. But T. Sailo would not admit that his party had failed at the hustings because of any wrong policies on the MNF movement. He said that, "The Congress (I) took advantage of our poverty and bought their votes with the money they brought from Delhi, Assam and elsewhere."⁵⁷

Interestingly, following the failure to win the 1984 Assembly election, the P.C. leaders expressed that they would not impede the peace process. Consequently, the 'RTB Order' of the MNF was cancelled with effect from 1st June 1985.⁵⁸ The strong armed measures adopted by the Indian army in the form of unprecedented atrocities and tortures on the Mizos was the main cause behind the formation of the P.C. But the same policy was adopted by them towards the MNF in dealing with the rebellion. Very clearly, this attitude of the P.C. towards the MNF was the main cause of its defeat and downfall.

Nevertheless, the P.C. welcomed the 'Memorandum of Settlement' which was signed between the MNF and the Indian Government on 30th June 1986, and sent a letter of

57. India Today, Dated 31st May 1984, p. 30.

58. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 150.

appreciation to the Prime Minister of India to show their gratitude.⁵⁹ However, the P.C. leader T. Sailo stated that though his party welcomed the 'Memorandum of Settlement' in general, because of the return of peace and normalcy in the state, yet it fell short of the requirements for ignoring the provision of greater Mizoram, and for confirming the existing U.T. boundary of 1971 North Eastern State Reorganization Act. Therefore, the P.C. could not wholeheartedly welcome the Accord, and when a resolution was moved in the Assembly to "Welcome the Peace Accord signed between the MNF and the Central Government and thereby usher an era of peace in Mizoram", by the then Deputy Chief Minister of Mizoram, Lalthanhawla, the P.C. MLAs could not vote in favour of the motion.⁶⁰

THE CONGRESS (I) AND THE MNF

The Mizo District Congress Committee, later called Congress (I) was established on 10th August 1961 under the leadership of A. Thanglura at Aizawl.⁶¹ At the inception, the party faced several problems due to the fact that its leader A. Thanglura, the founder President was all the time

59. Proceedings. Sixth Session of the Fourth Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Aizawl, dated 2nd-5th September, 1986.

60. Ibid.

61. Thanglura, A. Zoram Politics Lumlet Dan (in Mizo), op.cit.

living in Shillong. His occasional visit to the District was not of much help for the growth and mobilisation of the party organisation. The disturbance caused by the MNF movement in 1966 rendered it superfluous.

On 20th December 1967, during the time of disturbance, the Congress was reconstituted and an ad-hoc committee was formed consisting of Dengthuama as President, and Zalawma as its Secretary.⁶² The leader of the Congress hoped to fulfil their commitment to bring the Mizos into the mainstream of national life through the party. It is significant to note that the party did not favour assimilation of the Mizos and total obliteration of regional identity. It even spoke of safeguarding the special and distinctive interests and aspiration of the Mizos. The Congress (I) in Mizoram also had a constitution of its own by which it had functional autonomy.⁶³ However, from their very inception, the MNF was hostile towards the Congress on the ground that it was not a party of the Mizos.

But the Congress was able to consolidate its

62. Scholar's interview with Zalawma, op.cit.

63. A Leaflet issued by the Mizoram Congress (I), Memo No. MCC 6/83/Pt. Dated Aizawl, 5th December 1983. Source: M.C. Lalrinthanga.

position gradually, and surprisingly, managed to win the confidence of the MNF and was looked upon as an "overground MNF or pro-MNF"⁶⁴ chiefly because of its attempt to act as a mediator between the MNF and the Central Government.⁶⁵ Therefore, for the first time, its leaders Dengthuama and Zalawma went to New Delhi in January 1968 and urged the Central leaders to negotiate with the MNF for ensuring peace and normalcy in Mizoram.⁶⁶ However, as stated, it was the time when Mizoram was at the peak of disturbance and the party could not play a significant role until the end of the P.C. Ministry in 1984.

When the Congress (I) was in the opposition during the time of the P.C. Ministry, they took advantage of the strained relation of the MNF and the ruling P.C. They skillfully exploited Mizo students' sentiment and instigated them to launch a movement in favour of the MNF and the peace process for their political gain.⁶⁷ It is noteworthy that during the time of the P.C. Ministry there was student unrest which used to paralyse law and order

64. Saprawnga, Ch. Ka Zin Kawng, op.cit., p. 253.

65. Lalchungnunga. Mizoram: Regionalism and National Integration, op.cit., p. 95.

66. Scholar's interview with Zalawma, op.cit.

67. Scholar's interview with P. Siamliana, Former Mizo Students Union President, Dated 25th February 1993. Place: Aizawl.

situation at Aizawl. The P.C. accused the opposition for inciting the students for their selfish end.

