

MIZORAM IN TRANSITION,
A STUDY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL MOVEMENTS (1947-86)

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This is to certify that I, Milly Bhattacharjee, have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under *Ph.D* ordinances of the *University of Hyderabad*.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of any research degree to any other University.

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CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

History is a study of evolving social formations. A social formation is a cohesive whole of its constituent segments like economy, polity, society and culture. Therefore any crisis or development in any of these segments would have a natural manifestation as its political apparatus. Since political apparatus are the most powerful organ of modern day nation states, social crisis and economic issues are tackled politically by organizing political movements demanding state's intervention in responding to the crisis and resolving it. Therefore social and political developments are inextricably linked. In other words, political development are reflective of social developments. With this point of view, a detailed chronological development of the sequence of socio-political events contributing significantly to the formation of the present state of Mizoram is studied.

Mizoram went through a long and torturous path before being inaugurated as a state. Soon after India became independent, the Mizos (along with certain other tribal communities in the north-east) continued to be a part of Assam state, but gained a degree of freedom in the form of Autonomous District Councils. For the first time in their history, representatives of the people were to make decisions for their entire community. This was a massive transition from the time of sovereign villages, as well as the imperial reign of the British. Partial self-rule brought in its wake the rise of Mizo nationalism, for the limited freedom was insufficient. Constitutional provisions had safeguarded social custom, but being a small, remote part of a large state had failed to set an agenda for social welfare and

economic growth. This inspired the struggle for self-determination, eclipsing all other events in Mizoram for as many as 20 years, from 1966 to 1986. Peace talks finally made a breakthrough in 1986 and statehood was granted the following year.

This chapter briefly presents a chronological account of events in the political development of Mizoram from colonial contact to its becoming a state in 1987. These events have been traced reflecting the turbulent times of the Mizos and their struggle for every inch to reach the present stage of a separate statehood.

Profile of Mizoram

The twenty sixth state of the Indian Union, Mizoram is situated in the north-eastern corner of India. It is bound in the north by Cachar and Hailakandi districts of Assam, on the east and south by the Chin hills of Myanmar(Burma) and on its western frontier lies the Indian state of Tripura and the sovereign state of Bangladesh. Mizoram is located between the 22.27' (N) latitude and 92.20' and 94.29' (E) longitude.

It has a long international boundary ⁽¹⁾. But the partition of India in 1947 had a devastating impact on the Mizo hills. The Mizo tribes are distributed over a huge area in India as well as in Myanmar and Bangladesh. The Mizos essentially were people who were sovereign, living under the rule of their respective Chiefs, before the British occupation. It was the British conquest which divided them between two diverse areas: Myanmar and India. As long as India was under the British rule, it did not disturb the socio-economic life of the Mizos.

(1) R.N.Prasad, *Government and Politics in Mizoram - 1947 - 1986*, p.1

But the separation of Burma from British India in 1937 and the partition of India in 1947 distributed the Mizos between three sovereign countries- India, Pakistan, and Myanmar thereby blocking the emotional, social and economic ties with their fellowmen in those countries. The boundary with Burma extends 270 miles and with Bangladesh over 158 miles. Such a long international boundary had made Mizoram strategically very important. It has an area of 21,087 miles which is mostly hilly terrain.⁽²⁾

The hill ranges in Mizoram have an average height of 900 meters and run in south direction interspersed with deep gorges in which rivers and streams flow from the high hills. There are a number of rivers, streams, brooks and waterfalls which flow to the brim in the monsoon. The most important rivers are the Tlwang (Dhaleswari) which runs 200 Kms, the Tuirial (Sonai) running for 150 Kms and Tuival running about 60 Kms which flow along the northern Mizoram and eventually fall into the Barak river. The southern hills drained by Chintuipui (Kolodyne) has a course of 150 Kms on the east with its tributaries like Mat, Tuichang, Tiau and Tuipui while the Karmaphuli runs for 80 Kms with its tributaries - Tuichawng, Kap, Deh, Phairuang and Tuilianpui inundates the western Mizo hills. The river courses are somewhat complicated. The Tlawng river runs for 64 Kms northwards while parallel to it runs the Mat river and Deh to the South. In the same way the Tuivawl, the Tuichang, the Tuilianpui and the Tut run parallel to each other but in opposite directions.⁽³⁾

(2) Govt of Mizoram, Mizoram District Gazetteer, Aizwal, 1989 Pp.4-5

(3) Ibid

The hill ranges are generally very steep. The average height of the hills varies from 900 meters to 2165 meters. The Phawngpui of the Blue Mountain is the highest peak in Mizoram rising about 2165 meters situated in the south Mizoram. The rest of the peaks are Lengteng(2149 mts) , Naunuarzo (2140 mts), Surtlang (2016 mts), Zopuitlang (1963 mts) Lurhlang (1935 mts), Tan (1926 mts), Muifang (1922 mts), Ngurtlang (1895 mts), Tawi (1890 mts) and Rangturzo (1855 mts).⁽⁴⁾

The heavy rainfall and humid climate has made Mizoram very thickly forested but over the years due to the practice of Jhuming type of cultivation, the forest cover has been reduced drastically. Most commonly found trees are the different Chams. The hills are covered by several varieties of Bamboo (*Melanocana Bambusieides*) , and wild banana , which also cover many hill slopes.

The total population of Mizoram according to 1991 census is 6,89,756 in which the number of males were 3,58,978 and females 3,30,778. Thus the male-female ratio is 921 females for every 1000 males. The density of population was 32.77 per sq.km. Mizoram is one of the most literate states of India. The literacy rate being 82.27% according to 1991 census. The male literacy percentage is 85.61 while the female is 78.60.⁽⁵⁾

Origin of the Mizo

The word Mizo is generic term applied to a conglomeration of Chin-Lushai tribes and sub-tribes spread over Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur and sovereign states of Bangladesh and Myanmar. The names of these tribes and sub-tribes are Lushai, Pawi, Lakher,

(4) Ibid.

(5) R.N.Prasad, (ed), *Autonomy Movement in Mizoram*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 1.

Paite, Ralte, Hmar, Vaiphei and so on. Among them the Lushais were the dominant whose dialect emerged to be the lingua franca of all the Mizo tribes. The Mizos were a Tibeto-Burman language group who immigrated to the present Mizo hills from Burma in the 17th century. The origin of the word Mizo is shrouded in mystery. The word 'Mizo' comes from 'Mi', means 'man' and 'Zo' means 'highland'; in other words 'highlander'. Lt.Col. Shakespeare wrote :

the term Lushai as we now understand it covers a great many clans : it is the result of incorrect transliterations of the word Lushai which is the name of a clan, which under various Chiefs of the Thangur family, came into prominence in the eighteenth century... In this monograph Lushai is used in the wider sense. Lushai being used for the clan of that name... and the general population of the hills is spoken of as 'Mizo'.⁽⁶⁾

Lushai was therefore a later coinage and even under this name people always called themselves Mizo. The word Mizo simply means a Hill-man and Mizoram, the land of the Mizos. In 1946 during the formation of the first political party in Mizoram, the appellation Mizo was used for the first time in lieu of *Lushai* to cover all the tribes and sub-tribes living in the region. After independence the name of the district was changed from Lushai Hills District to Mizo Hills District by an act of Parliament in 1954. It was made into a Union Territory in January 1972. Mizoram became a full fledged state of the Indian Union on 20th February 1987.

(6) J.Shakespeare, *The Lushai -Kuki Clan*, Part I, London, 1912, Introduction, Para 3-4

Confrontation between the Mizos and English

The Mizos were essentially a sturdy tribal people living on hunting, fishing, food gathering and slash and burn cultivation called Jhuming. Often they commit raids, plunders, kidnapping and head-hunting on the people of the foot hills. Since Sylhet and Cachar are close to the foothills of the Mizos, it was the people of these plains who bore the brunt of the Mizos atrocities. After the acquisition of the Dewani of Bengal by the East India Company (1765), the English came into contact with these tribes. They had the obligation to protect their subjects in the plains from the tribal atrocities. In 1843 there was a tribal raid in Pratapgarh of Sylhet district in which the Mizos carried away 22 heads. The British community immediately sent a punitive mission to chase the tribals. After this, many such expeditions had to be sent. The plains of Cachar were annexed to the British India in 1834 which brought them into closer contact with the Mizos. Cachar was annexed by the British during the period of William Bentinck. Though he followed non-intervention policy, in the name of mal-administration Bentinck annexed Coorg and Jaintia besides Cachar. The British often intervened in the matters of tribal feuds too. In 1849 the Mizos killed 20 Kuki captives. To counter such acts, the British armed the Kukis to defend themselves against the Mizos.

