

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 repellant 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.