It should be remembered that Congress (I) came to power in Mizoram with the help of the MNF chief, Laldenga. Having assumed office with the blessing of the MNF, the new Chief Minister Lalthanhawla said that his priority would be to bring together the underground MNF and the Central Government in one table for fresh negotiation. The then party president Lalduhawma also said that his party would not delay settlement of peace which was their main election promise in 1984 Assembly General election.⁶⁸

It should be noted that the victory of the Congress (I) in the 1984 Mizoram Assembly election was not because of the people deliberately supporting a national party in Mizoram but purely because it had the blessing from the MNF. The Congress (I) also pledged to finalise the negotiation and the pledge was so appealing to the Mizo electorate that they wanted to try the experiment on their commitment. The Mizos also still remember India Gandhi's statement that given a Congress (I) Government in Mizoram, she would directed them to take positive step for the

68. Scholar's interview with Ex. Congress (I) President Lalduhawma, Dated 21st January 1995. Place; Luangmual, Aizawl.

settlement through negotiation, even to the extent of asking the state Congress (I) Ministry to step down.⁶⁹

It is noteworthy that Lalduhawma, an I.P.S. Officer, who joined the Congress (I) in Mizoram in deference to Indira Gandhi's desire, played a significant role in the peace process. Towards the end of 1983, while Lalduhawma was serving as a Special Security Officer to the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi in New Delhi, she invited him to join her party in Mizoram.⁷⁰ Following the invitation, he quit his service and came over to Mizoram and shortly afterwards, he was elected as Mizoram Pradesh Congress (I) Committee President.

It was the time when Mizoram was preparing for a fresh Assembly general election in 1984. As stated, different political parties were competing to obtain the MNF 'blessing' for wooing the people, and the MNF chief was quite generous in 'blessing' them. It should be remembered that Laldenga has 'blessed' the Mizo Convention leaders who went to London to see him during the time of 1984 Assembly general election. It was Lalduhawma, the MPCC (I) President, who went to London to see Laldenga and convince

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

him to prepare another election message in favour of the Congress (I) contrary to his earlier one. In the cassette, Laldenga said that the Congress (I) leader assured him to resume peace talk and would step down in favour of the MNF and would not delay a single second for the settlement. As stated, Laldenga also requested the Mizos not to elect a single P.C. candidate. Therefore, the bulk of the Mizo electorate were impressed by the election message made in favour of the Congress (I), because peace and normalcy was what the people most wanted. Consequently, the Congress (I) won the 1984 Assembly election in Mizoram. After they formed a Ministry, there was a congenial atmosphere for the peace dialogue and Laldenga was also brought to New Delhi from London and thus, peace talk resumed on 17th December 1984.⁷¹

According to Lalduhawma, negotiation had taken a final shape on 20th June 1985, but could not be concluded due to certain internal problems within the Congress (I).⁷² It was also an open secret in Aizawl that the ruling Congress (I) Ministry led by Lalthanhawla remained a stumbling block in the conclusion of peace talk. However,

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

Lalthanhawla negated their promise to the people and informed the House that, "We never committed to bring peace to the people. All we can do is to request the warring parties to come together for a fresh negotiation and now, they have resumed peace talk. Our commitment to the people have been fulfilled."⁷³

Following the delay, pressure mounted on the ruling Congress (I) Ministry to keep their promise during the time of 1984 Assembly election. Thereafter, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi summoned the Congress (I) leaders of Mizoram to New Delhi to discuss the impending issue of Accord. In the meeting, the Prime Minister made it known to them that peace talk was resumed on their request but he could not understand why they negated their commitment just when they were about to conclude the talks. The Prime Minister wanted to know what they really wanted. In answering the Prime Minister, Lalthanhawla stated, "Peace not at the cost of my Ministry, but there may be an Interim Government headed by the Congress (I)".⁷⁴ After that, the Prime Minister

73. Proceedings. Third Session of the Fourth Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Dated Aizawl, 20th-24th March 1985.