The discovery of tea and introduction of the tea plantation in Cachar aggravated the situation. There was a rush for foothill lands for tea cultivation. In the rush some planters even trespassed into tribal lands. The Mizo chiefs considered this as an encroachment and threat to their sovereignty. They reacted more violently in the form of raids and incursions into the frontiers. Some Mizos under the leadership of Sukpial raided the Monierkhal tea estate in Cachar in 1869. In fact between 1826 and 1844 about 150 persons were killed by

these raids. In 1849 there was a raid in Rupcherra in which 32 persons were killed and 42 kidnapped. The newspapers and Tea merchants were panicky about the emerging situation. Captain Lister led a punitive march into the hills of Mizoram in 1849. It was followed by a phase of peace. But by 1860's the Lushais attacked again. In January 1862 they attacked the village of Adampur in Sylhet. In 1863 they raided Chandraipur and in 1869 the Monierkhal Tea Estate. A punitive expedition brought peace with the Mizos. There was a treaty between the Mizo Chief Sukpilal and the British in which Sukpilal recognized Cachar as British territory. But in 1871 the Ainerkhal area was attacked and 25 persons were killed. In January 23, 1971, the Mizos attacked Alexanderpur Tea Estate, killed the European planter Winchester and carried away his five year old daughter Mary. In the same month Katlicherra, Monierkhal and Nudigram were also plundered and several people killed. The consequent military expedition brought the surrender of some of the Chiefs.

But the other groups continued the ambush on the tea gardens. There were a series of attacks during the 1880-1895 resulting in the death of several people. In early 1889, chief Lianphunga attacked 23 villages, killed 100 people and kidnapped 91 persons as hostages. Realizing the gravity of the situation, the British sent the famous Chin-Lushai expedition in 1869 to make a multi prolonged counter to the Mizos. The attack and counter attack continued for years. The British then realized that to suppress the Mizos it was necessary to bring them under the British administration and rule them from the heart of the Mizo hills. As such in 1891 the entire Mizo hills was annexed to British India and placed under British administration. It was made a district of Assam with its head-quarters at Aizwal. The entire area was placed under the charge of an officer known as District

Superintendent. The first Superintendent of Mizo hills was Colonel J.Shakespear (1899-1905). He settled the boundaries with the chiefs and in 1901 and introduced a new system of Circle Administration under which the whole district was divided into eighteen circles. An interpreter was posted in each circle as an intermediary between the sub-divisional officers and the Mizo tribal chiefs. In 1898 the Mizo District which was 7,227 square miles in area was put under the charge of Superintendent. For administrative purpose the District was divided into two sub-division Aizwal sub-division with its headquarters at Aizwal which is also the headquarter of the district, and Lunglei sub-division with its headquarters at Lunglei. In the year 1898-99 Major Shakespear formulated the 'Land Settlement' policy under which each chief was given a certain area within which he and his people could move about as they liked. ⁽⁷⁾ For the first superintendent of the amalgamated Lushai Hills, the Mizo had given a name 'TARMITA' (Mr.Spectacles). He settled the boundaries of the different chiefs. In 1901-2, he introduced a new system of 'Circle Administration' under which the whole district was divided into eighteen circles, eleven in Aizwal Sub-Division and Seven in Lunglei Sub-Division. The interpreters in each circle utilized the administrative measures for their selfish ends and in 1906-7 there was trouble in the far south of the Lushai Hills. In December 1907, Major Cole and a force of 100 Military Police under Lt.Col.Lock visited the troubled area and realized a fine of Rs.500/- in the shape of 20 guns. In 1910, the Aizwal-Sairang Cart Road was completed.

(7) Mizoram Today, Vol. IV, No.1, Dec. 1979, DIPR&T, Govt. of Mizoram.

The boundary of the Lushai Hills District on the south of the Serkawr region was fixed according to the proposals of Loch as modified by Cole. But again in 1917-1918 there was serious unrest in the un-administered area lying to the south, between the borders of the Lushai Hills and Arakan Hill Tracts. Raids were made inside the British border and elsewhere. Colguhoun, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, visited the region with an escort of 50 rifles and extracted fines from several villages without any opposition. Condition in the hills were also affected by the disturbances which took place in the Chin Hills and Manipur. As a result, troops were sent to Manipur border as well as to Falam to maintain peace . In 1924-25, Parry, the then Superintendent, made a tour in the unadministered area south of the district and recommended its inclusion in the Lushai Hills district. The recommendation was accepted by the government of Assam which ultimately came into effect in 1930. ⁽⁸⁾ In accordance with the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief s Right) Act, the rights and interest of 259 chiefs were acquired by the Government and the same were handed over to the District Council on 1st April, 1955. On April 15th of the following year the rights and interests of 50 Chiefs in Pawi Lakher region were handed over to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council.

(8) Ibid

The Post -conflict era

The turbulent years of Anglo-tribal conflict soon gave way to a more peaceful life in the lushai hills. The British sought to de-tribalize the Mizo by the introduction of a settled life, education and modern life and the propagation of Christianity. The first missionary to the Mizo hills was Rev. W.Williams of the Welsh Calvinistic church followed by S.W.Savidge and J.H.Lorrain as missionaries. They introduced western education in the hills and by 1924 the lushai had their first matriculate.⁽⁹⁾ As a result of the education and the enlightenment, the Mizos had settled down to a peaceful life. They had virtually stopped head hunting and raids. The missionaries persuaded the chiefs to release their slaves. They were convinced to a Christian way of life and accustomed to modern hygiene and medicine. What remained was the oppressive institution of chieftainship, the suffering from periodic famines that visited the hills, and the uncertainty over its future, to tackle all these, the Mizos needed mobilizations and movements.

MNF Rebellion, 1966

The perpetrators of the disturbances that swept the territory in 1966 was the Mizo National Front which was a local organization of the territory. The meteoric ascendance of the Front in the political sky dates back only from 1959 when it started functioning as a social organization under the name and style of, "The Mizo National Famine Front" in 1959 to serve the people who were facing great calamity in the Mautam famine.

(9) Suhas Chatterjee, *"Mizos under British Rule"*, Delhi, Pp. 183-184.

The organization then converted itself into a political organization and named itself as the Mizo National Front. It first raised the slogan of the United Mizoram comprising the area inhabited by the Mizo in Assam, Manipur and Burma. In 1963, the Front gathered sufficient force to fight the Mizo Union Party in the By-election for Assembly seats. Though Mizo National Front overtly displayed their loyalty to the Government of India, yet its clandestine link with foreign countries hostile to India soon came to light. Meanwhile the extremist elements dominated the party and they formed its hard core. According to them, the genesis of the backwardness of the district lay in the administrative machinery which they thought, was unmindful to their development and alien on their soil. Steadily, the party developed a bellicose attitude and secretly propagated for a sovereign state for the Mizo, outside the Indian Union. Against this back-ground, the President and Vice President of the Front were arrested and jailed. In February 1964, both these leaders were however released when they gave a written undertaking to the effect that they would not resort to violence and denied their collusion with foreign countries. The Government increased the number of security posts. On 1st March 1966, the MNF launched an coup-de-etat and declared independence , beginning an armed insurgency for next twenty years.

Towards the beginning of 1976, the Government of India and the MNF leaders began their negotiations for a lasting peace. An agreement was reached between the representatives of the Government of India and the MNF on the 1st July 1976 at New Delhi which brought a halt to the hardship and suffering wrought by the outbreak of hostilities since 1st March 1966. In 1986, the MNF signed a peace accord with the Government of India and in 1987 Mizoram was inaugurated as the 26th state of India.