74. We are very much indebted to Lalduhawma, Former MPCC (I) President for his valuable information.

dissolved the meeting. Explaining its rationale in the Legislative Assembly, Lalthanhawla asserted: "In politics, every party wanted to be the ruling party, and every leader wanted to be the Chief Minister."⁷⁵ Supporting the Chief Minister, R. Thangliana, a Congress (I) Minister also expressed the feeling that "no one really cares or pays full attention to the peace issue, we are only politicizing the issue."⁷⁶ Thus, it was a fact that every political party in Mizoram was exploiting and politicizing the MNF issue for its selfish end.

The Congress (I) leaders in Mizoram had difference of opinion on this issue. In his letter to Sangkhuma, a Congress (I) worker of Kolasib town, Lalduhawma the MPCC (I) President commented that, "The Chief Minister Lalthanhawla would like to continue his Ministry by creating artificial incidents which could delay the peace settlement."⁷⁷ Though the letter was private, it was disclosed and soon afterwards it completely saturated the whole Mizoram with total dismay. The reason behind

75. Proceedings. Third Session of the Fourth Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Aizawl, Dated 20th-29th March 1985.

76. Ibid.

77. Lalduhawma's personal letter to Sangkhuma of Kolasib, Dated 15th February 1986. Source: Sangkhuma.

Sangkhuma disclosing his private letter was that by revealing the truth, people were given an opportunity to know the real causes of the stagnation in the negotiation so that they could persuade the Ministry to fulfill their commitment to the people at the time of the election in 1984.⁷⁸ Had Sangkhuma not disclosed his letter, the public may not have known the truth for a long time, and the peace Accord may not have been signed on 30th June 1986.

As a consequence, Mizo Students Joint Action Committee requested the Chief Minister to resign and make way for peace.⁷⁹ Following mounting public criticism, Lalthanhawla tendered his resignation to the Central Congress (I) leaders. But New Delhi opposed the move on the ground that it was not the right time to resign.⁸⁰ After New Delhi opposed the idea of resignation, Lalthanhawla called a Congress (I) Legislature party meeting on 14th March 1986 which demanded resignation of MPCC (I) President Lalduhawma for his 'false' allegation against the Chief Minister. Subsequently, Laduhawma tendered resignation to the MPCC (I) Vice President, Zalawma on 16th March 1986 and

78. Scholar's interview with Sangkhuma, Dated 10th September 1994. Place: Kolasib.

79. Vide S.J.A.C. General Secretary Letter to All Political Parties, Dated 28th May 1986. Source: K. Hrangthankima, Aizawl.

80. Zoeng (Mizo) Weekly Magazine, Vol. IV, No. 12, Aizawl.

accepted by the Mizoram Congress (I) Executive Committee the very next day.⁸¹ However, Lalduhawma's resignation was not approved by the Central Congress (I) leaders for sometime. Therefore, he opened a separate Congress (I) office in Aizawl and called it "Congress For Peace". He used to say that "I am still the rightful president of Congress (I) in Mizoram and the Congress Bhavan is wherever I am."⁸²

In view of the delay in the peace settlement, an all party joint meeting sent delegates to New Delhi to meet the Prime Minister. Their memorandum requested the Prime Minister to give up party consideration and strike a final settlement without further delay.⁸³ Meanwhile at Aizawl, Lalthanhawla was busy trying to retain his Ministry. In his speech to the 14th Congress (I) Assembly at Aizawl, the Chief Minister stated that his Ministry had nothing to do with the on-going peace talk and it was completely up to the MNF and the Central Government which were beyond his control. The Chief Minister, however, softened his attitude and stated: "We are ready to vacate our seats if necessary

81. Scholar's interview with Lalduhawma, op.cit.

82. Ibid.

83. Scholar's interview with K. Hrangthankima, a peace delegation of All Party Joint Meeting to New Delhi, Dated 10th May 1994. Place: Luangmual, Aizawl.

and could even share interim government with the MNF if asked to."⁸⁴ In justifying his stand, Lalthanhawla categorically stated that though everybody wanted to safeguard his party interest, he never held it above the national interest. At Aizawl, another committee called Action Committee For Peace was formed in May 1986 which included the P.C., Mizo National Union, the Mizo Convention, the M.P.F., and also the Congress (I), to mobilise public support in favour of the peace process. When the Mizo students organized a total bandh on 3rd June 1986 protesting against the delay the Action Committee for Peace gave a tacit support to the student movement. Besides, when the students organised a relay fasting on 23rd June 1986 in order to demand the conclusion of peace, it was also supported by the Action Committee for Peace.

At last, the Central Government and the MNF signed Peace Accord. Along with the Peace accord, an agreement at party level between the MNF and the Congress (I) was also signed by Laldenga on behalf of the MNF and Arjun Singh on behalf of the Congress (I). According to the agreement, it was decided that Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanhawla would step down in favour of Laldenga, who would head the

84. Speech of Lalthanhawla on 14th Congress (I) Assembly, Aizawl, May 1986. Place: Aizawl.

coalition Government shared between the MNF and the Congress (I) during the interim period.

THE M.N.F. AND OTHER PARTIES

Besides the major political parties, there were also several minor political parties in Mizoram during the time of the peace talk such as Mizo Peace Forum, Mizo Convention and Mizo National Union etc., which did not lag behind during the negotiation stage.

(a) The Mizo Peace Forum (M.P.F.) and the MNF

The origin of the MPF dated back to 30th December 1982, when some Mizo Student leaders of the All Mizo Post Graduate Students Union and Mizo Students Union formed a students' forum to ensure mobilisation in favour of the peace process.⁸⁵ On 4th August 1983, it was transformed into a political party aiming to bring about permanent peace and tranquility in Mizoram. The MPF circulated several leaflets, pamphlets, and also submitted a number of memoranda to the Central Government as well as Mizoram Government to hasten the negotiation in the face of Congress (I) stalling its progress. Its leaders also played a leading role in the All Party Meeting, Action Committee

85. Scholar's interview with P. Siamliana, President of the Mizo Peace Forum, Dated 6th April 1993. Place: Aizawl.

for Peace etc., which were constituted for mobilising public opinion. As stated, the MPF was pro-MNF from its initial stage and true to its nature, it merged itself with the MNF when it came over ground.

(b) The Mizo Convention and the MNF

In early 1979, a 'Steering Committee' was formed by several political party representatives such as P.C.'B', M.U., M.J.P., M.D.F. and Congress (I) at Aizawl to mobilise public support in support of the peace talk. However, the leaders of the Steering Committee decided to transform it into a political party on 2nd April 1982. Therefore, a new party called 'Mizo Convention' (M.C.) was formed by the representatives of the P.C.'B', the Mizo Union faction led by Hausiama, Congress (I) faction led by R. Dengthuama and Mizo Democratic Front.⁸⁶ The M.C. leaders thought that the party could play a meaningful role in the peace process if they formed a Ministry. Therefore, during 1984 Assembly general election, its leaders Lalthanzauva and K. Lalhnuna went to London to meet Laldenga's support for their political gain. The party also supported the student unrest during the time of the P.C. Ministry, when Mizo students

86. Lalrinthanga, M.C. Zoram Politics, op.cit., p. 135.

launched a movement in response to the MNF call. When the Action Committee for Peace was formed by various political parties at Aizawl in early 1986, the M.C. leaders played a leading role. When the MNF came overground, the M.C. merged itself with the MNF.

(c) The Mizo National Union (M.N.U.) and the MNF

In May 1986, a new party called the Mizo National Union (MNU) was formed by the break-away Congress for Peace led by Lalduhawma, former MPCC(I) President and the Mizo Union Christian Democratic Socialist (MUCDS). Among other things, the party's main objective was to settle the Mizo political problem by peaceful negotiation.⁸⁷ It should be remembered that its President was none other than Lalduhawma. However, it merged with the MUCDS shortly and formed a new party, the MNU. The Mizos had high expectation from Lalduhawma, on the ground that he sacrificed his Congress (I) presidentship while defending peace negotiation, and it was generally believed that he would join the MNF afterwards. However, interestingly, the MNU did not merge with the MNF when it came overground.

87. Scholar's interview with Lalduhawma, op.cit.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Politically and socially the Mizos had a status different from the neighbouring tribes. The excluded area status in the pre-Independence period had fostered isolationist feeling as the people had no outlet of interaction with other parts of the country on any common issue. The rapid spread of Christianity engulfing almost the entire Mizo population injected new standards in society which also coincided with very high literacy. Abolition of Mizo traditional chiefship, a revolutionary step in the tribal society, had the effect of introducing egalitarian values in social relations. Against this background, the Mizos were on the lookout for a new identity, which in course of time became synonymous with ethnic nationalism seeking its mobilisation through politics. Ethnic mobilisation took place in an unprecedented manner and within a short span of time, the organisational network of the MNF was directed towards this goal and tribal unity could be forged to spearhead a political movement.