As can be seen above, the north eastern state of Mizoram is such a state which has been grappling with crisis one after another since it became a part of British empire. To tackle such crisis it had organized political parties and political movements.

Some such problems were the stratification of the society between the chiefs and commoners ⁽¹⁰⁾ including the slaves (Bawis)⁽¹¹⁾ by the unbearably oppressive institution of chieftainship. The dilemma over integration with India or maintaining independence, the periodic famine and its devastation over the Mizo people and lastly the apathy of the Indian state and the rise of insurgency are the important crises developed in Mizoram as a result of the arrival of British and with it the advent of modernity. Some of these problems were there in the Mizo society even before the arrival of the British. For example the institution of Chieftainship and its constituent oppression or the institution of slavery. But these are part of a tribal life which in the absence of education and enlightenment were put up with, without questioning. But the advent of British marked the advent of modernity in these hills in the form of Christianity, education, modern medicine etc which changed the mindset of the people. Education brought ideas of enlightenment and liberation in the hills too. The Christian missionaries provided the intellectual leadership to question certain ideas and institution of the tribal society. From these ideas, began the debate, from debate the social movement and political organization on each of these crises

(10) Suhas Chatterjee, "Mizo Chiefs and Chieftainship", Delhi, 1995, Pp.15

(11) Sujit Choudhury, "Social background of Mizo Insurgency", ICSSR, Shillong, 1998.

Survey of the literature:

There is a growing body of literature on Mizoram, but unfortunately there has not been any study on them from the perspective of social movement. Hence the areas proposed to use remained unconcerned. An overview of some important works concerning the Mizos are detailed below:

B.B.Goswami, *"The Mizo unrest : A study of politicalization of culture"* (Jaipur, 1979), is basically an ethnographic study containing valuable information concerning the political structure of Mizos culture. Suhas Chatterjee, *"Mizoram under British Rule"*, Delhi, 1987, discusses the history of the conquest of Mizos. R.N.Prasad, *"Govt and politics in Mizoram"*, (Delhi, 1989), is another important work which though discusses political development, but lacks information on social issues like *Mautam* and Anti-chief movement, around which major political debate was unleashed. Suhas Chatterjee, *"Mizo Chiefs and the Chiefdom"*, (Delhi, 1995), *"Mizoram Encyclopaedia"* (Three volumes, New Delhi, 1990) are repeated versions of author's earlier work. The voluminous work by H.K.Barpujari, *" Problem of the Hill Tribes in North Eastern India"*, Guwahati, 1970,1977, and 1981 throws light on the gradual subjugation of the Mizo tribes by the British over a period of a century. This book deals with the beginning of the British contact with the Mizo tribes, phases of the British policy towards the Mizos, annexation of these hills to the Indian territory, and the rise of insurgency in Mizoram in 1960's. The book by J.J.Roy Burman, *"Christianity and Development among the Hill Tribes of North-East-India"*, (Bombay, 1988), is a study of the impact of western Christianity on the hill tribes of North East India since the advent of the British rule. Data from 1981 census reveals that in four states - Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya, 80% of the tribals are

Christians. It is argued that Christianity added to the cultural ethnic homogenization of these groups, while other structural factors contributed to the incorporation of the tribals into the Nation state. The Christian church played an intermediary role in the transition of tribal political system to the formation of a centralized state. *"Ethnicity in a multi-Cultural Society"* by Ajit K Danda, (1988, Calcutta), deals with the development and role of socio-political movements in the multi-cultural society of India. Geographical, historical, and cultural factors affecting the plurality of India are discussed and used as a backdrop for examining major socio-cultural, political, and other reform movements, including the Gorkhaland, Jharkhand, Khalistan, Mizoram and Nagaland movements. The shared experiences of these movements, the developments of boundaries, plural identities and loyalties and their relationship to the larger Indian society are explored. *"Modernity in the context of Education and socio-cultural factors: A study of social Attitudes in Mizoram"* by M.A.Sudhir and Labinkimi, (Aizwal, 1986) explores the modernizing influence of education on selected social attitudes of members of the Mizo community of North-Eastern India. Social attitudes towards religion, marriage, family, status of women in society and education were measured by administering the Mizo's attitudes towards modernity. Other important works dealing with the Mizos are: Chittaranjan Nag, *"Mizo polity and political Modernization"*, Delhi, 1998, discusses the emergence of modern politics in Mizoram. Sajal Nag, *"India and North-East India"*, Delhi, 1999, discusses the process of integration of Mizo hills with India during 1946-47, The other works are by C.G.Bhargese and R.L.Thanzawhar, *"The History of the Mizos"*, Vol.1 and 2 Delhi, 1997, S.K.Chaube, *"Hill politics in North-East India"*, Delhi, 1975, and is the most significant study of political development, but its focus is entire north-east region, and hence has limited discussion on

Mizos, P.Roy Choudhury, *"The North-East roots of insurgency"*, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1986, Sujit Choudhury , *"Social background of Mizo insurgency"*, ICSSR, Shillong, discusses the resolution of repressed classes (*Bawis*) against the chiefs, 1988, Hluna J.V, *"Church and political upheaval in Mizoram"*, Aizwal, 1988, discusses the Mizo insurgency and the role church played in containing it. Lalchungnunga, *"Mizoram : Politics of regionalism"*, Guwahati , 1996, discusses the rise of Mizo National Front (MNF) and regionalization of Mizo politics. A.K.Nag, *"The Mizo Dilemma"*, Silchar 1981, C.R.Nag, *"The Mizo society in Transition"*, Delhi, 1994, are the two books which depict the crisis and transition the Mizo society was facing. The work by Urmila Phadnis, *Ethnicity and Nation building in South Asia"*, Delhi, 1991, deals with the Mizo secessionism as an ethnic resistance movement, and covers this aspect as a part of South Asian ethnic resurgence. The other works are Animesh Ray, *"Mizoram : Dynamics of change"*, Calcutta, 1982, V.V.Rao(ed) , *"Century of Govt and Politics in North East India"*, Delhi, 1991, narrates the structure of administrative and political development up to 1990's . The major sources of this study are from Archival sources, published reports and proceedings, and oral sources. As far as the methodology is concerned, the empirical method is generally used and wherever necessary, the empirical evidence were supplemented by oral sources to reconstruct the complete story.

The result of the investigation have been organized in six integrated chapters. The first is the introductory chapter which poses the problem. It introduces the history and society of the Mizos with details of the state and contextualises the problem. The second chapter discusses the rise and fall of the chieftainship in the Mizo society, and the factors leading to the social movement against the chiefs and the consequent abolition of the institution of

chieftainship. The third chapter discusses the scarcity and the periodical famine which the Mizos had to endure, and the steps the Christian Missionaries, the Mizo Union and the then Government of Assam took to mitigate the sufferings of the Mizos. The fourth chapter details the factors leading to the political movement in Mizoram during the withdrawal of British from India culminating in the merger of Mizoram with the Indian Union. The fifth chapter elaborates on the process by which the Indian government brought an end to insurgency and the grant of statehood to Mizoram. The sixth chapter is the conclusion, which summarizes the entire story and then endeavours to characterize the movements.

In this project we study how the Mizo organized themselves and resolved the issues. The study is performed by looking into the aspects of the advent of modernity among the Mizos, the struggle of the people to bring about such transformation, the problems and crises that Mizos faced in course of the movement, characterization of the movements of the Mizos and their integration with the history of the rest of India. Regarding the problems faced by the Mizos, some special features deserve to be mentioned. The Mizos had to fight the oppressive institution of Chieftainship, where the chiefs were no different from the feudal lords of the rest of the country. Also the Mizos had to face the problem of famine, which created havoc to such an extent that it threatened the very existence of human life in Mizoram. Also the spirit of self-determination played a crucial role during the period of insurgency in Mizoram.

Stated in brief, the objective of the present study is to reveal the advent of modernity in Mizoram, and the fight of the common Mizo people against chieftainship, the Famine which threatened the very existence of human life in Mizoram, and the spirit of self-determination of the people of Mizoram during the period of insurgency, were the

important events which made the Mizos strong and move ahead thereby contributing significantly to the process culminating in the present state of Mizoram.

Impact of the Christian Missionary

Mizoram was a pagan community that believed in slavery and in beheading their enemies. Missionaries converted the Mizos to Christianity in just four generations.^[12]

Today, Mizoram boasts no homeless people, no beggars, no starvation and 100% literacy, all attributed to the Christian transformation. The national church is now estimated to be between 85 to 90 percent of the current population and the city sends about 1,000 missionaries to surrounding regions in the country and throughout the world.

One of the earliest and largest transformed communities of the twentieth century is found in Mizoram. The Mizos live in villages surrounded by timbered mountains and scenic gorges. The flora is not entirely alpine, however, it is common to see hills covered with bamboo, wild bananas and orchids. The Mizos are hearty agriculturists who manage to grow ample crops of rice, corn, tapioca, ginger, mustard, sugar cane, sesame and potatoes.

(12) George Otis, Jr, *"Informed Intercession"*, Renew Books, California, U.S.A

But it is not farming prowess that sets Mizoram's 750,000 citizens apart. Nor, for that matter, is it their Mongol stock. Rather it is the astonishing size of the national church, estimated to be between 80 and 95 percent of the current population. This achievement is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that Mizoram is sandwiched precariously between Islamic Bangladesh to the west, Buddhist Myanmar to the east and south, and the Hindu states of Assam, Manipur and Tripura to the north.

Before the arrival of Christian Missionaries in the late nineteenth century, local tribes believed in a spirit called Pathan. They also liked to remove the heads of their enemies. But just in four generations, Mizoram has gone from being a fierce head-hunting society to a model community quite possibly the most thoroughly Christian place of comparable size on earth. Certainly in India there is no other city or state that could lay claim to having no homeless people, no beggars, no starvation, and total literacy.

Funds for the mission outreach are generated primarily through the sale of rice and firewood donated by the believers. Every time a Mizo woman cooks rice, she places a handful in a special "missionary bowl".

This rice is then taken to the local church, where it is collected and sold at the marketplace. Even the non-Christian media of India have recognized Christianity as the source of Mizoram's dramatic social transformation. In 1994, Mizoram celebrated its one-hundredth year of contact with Christianity, which began with the arrival of two missionaries, William Fredrick Savage and J.H.Lorraine. On the occasion of this centennial celebration, *The Telegraph* of Calcutta (February 4, 1994) declared :

"Christianity's most reaching influence was the spread of education . Christianity gave the religious , a written language and left a mark on art, music, poetry, and literature. A missionary was also responsible for the abolition of traditional slavery. It would not be too much to say that Christianity was the harbinger of modernity to a Mizo society."

A less quantifiable but no less palpable testimony to the Christian transformation of Mizoram is the transparent joy and warmth of the Mizo people. Visitors cannot fail to observe "the laughing eyes and smiling faces," in the words of one reporter, on the faces of the children and other residents of Mizoram. And nowhere is this spirit of divine joy more evident than in the Churches, where the Mizo's traditional love of music and dance has been incorporated into the worship. The generosity of the people is also seen in their communal efforts to rebuild neighbor's bamboo huts destroyed by the annual monsoons.

Eighty percent of the population of Mizoram attends church at least once a week. Congregations are so plentiful in Mizoram that, from one vantage point in the city of Izol, it is possible to count 37 churches. Most fellowships have three services on Sunday and another on Wednesday evening.

The state of Mizoram is governed by a 40-member assembly that convenes in the capital of Aizawl. Although there are different political parties, all of them agree on the ethical demands of political office in Mizoram. Specifically, all candidates must be: persons with a good reputation, diligent and honest, clean and uncorrupt, non drinkers, morally and sexually unblemished, loyal to the law of the land, fervent workers for the welfare of the people, loyal to their own church.

Important Celebrations:

Though mostly Christians, the hill people have kept alive their rich cultural heritage, colorful customs and lively traditions¹³. Festivals and dances of the Mizos have a unique tribal flavor. Other than Christmas and New Year's Day which are the most popular festivals, *Chapchar Kut* (after clearing of jungles for cultivation of the *jhum* crop in February-March) , *Pawl Kut* (after the harvests when the granary is full in December) and *Mim Kut* (dedicated to departed souls after the maize harvest in September), are the other occasions celebrated with much gusto. The most popular dances of Mizoram are *Cheraw* (Bamboo dance), *Khuallam* (dance for visitors or guests), *Chheih Lam* (at the end of the day's work) and *Solakar* or *Sarlamkai* (prevalent among the *Mara* and *Pawl* tribes).

Tourist potential of Mizoram:

Aizawl, the scenic capital of Mizoram, its surrounding areas and the rest of the state have been developed to meet the influx of domestic and foreign tourists¹⁴. Aizawl, located at nearly 4,000 feet above sea-level, is a religious and cultural centre of the Mizos. *Champai*, *Tamdil*, *Vantawng fall* and *Thenzawl* are some of the other important tourist centres in this state. The rivers, peaks, plains and the lakes are the treasures of Mizoram. It is full high ranges running from North to South covered by greenery throughout the year.

(13) Reports from State Resident Commissioner in Delhi, Mizoram House.

(14) Ibid , National Informatics Centre, Assam

The scenic beauty of the hill ranges and river valleys during dry season, the rolling clouds mixed with thundering sound followed by heavy rains, slowly moving across the hills and valleys, during rainy season are the sights of unforgettable pleasure for the tourists.

Agriculture:

Agriculture is the main profession of the Mizos^[15]. The main pattern of agriculture followed in Mizoram, is *jhum* or shifting cultivation. The government is now taking steps to do away with this pattern of agriculture, which is very harmful. They have now introduced a new system of contour farming, with trenches and hedging, with the intention of switching over to permanent cultivation on hill slopes. Mizoram is famous for the fiber less ginger grown in this area. Paddy, maize, mustard, sugarcane, sesame and potatoes are the other prominent crops grown in this area. Apart from these crops, Tea, Rubber, Coffee, plantations fruits, nuts and spices, and vegetables are also grown. The Mizos also involve in sericulture.

Natural Resources : Mizoram has abundant water resources in the form of the free flowing rivers. In terms of the land resource, the categorical distribution among the various types are detailed further under Land resource.

(15)Ibid

Land Resource: The categorical distribution of land types available (in Hectare) for the year 1988-89 are shown in the table .

Distribution of Land types (In Hectare) for the year 1988-89.

Built Up	7873
Kharif	6600
Net sown area	6600
Gross Crop	6600
Evergreen Forest	419909
Abandoned Jhum	1385720
Abandoned Juvenil	150838
Lake Tank	63
Shifting Cultivation	85608

Source: Reports from National Remote Sensing Agency, Balanagar, Hyderabad.

Mineral Resource:

Occurrences of some minerals like Oil and Natural Gas, Coal, Clay, Shell Limestone are reported from Geology and Mining Wing, Department of Industries, Govt, of Mizoram. According to Geology and Mining Wing, Oil and natural gas occurs in *Theiduhkan, Bairabi nad Kolasib*, Coal also in *Kolasib*, Clay occurs in bank of river *Tut, Tuirial, Chawngte Lui, Phura, Morai* and *Lokicherra*. Shell Lime stone occurs in some places of Mizoram near *Seswang* village, 7 Km. North East of *Muthi* village, near *Kawrtethawveng* with a inferred reserve of 5.202 million tons.

Shell lime stone also occurs in some more places like west of *Kawnpui*, near *Kawrtethawveng*.^[16]

(16) Reports from Dept.of Mines and Geology, Govt of Mizoram.