The MNF came into existence as a regional party and within a short period of time it became an important political force in Mizoram. The aims of the party were such

that they could be realised through extra-constitutional means. As a result, the party leadership started mobilising people in support of the declared aims. The MNF 'declaration of Independence' was made at a time when the governmental machinery was least prepared for it and the initial success created wider interest in its leadership. The MNF resorted to violent means which led to counter violence from the government. The armed struggle raised great expectation among the Mizos but it was through repression, and grouping of villages that the government was able to control the situation. Negotiation with the MNF started in early seventies but it was not until 1986 that an Accord could be reached providing for upliftment of Mizoram from Union Territory to a State and ensuring a complete surrender of underground personnel and arms. The Accord led to the installation of the MNF leader Laldenga in the corridors of power and a coalition Ministry was formed with the Congress (I). In the election that followed, the MNF secured forty six per cent of the votes polled and formed a Ministry on its own.

The MNF movement drew its strength by inspiring perceptions and sentiments of ethnic identity of the Mizos. In fact, ethnic nationalism remained at the centre-piece of MNF extremism. Before the 'Declaration of Independence',

the MNF leadership was able to ignite a sense of collective cultural identity by distributing leaflets and by skilful articulation of their distinctiveness.

An analysis of the MNF activities show that ethnic sentiments were exploited in a planned and systematic manner. The name Mizoram provided a recognizable sense of community. Along with it, 'greater Mizoram' was the declared aim of the MNF and was specially mentioned in its constitution. The party all long emphasised the pre-British settlement of the Mizos without any artificial division. The Mizos responded overwhelmingly to the appeals emphasising the belief of common ancestry and myth of migration. Again, as the vast majority of the Mizos were Christians, the attainment of a Christian State was given top priority in the MNF programme. Further, Mizo solidarity was sought to be promoted by raising apprehension of assimilation into Indian culture. In fact, the MNF call created a revolutionary change in the outlook of the Mizos.

However, ethnic mobilization takes a definite shape through the idea of national self-determination. It is through demand for self-determination that ethnic nationalism takes hold of a given population. The spread of political extremism in the Lushai Hills under the MNF was through the demand for self-determination which swept the

whole district and earned its popularity. According to Michael Freeman, "the concept of self-determination is both potent and paradoxical". It is attractive to many because it is associated with the 'value of democracy and national community'. It is repellent to others because it is also associated with 'ethno-nationalist fanaticism and anarchy'. The post-colonial interpretation of the right to self-determination implied that there was no right of secession except in the context of decolonization. Buchanan argues that the right to national self-determination if interpreted to mean that every nation has the right to its own state is vulnerable to the anarchy argument and should therefore be rejected. The debate is still on as to whether the right to self-determination should include the right to secession.

The right to self-determination is raised by referring to the theory of natural or human rights. The great affirmation of this right in the American Declaration of Independence is derived from natural rights premises. In contemporary literature one also finds a contrast between democratic interpretation of the right and the ethno-nationalist interpretation - the former ascribes it to the citizens of a state while the latter ascribes to nations the right to their own state.

The MNF in their 'Declaration of Independence' relied upon natural right to self-determination and borrowed ideas from Locke's theory of consent and the American Declaration of Independence. The MNF demand was a secessionist one and it was this demand which at that time inspired confidence of the Mizos in the leadership of the MNF. The MNF constitution assured highest sovereignty to the Mizos. It may be mentioned that the original Mizo demand was non-secessionist by nature. Today some scholars argue that non-secessionist forms of self-determination should play a larger role in intra-state and inter-state politics. It may be mentioned that post-colonial state elites oppose secession by referring to the pernicious effects of balkanization and by stating that small states are more vulnerable to exploitation by large states.

FINDINGS

1. The root of political extremism in Mizoram is traceable to the failure of autonomy proposal initiated by the Mizo Union on the eve of Indian Independence urging upon 'full self-determination' of the Mizos 'within the Province of Assam' based on a separate constitution of their own, the draft of which was also submitted to the Constituent Assembly.