Forest Resource :

Mizoram, by virtue of its geographical location, is blessed with substantial forest coverage. Mizoram has 12 forest divisions including a division centered at the state capital Aizawl. The area-wise distribution of forest coverage is shown below :

Division	Total Area (In Hectare)
Aizawl	32847
Champai	32320
Dampa Tiger Reserve	50000
Darlawn	60057
Kawrthah	79900
Kolasib	86100
Lawngtlai	20000
Lunglei	34843
N Vanlaiphai	256
Thenzawl	46960
Tlabung	43240
Mamit	58200

Source: Conservator of Forests, Aizawl.

Industrial Possibilities in Mizoram

Concerted efforts have been made to accelerate the growth of industries in Mizoram. The new industrial policy of Mizoram was framed in 1989, under which some priority industries were identified. These include agro and forest based industries, handloom and handicrafts, electronics and consumer industries.^[17]

In the present day, the economic progress of any country, or state or district can be achieved only through a systematic Industrial development. This is an undisputed fact in today's context. For historical reasons and to some extent political and social causes, it did not make any headway in the field of Industrial development in the land-locked state of Mizoram . Mizoram has its native investment strengths, the notable among them being, abundant availability of literate and cheap workforce in the state, best coverage of medical care among the states of the North-East region, and the high proportion of urban population, especially lucrative for services industry.

The Central Government, in its part announced investment incentives for setting up industrial units in Mizoram. The highlights of the incentives announced by the Central Government are:

- a) 5-Year income tax holiday for all new industrial units set up in the North-East region.
- b) 90% transport subsidy for procurement of raw materials upto the Siliguri rail-head.
- c) Identified growth-centres to be converted into total tax-free zones for the next 10 years.

(17) Reports from State Resident Commissioner in Delhi, Mizoram House.

(18) Reports from North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd.

- d) Capital investment subsidy of 15% of investment in plant and machinery, upto Rs.30 lakh.
- e) Interest subsidy of 3% on working capital loans for a period of 10 years.^[19]

With a view to help the entrepreneurs, a tentative list of industries, identified to have scope for development in Mizoram state, based on consumer demands, local resource, and miscellaneous type of industries^[20] are as follows :

Consumer based Industries: It is to be noted that several consumer articles are produced in Mizoram. They include the following: Plastic injected molded components, Polythene carry bags, poly-packs , Hawai chappals from rubber , Detergent powder, washing soaps, Paper bags, envelopes, paper pins, stapler pins, Office file covers, file pads, tags, ready mixed paints, varnish, thinner, wood polish, fence polish, Biscuits, breads by semi-mechanized process, Chalk crayons, Teaching aids, Montessori school equipment, bags for school children, steel furniture, almirah, steel rack, rolling shutter, gates and grills, domestic aluminium utensils, containers, ready made garments, noodles and vermicelli, exercise note books, wax candles and decorative festive candles, wire nails, panel pins, wood screw, plastic molded switches, pine, wooden/fabricated switch boards, ceilings, roses , office gum and pastes, phenyl, fine chemicals, vim powder, vessel cleaning chemicals, scented supari, aerated water and soft drinks, hair oil, hair dyes etc.

(19) Ibid

(20) Report prepared by Assistant Director-in-charge, Small Industries service Institute, Govt.of India, Ministry of Industries, Aizawl-796001.

Local resource based industries: Wooden furniture, wooden handicrafts, artistic photo frames, trays, wooden doors and windows, cane furniture, bamboo crafts, baskets , Umbrella handles, walking sticks, police lathi, handle for sports goods, wooden rulers, graduated scale, handmade pencils, ginger processing, de-hydrated ginger, fruit juice, jams, jellies, mushroom cultivation, banana processing, banana chips, potato chips, corn flakes, starch from sago and tapioca, cold storage, animal and cattle feed, papain and papaya processing, wooden packing box, packing materials, hand made paper from wooden waste, recycling of paper waste, extraction of essential oils, tent poles, bamboo ladders, agarbatty sticks, dhoop, cold storage for meat, fishes, particle board from wooden shavings, fuel briquettes from charcoal dust, wooden waste, country type bricks and clay tiles etc. are all produced in Mizoram.

Capital goods Industry: A full-fledged ferrous foundry unit to produce castings, and to the requirements of other SSI's , a machine tool industry to manufacture machine tool accessories and small machines like drilling machine, hand saw machine, grinder etc. Manufacture of bench-wise, envils, and other cast items required for various industries. The other categories identified under the capital goods industry are : Steel re-rolling mills using steel scrape, mini cement plant, mechanized bricks, tiles , ferrous and non-ferrous foundry with heat treatment, mini paper mill based on local resources, well organized tool room unit, corrugated sheet manufacturing unit.

Miscellaneous Industries: Mizoram in recent years has been producing Hollow cement blocks, cement bricks, RCC spun pipes, water pipes , Aluminium furniture, office partitions, cone ice creams, cone out of popcorn, painting brushes, domestic brushes, woolen socks knitting, knitting work, hosiery items, ladies bags, purses and novelties, Blue

metal and stone crushing, electrical accessories like choke, starter , plastic extruded items, bolts and nuts, agricultural tools and equipment, air conditioners, cans, builders hardware, tower bolts, hinges, automobile components, cables, clutch wire, non-ferrous items like brushes, pines, barbed wires, steel expanded metal for fencing, mechanized wire-cut bricks, bee keeping cum honey processing, caffeine from tea waste, paper pulp from wood waste, frozen fish cutlets, hatchery and poultry farms, pineapple processing, vinegar from fruit waste, meat processing and preservation, sports goods from wood, cane and bamboo, ceramic based industries, light roofing sheet, cement mosaic-flooring tile, chemical porcelain wares, glass mirror, tile polishing unit, salt glazed pipes, printing ink, ball pen ink, manufacture of phenyl, deodorant, re-cycling and reclamation of used lube oil, leaf cups and plates, hospital equipment and absorbent cotton, and bandage.

Engineering based Industries: CI sluice valves, wheel valves, pipe fittings, manufacture of PVC pipes, special purpose of fasteners, mild steel electrodes, trailers, trolleys, GLS lamps and miniature lamps, Milk chilling plant, and manufacture of slotted angles.

Large and Medium scale industries: As per the sources from the North Eastern Development finance corporation Ltd, the Mizoram food and Allied Industries Corporation (MIF) in Aizawl established in 1989 owned by the State Govt, falls under this category.

Small Scale Industries Units : As per the data available for 1998, the distribution of the small scale industries are tabulated below:

Type	Numbers
Job Work	2219
Manufacturing	559
Processing	377
Rearing	3
Servicing	432

Source: National Informatics Centre, Assam, North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd.

Industrial Estates in Mizoram: The Aizawl Industrial plots are present at Zuangtui, and Kolasib and the Government extends a subsidy of 25% on the development of land within the estates by the entrepreneurs.^[21]

Mizoram Industrial Policy (1989):

The Government of the newly created Mizoram state are committed to improve the economy of the State and thereby bring about higher quality of life and happiness to the people. Having this end in view, the Government attached a high priority to the development of Industries in the State.

The Government of Mizoram therefore, considered necessary to lay before the people the policy frame work for the Industrial Development of Mizoram within which a programme of action can be undertaken.

(21) Directorate of Industries, Aizawl.

While framing its Industrial Policy²²¹, the Government of Mizoram has kept in mind the geographical , demographical, and socio-economic realities of the State and also the process of Industrial Development as enunciated and modified by the various Industrial Policy Resolutions of the Government of India notably those of 1948, 1956 and 1980 as well as the policy announcement recently issued for dispersal of Industries to backward areas and special category districts. The State Government is also fully aware of the existing objective of the Central Government in regard to the upgradation of technology, export promotion, balanced growth and wider spreading of entrepreneurial and technical skills for different industries. In consonance with this objective, the State Government felt the need for establishing a common approach to Industrial growth through various Government Departments, local bodies, institutions and other agencies dealing with Industrial matters so as to channelise the growth of Industry to a desired direction.

The State Government of Mizoram is also fully aware of the inter-dependence of Industries and other sectors of economy like Agriculture, Horticulture, Forest and Animal Husbandry. The State Government will, therefore, strive to take concerted action so that the Development of Industries in the State will be supported by these sectors and the growth of Industries will in turn further foster the Development of these sectors. The intention of the Government of Mizoram, while framing its Industrial Policy, is not Industrial growth per se in the State of Mizoram.

The State Government should rather aim at all round development in the interest of the indigenous people of Mizoram and at giving them gainful employment and self-employment opportunities in the Industrial and allied sectors.

Role of Public, Joint and Private Sectors: The State Government recognized that all the public, joint, and private sectors have important roles to play in the industrialization process. They should, therefore be made instrumental for the Industrialization of the State in their respective purview of functioning. Public Sector investment from the Central and State Government will therefore be welcome in the large and medium sectors as a means to provide the required speedy growth of Industries in the State for creation of more employment opportunities for the people. Also Joint and Assisted sectors Investments from outside and inside the State of Mizoram will be welcome in the large and medium sector industries. As far as possible, small scale industries will be encouraged in the private sector, generally for local entrepreneurs.

Priority Industries: With a view to reducing the prevalent practice of shifting cultivation by the people of the State and to divert their activities towards more economically profitable activities within a short span of time, special industries for short term measure will be identified. Pending completion of the identification of such most feasible industries, the Government will immediately launch an action programme for development of the following priority industries :

Agro based Industries: Through various schemes including those meant for controlling the shifting cultivation, cash crop plantations of premanent nature are already launched and more of this type of plantations will be encouraged throughout the State. Plantation crops will also be taken up with a view to increase required industrial raw materials. Similarly

management of forests will be tuned towards more production of required industrial raw materials. Agro-based and Forest based industries will be set up to profitably utilize the Agricultural, Horticultural and Forest produces as industrial raw materials. Special emphasis will therefore be laid on cultivation of different kinds of Fruits, Potatoes, Oilseeds, Vegetables, Sugarcane, Tea, Coffee, Rubber and other kinds of cash plantation crops. Industries which cater to the requirement of Agricultural sector such as pumps, pipes and various agricultural implements will be given special attention. Mizoram Agro Industries Development Corporation will immediately be formed and the same will be given the task of implementing various programmes and schemes for the development of Agro and Forest based industries.

Handloom and Handicraft Industries: The womenfolk of Mizoram have practically abandoned their age old practice of loin loom weaving , as this has now become economically unviable. At present only an insignificant number of people, has started practising weaving by handloom. Considering the factor for creating employment and self-employment in this sector specially among the womenfolk and also in view of the good market prospect of Mizo handloom throughout the country and abroad, special thrust will be made to spread handloom industries in the State and upgrade the skill and technology of modern handloom for the benefit of weavers. In order to facilitate the marketing of handloom and handicrafts products, the State Government will take all possible measure to explore national and international marketing outlets. With a view to fulfilling this objective, emporia/showroom will be established in and outside the state. Various handicraft products based on bamboo, cane, wood and fibre will be made to suit the national and international markets. Efforts will also be made to obtain modern technologies

for bamboo and cane industries from those countries which have the latest and best technologies. In order that this is effectively implemented in a speedy and systematic manner, Mizoram Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation will be formed and also co-operatives will suitably be strengthened.

Sericulture Industries: Mizoram offers immense scope for the development of sericulture for the economic upliftment of rural people. Since this sector of economic activity is known to be very feasible alternative to shifting cultivation, Government will accord high priority for the development of Sericulture. As a strategy for systematic and speedy development of sericulture industries, the Government will adopt an intensive method and area approach. While all varieties of silk will be produced in the state, special emphasis will be laid on production of Oaktasar and Mulberry silks. It will be the endeavour of the Government to encourage large production of seeds and cocoons in the private and co-operative sectors. Reeling and silk Weaving Industries will also be encouraged. Government of Mizoram will explore all possible national and international markets to assist the producers. Training centre and Demonstration -cum Production Centres will be set up within the State in order to effectively implement the programmes of the organization of Sericulture Department, which will be reviewed and required expansion and improvements made. Expert consultants as required will be employed and also all necessary assistance obtained from the Central Silk Board.

Electronic Industries: Considering the increased use of communication, telecommunication, medical equipment and consumer electronic products in the country, especially in the North-Eastern region, and also considering the fact that the electronic items are small in volume and high in cost suiting the conditions of hilly regions like

Mizoram and also considering the fact that there are increasing number of educated young men and women in Mizoram who are interested in this electronic field, the Government of Mizoram consider essential and feasible to immediately launch a programme for development of electronic industries in the State. Even though this field of industrial activity is new to this State, it will be in the interest of the development of the people of Mizoram to make a start as early as possible in this regard because electronics cannot be ignored in the modern world and at this time when the country as a whole is at the threshold of the 21st century. A special programme for training of local educated young boys and girls will be immediately launched in the field of electronics. The Department of Industries will create suitable section to look after the programme. The Government will also consider formation of the Mizoram Electronics Development Corporation at the appropriate stage so that electronic equipment including computers may be introduced to various offices and joint sector industries may also be set up in the state in collaboration with willing national or other State enterprises or with willing private entrepreneurs.

Village and Cottage Industries: In order to provide employment to the people especially those living in rural villages , the State Government will take all necessary actions to provide assistance in establishment of a number of village and cottage industries. This will be done through the District Industries Centres, Khadi and Village Industries Board, Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation, Industrial Co-operatives, recognized Private voluntary Organizations and other approved Agencies. The concerned activities of these agencies will be assisted by financing agencies, marketing and raw material supplying agencies under the over all coordination of the State Government.

Consumer Industries: With a view to prevent the flow of money out of the Mizoram state through the channel of consumer supplies and also with a view to improve the general economy of the State, the Department of Industries, Government of Mizoram, will immediately identify consumer items that are mostly in constant use within the State and that are possible to be immediately produced through small scale industries within the State. To the extent possible, those items which can be supplied to the neighboring state will also be included. The Government will give special efforts for having those identified type of industries set up in the small scale sector by willing local "private small scale entrepreneurs. All necessary assistance will be given to them by the State Government.

Investment Potential of Mizoram: Mizoram, the most peaceful state in the whole northeastern region, has a number of potentials for development namely Horticulture development, fruit processing, agro based industry, tourism, electronics etc. Proposals for Action prepared by the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in 1998 for sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development in Mizoram is detailed in the following paragraphs. ^[23]

(23) Dr.Lianzela, Reader.NEHU Mizoram Campus, Aizawl, *Potentials and Problems of Development in Mizoram*

Establishment of Tea Industry: It has been estimated that tea could be raised in four blocks over about 10,000 ha in ten years by Jhumiyas planting at least one ha each. The green leaf would be supplied to the tea factory set up by a reputed private entrepreneur. The net income in fourth year of Rs: 13,000 per ha raises to Rs:82,000 from the eighth year onwards.

Establishment of coffee plantation: About 10,000 per hectare of coffee plantations could be raised in seven blocks over ten years by Jhumiyas planting at least one hectare each. The coffee seeds will be available from the third year onwards. Black pepper and orange will be grown as companion crops. The net income of Rs: 15,000 per hectare in the fourth year increases to Rs:88,000 in the eighth year. Pulping machines and drying yards have been proposed. Coffee Board has identified several areas in the state that may be considered as potential for growing coffee. Prima-facie, a total of 4,000 hectares is identified as potential for coffee cultivation, while only 300 hectares are covered at present. Coffee is cultivated in the state without any care and maintenance with practically no technical inputs being applied.

Development of Rubber Plantation: The State has a potential for raising about 5,000 ha of rubber plantations in the three blocks, near the western border, in ten years at the rate of one hectare per farmer. Banana and pine apple could be grown in the first three years. The trees would be tapped from the seventh year to get 1,000 Kg per year increasing to 1500 Kg in the tenth year onwards. The net income of Rs: 13,000 per ha in the seventh year would be erected to produce smoked sheets for sale in market.

Tung Plantation : In Mizoram, the farmers raise *tung* trees in their lands. About 275 trees per ha could be raised as a plantation. The *tung* seeds, after shelling and drying, it could be supplied to the oil extraction factories at Rs:10 per kg ex factory. The net income from one ha of *tung* plantation in the fifth year is Rs:1000 which increases to Rs:13,000 from the tenth year onwards.