2. The MNF does not stand out to be the first political

party in Mizoram to have raised the demand for secession as during the first four months of 1947 there were persistent demands for inclusion of the then Lushai Hills District in Assam only for a transitional period of ten years suggesting its revision 'according to the future trend of events even to the extent of seceding after ten years'. Significantly, this stand was taken even before the Naga National Council had entered into a 9-point agreement with the Government of Assam envisaging a transitional arrangement of ten years.

3. The State administration allowed the MNF to function as a legitimate party despite its commitment to achieve sovereign status for the Mizos. While it participated in electoral politics it also geared up for the eventual strike. The civil and military cadres of the MNF made full preparations before the 'declaration of independence'.

4. The famine of late fifties in the Lushai Hills was only an immediate cause of extremism as political mobilization of the Mizos had already taken place along separatist lines demanding special status and greater Mizoram.

5. The MNF's rise to prominence could be attributed to its successfully channelising the feeling of Mizo

nationalism to its advantage and secession was openly propagated in various parts of the District in full knowledge of the governmental machinery. The MNF Constitution promised to ensure 'highest sovereignty to the Mizos' even when it was a recognised political party. It remains an enigma as to how this stance of the MNF was overlooked by the Election Commission.

6. The secessionist demand of the MNF though promoted by favourable conditions was also constrained by the superior might of the Indian State and by 1971 Laldenga had to express willingness to negotiate within the constitutional framework. The following fifteen years for the MNF was not a movement for secession but a strategy of achieving political concessions through intermittent negotiation so as to become an important political force in Mizoram.

7. The supreme power in the MNF was always monopolised by its leader, Laldenga whose style of functioning was only authoritarian. Rank and file of the MNF was never consulted at any stage of discussion and even the party organisation was kept in the dark during secret and routine discussion. The majority of the MNF were however convinced of Laldenga's bargaining capacity.

8. During the greater period of MNF extremism political process in Mizoram like election to Legislative Assembly, and ministry-making by other parties continued not in defiance of the MNF but with tacit understanding with it. Nevertheless the MNF role in Mizoram politics was one of continued waning of its support. Other political parties like the People's Conference and the Congress (I) while maintaining pro-MNF stance from time to time acquired their own strength in detriment to the MNF. The People's Conference came to power in 1978 and the Congress (I) in 1984 with MNF sympathy.

9. The Mizoram Accord represented the triumph of state power on the one hand, and a setback to Mizo nationalism on the other. The use of repressive measures, violation of human rights and regrouping of villages brought untold sufferings to the people and to them return of peace was the most desirable thing. There was no public opposition to the Accord even though the Mizos achieved no more rights than the rest of the Indians. It led to the formal abandonment of Greater Mizoram and the cherished goal of making Mizoram a Christian state. It brought about a complete surrender of the MNF personnel and arms.

10. The Mizoram Accord by installing Laldenga as Chief Minister violated the Constitution of India which only

allows formation of government through election. A government having absolute majority in the Assembly stepped down as part of the political settlement. In fact, this part of the negotiation took five years to materialise.

11. In the negotiation stage, Church played a marginal role as neither the Government of India nor the MNF was ready to offer it a mediatory role. The students however played an important role as a pro-MNF force in the peace effort.

12. The MNF leadership's early disillusionment with the declared goal of independence was mainly because of the lack of effective and long term material help by any foreign country. In fact, no country was ready to give the MNF diplomatic support to its cause. The MNF ceased to be secessionist even in early seventies when Laldenga started secret negotiation and by 1976 the MNF leadership had to tailor its goal within the framework of the Constitution of India.

13. The realisation of the futility of secession also became evident to the MNF when the grouping of villages affected the backbone of the movement. Repressive measures by the Government led to the establishment of a Human Rights forum, the first of its kind in north-east India.

14. During the two decades of political extremism, the MNF factor in Mizoram politics was a force to reckon with. No political party or the Government could ignore its potential and in particular the opposition parties were always pro-MNF. The Congress (I) victory in 1984 in Mizoram Legislative Assembly election was only on the basis of Laldenga's blessings and his cassette messages were used to win popular support.

15. Factionalism has been a weakening force in the MNF. During the underground movement, Laldenga's charisma worked well and the overwhelming support always went in his favour. While in the corridors of power, Laldenga was functioning in the same autocratic manner which led to the disintegration of the party.

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