Orchid Cultivation : More than 200 varieties of orchids occur in Mizoram. Farmers could cultivate *Cymbidium* variety for sale as cut flowers in Delhi/Calcutta market with the assistance of Forest Department. The cultivation of 1000 plants of *Cymbidium* hybrid will generate a profit of Rs:67,000 in the third year, rising to Rs: 121000 in the fifth year.

Establishment of rural nurseries: There is scope for establishment of nurseries on each block at Kolasib to produce quality planting material for the cash crop cultivation. The annual income of each nursery has been estimated to Rs.2.37 lakhs. There is scope for growing of new crops viz. mango, cashew, banana, cinnamon, clove, arecanut, geranium, and mint.

Establishment of large-scale fruit processing unit: The primary objective is to convert fruits, vegetables and spices into value added products to enable marketing the produce with reasonable profit for the farmer. The financial investments for village and district level units will be : Non-recurring - Rs: 2.5 lakhs and Rs:384 lakhs respectively and Recurring Rs:500 lakhs and Rs:56 lakhs respectively. The state level processing unit will be set up in five years at a total cost of Rs:800 lakhs having Rs:750 lakhs as non-recurring and Rs:50 lakhs as recurring expenditure. With an annual recurring expenditure of Rs:8.970 lakhs for the network, the annual income will be Rs:9.675 lakhs.

Establishment of Agro Forestry Center: The agro forestry centres will produce and supply better quality planting material, teak, *tung*, *chamak* and *khasipine*. The centre will be established near Aizawl with three sub centres at Champai, Lunglei, and Kolasib at a total cost of Rs:100 lakhs, with Rs:68 lakhs as non-recurring and Rs:32 lakhs as recurring expenditure.

Integrated Fruit Juice Concentrate Unit at Chhingchhip: *Jhoom* farmers should be assisted to shift to "New Contour Farming" only if they enter into a contract to supply passion fruit, orange and pine apple to the proposed concentrate unit. The project would have an input processing capacity of 16 tons per day with 9 am to 2 pm shifts.

Integrated production and processing of poultry and pork: Eggs, Chicken, and pork are important items in the menu of the average public of Mizoram . Around 80% of eggs are imported from distant places while there is a chronic shortage for chicken and pork. Processing facilities for both chicken and pork do not exist in the state. The project aims to set up one farm each at Aizwal and Lunglei for both poultry (10,000 layer birds and 12,000 boiler birds each) and piggery (100 SOW units and 1800 piglets each). The processing unit proposed at Zemabawk would have a capacity to process 15,000 pigs and 4,50,000 poultry birds per annum.

Statewise Development Projects on Inland Fisheries: Besides being need based, the projects would be significantly employment oriented. Existing 4,500 fish ponds are to be renovated while 10,000 new ponds are to be dug over the next five years. Cold storage and ice plants need to be established. Private sector to be encouraged.

Integrated poultry and cattle feed project: The project is entirely need based. Feeds for cattle, poultry and piggery are entirely met through imports wherever possible, while some

farmers **feed the animals** with whatever ratio they can spare from captive sources. The existing Animal Feed Mill does not cater to any private sector needs. Around 70,000 tons of feed is required annually for the cattle poultry and piggery. The state has significant productivity for maize and the same should be exploited fully so as to meet the feed ingredient requirement to a considerable extent.

Power sector: The peak load is 54 MW against a demand for 88 MW. 26% power capacity is of high cost (Diesel power). TECS estimates a minimum of 105 MW of additional power need for the state. State authorities have 11 small hydel projects to be implemented. Multi agency involvement is desirable to implement more small hydel projects. Tuivai project (a central subject) should be implemented on a priority basis. Power from this may cost Rs:1.11 per kwh (200 to 300 % savings over Diesel based) . Kolodune Phase-I project of 100 MW despite its possible drawback (viability) needs to be implemented as a social cost benefit step.

Modern Hospital: Social infrastructure in Mizoram is knit on a very weak fabric. TECS has identified health care facilities, as the priority area for the establishment of a moderately equipped hospital, which is the need of the hour. There are no facilities for treatment of complicated and serious diseases. TECS recommends setting up a fully equipped hospital with diagnostic and curative facilities . The facilities recommended are: 500 bed capacity, MRI, ECG, US scanners, ICU, Trauma Care, Blood Bank etc.

Information Technology: Development of information technology ensures accelerated employment. Mizoram with its very high literacy has a very significant potential in this line. TECS recommends for Mizoram, establishment of software development centre, full exploitation of the qualified engineering man power that is currently available for converting the same into a more tangible asset through import of software expertise.

Electronics: High literacy, intricate capabilities of the local woman workforce and pleasant agreeable climate of Mizoram state are all conducive for the development of electronics. TECS recommends the setting up of Mizo Technical Service Centre, to cater to needs of training, consumer electronics, computers and general electrical and electronics.

Tourist potential: Mizoram offers excellent attractions for a tourist, both National and International. The topography, climate and the culture are the very attractants in this case. TECS recommends development of adequate infrastructure for the Reiek Tourist Complex, Palak Lake, Dama Sanctuary and Thenzawl / Vantawng Falls etc. Promotional strategies need to be followed to successfully market the identified tourist places.

As per the data available for the year 1999, the investment profile of Mizoram in the power sector is given below.

Sl. No	Name of the Project	Type	Investment (Rs. in crores)
1	NE Electric power	Hydro Power	684.00
2	Govt. of Mizoram	Hydro Power	420.00
3	NE Electric power	Hydro Power	360.00
4	Govt. of Mizoram	Hydro Power	42.00

Source: *Business Today*, 22 Dec.99 to 6 Jan.2000.

Economy of Mizoram : The hilly state of Mizoram is predominantly an agrarian state like most of the other states of the North East with more than 70% of its population engaged in agriculture. The present state of the economy is far from satisfactory with very less improvement in the agricultural productivity level. Handloom and handicrafts are the other traditional means of livelihood. The bamboo products of Mizoram are very famous. The per capita income of Mizoram is above the national average. However, the state is not self-sufficient and depends heavily on Central Government assistance like most of the North Eastern states except Assam. Mizoram has the advantage that it shares borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar. With the opening up of border trade, the state would be able to be a major business hub. In terms of infrastructure, it is still very poor with an index of 63 (according to CMIE in 1992-93) with reference to the national average of 100. In 1995-96 the contribution of the tertiary sector to the Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) was the highest (37.75%). Over the years, all the sectors (primary, secondary, and tertiary) show fluctuating trends. Also there is no obvious shift in sectoral contribution. The annual compounded growth rate of NSDP during the period 1980-81 to 1995-96 has been worked out at 16.97%. It has been observed that during 1990-91 to 1995-96, agriculture exhibited an annual compounded growth rate of 22% at current prices. Similarly, manufacturing sector showed an annual growth rate of 13% at current prices for the same period.^[24]

(24) Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt, of Mizoram.

The Net State Domestic Product at factor cost by industry of origin in current prices (Rs. In lakhs) from 1990 to 1996 .

INDUSTRY	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Agriculture	7290	13444	14223	18594	19989	24022
Forestry And Logging	968	1604	1050	1563	129	3273
Fishing	881	1071	1099	684	521	677
Mining and Quarrying	704	894	210	88	148	295
Registered Manufacturing	733	786	688	725	684	628
Unregistered Manufacturing	1034	1824	2342	2694	2883	3050
Construction	4564	4700	6660	6778	6782	9254
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	-853	-1342	-1223	-1579	-1585	-1767
Transport, Storage & Communication By Railways	0	0	0	14	1	1
Transport by other means	1619	1490	1722	1590	1989	2218
Storage	3	2	2	2	3	3
Communication	152	193	200	304	356	471
Trade, Hotels And Restaurants	1647	2291	3376	4289	3911	6331
Banking and Insurance	552	544	643	694	792	974
Real Estate, Ownership of Dwellings and Business services.	3216	3676	4271	5082	5716	6675
Public Administration	4849	6855	7232	8888	9946	11322
Other services	3201	3701	5315	5768	7437	8185
Total NSDP	30560	41733	47810	56178	59702	76112

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Mizoram.

Observing the profile of the economy in terms of NSDP, it is apparent that during the period 1995-96, the overall NSDP is highest when compared to the previous years starting from 1990. It is also worthwhile to investigate the profile of the per-capita income of Mizoram from various industries starting from the year 1990.

Per Capita Income : (At Current prices in Rs.)

INDUSTRY	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Agriculture	23.85	32.21	29.75	33.10	33.48	31.56
Forestry And Logging	3.17	3.84	2.20	2.78	0.22	4.30
Fishing	2.88	2.57	2.305	1.22	0.82	0.89
Mining and Quarrying	2.30	2.14	0.44	0.16	0.25	0.39
Registered Manufacturing	2.40	1.88	1.44	1.29	1.15	0.83
Unregistered Manufacturing	3.38	4.37	4.90	4.80	4.83	4.01
Construction	14.93	11.26	13.93	12.07	11.36	12.16
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	-2.79	-3.22	-2.56	-2.81	-2.65	-2.32
Transport, Storage & Communication By Railways	0	0	0	0.02	0.01	0.01
Transport by other means	5.30	3.57	3.60	2.83	3.33	2.91
Storage	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Communication	0.50	0.46	0.42	0.54	0.60	0.62
Trade, Hotels And Restaurants	5.39	5.49	7.06	7.63	6.55	8.32
Banking and Insurance	1.81	1.30	1.35	1.24	1.33	1.28
Real Estate, Ownership of Dwellings and Business services.	10.52	8.81	8.93	9.05	9.57	8.77
Public Administration	15.87	16.43	15.13	15.82	16.66	15.33
Other services	10.47	8.87	11.12	10.27	12.46	10.75

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Mizoram

Observing the above profile of the per capita income starting from 1990 onwards, it can be found that the contribution from agriculture to the per capita income is maximum in all the years, emphasizing the fact that Mizoram is an agrarian state.

Economic classification of Population: Observation of the 1991 census of India data on the economic classification of population (in persons), shows that the population of male workers under the classification of main workers and cultivators are higher than females. The same trend is observed under the categories of agricultural labor, household industry, manufacturing, processing, servicing, repairs, and industries other than house hold industry. But under the category of marginal workers, the population of female workers is higher than that of the male workers.

Educational Infrastructure: As per the data available for the year 1998, the availability of the institutes under various categories are listed below.

Type	Numbers
University (NEHU Campus)	1
Colleges	29
Polytechnic	1
Technical and industrial school	1
Higher secondary school	18
High school	345
Middle school	733-
Primary school	1318

Source: Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Govt. of Mizoram.

The availability of large number of primary, middle, high schools and colleges indicate that the state has a very high literate population, making the Mizos eligible for knowledge based industry.

Transport and Communication: Mizoram has a national highway covering a length of 430 Kms serving the districts of Aizawl, and Lunglei touching the towns Demagiri and Kolasib. ^[25] Also, the state of Mizoram is served by the State Roadways covering a length of 261.5 Kms touching the important towns Champai, Bairabi, Zamuang, Zokhawthar, Hmuifang, Thenzawl, Haulawng. ^[26] Regarding airways, Mizoram is served by Tuirial airport at Aizawl. The available data for 1998 indicates that Mizoram is served by 390 post offices.

(25) Office of the Chief Engineer, P.W.D, Aizawl, Mizoram.

(26) Ibid.

Mass Communication Media: News Papers and Magazines: Mizo public has access to daily local newspapers like Highlander (in English), and news papers in Mizo like Mizo Aw , Khawpui Aw, Vanglaini, Mizo Arsi, Zonunmawi, Romei, Hnehtu, and Zoram Tlangau, all published from Aizawl. Also, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly magazines like Senhri , Zoeng, Sunday Post, Sakeibaknei, Thu Benglut, Runlum, and Sabereka Khuangkaih all published from Aizawl.^[27]

Health Services : As per the data available for the year 1997-98, Mizoram is served by 3 General Hospitals with the availability of 471 beds, along with 7 hospitals in the district level. Mizoram has 6 Community health centres and 38 primary health centres and 336 sub-centres. These hospitals are served by 225 Allopathic Practitioners assisted by 338 nurses and 92 pharmacists.^[28]

(27) Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Mizoram.

(28) Director of Medical and Health Service, Mizoram.

Before colonial annexation, Mizoram was almost inaccessible, and the country lay covered with dense forest, inhabited by wild animals. Missionaries converted the Mizo to Christianity in just four generations. The establishment of the trade marts was the first step in the direction of extending the civilizing influence in Mizoram.

Considering the present day Mizoram, it has many potential, the notably among them being abundant availability of literate and cheap workforce. Apart from this, the state has its native tourist potential. Agriculture is the main profession of the Mizos. With regard to Natural resources, it has abundance of water, forest, land and mineral resources.

For historical and to some extent political and social causes, Mizoram did not make any headway in the field of industrial development. The Central Government, with a view to help the entrepreneurs, in its part announced investment incentives for setting up industrial units in Mizoram. Mobility of the Mizo population is greatly facilitated by the improvement in the transport infrastructure. The present Mizoram is crisscrossed by both metalled and un-metalled roads.

Ultimately, it can be said that Mizoram is a gradually but steadily developing state compared to other north-eastern states. It is in the path of becoming a prosperous state and a better place to live in by enhancing trade and commerce and facilitating quicker mobility to other parts of the country.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter-II

The Rise and fall of Chieftainship and Social Movements

Every society is guided and shaped by the ideas and actions of its leadership. So did the Mizo society. But traditionally Mizos were guided by their chiefs. With the change in administration under the British , there emerged a new Mizo leadership in the form of a middle class. In this chapter we discuss the emergence of this new leadership in Mizo hills.

In the absence of written records and other materials, it is difficult to give a complete picture of the leadership structure of Mizo tribe immediately after and prior to their migration to the present habitat. However, through verbal sources and collateral evidence from the beginning of the nineteenth century and some written records in the neighboring territories and later on notes and writings of the British administrators and the like, an outline can be attempted ^[1]. When the Mizo society was known to the outside world, it had probably passed through the "Primitive-Communal" stage, "A primitive communal society is marked by a primitive gathering, fishing and hunting economy, in which success is possible only if all co-operate and in which the results are so meagre that they must be shared equally to avoid death by starvation by some, which would endanger the survival of all by making the entire group too small and weak to function and defend itself. In that state in which these communal groups remain but chieftains, ruling class, or priest kings emerge."

(1) A.G.McCall, *Lushai Chrysalis*, London, 1949.

In view of pressure from other neighboring tribes and need for shifting cultivation, migration was almost an order of the day. This coupled with the need for security led to the emergence of a leadership structure and a tribal elite in the shape of chieftainship. It is said that when the Mizo came to the present habitat for-saking their chief, they had no chief. But after their settlement at Selesih, they had to take a new chief. This was imperative in view of the need to perform military and other directing functions for the group in their efforts for survival.

Origin of clans in Mizo tribe:

The real founder of the chief's clan is "Zahmuaka" ^[2]. The first Mizo settlers at Seipui khur belonged to the Chhakchhuak clan. In course of a fight with the Paites living on the right banks of the Chindwin, one Chhuahlawma, son of a Paite fighter Ralna by name was captured by the Chhakchhuak. He was later adopted by the Chhakchhuak as their son. His first son was Zahmuaka. This Zahmuaka who was initially hesitant ultimately accepted the chieftainship after a lot of persuasion. Zahmuaka had six sons, viz., Zadenga, Pahana, Thangluaha, Thangura, Rivunga and Rokhuma. The names of the Chief's clans owe their origin to them and they are called Zadeng, Palian, Thangluah, Rivung, and Rokhum. The name of the Sailo clan is traceable to one of the sons of Thangura called Sailova. Sailova had a son Chhungnunga who ruled over 7,000 houses at a place called Selesih. It was his prowess and ability which paved the way for the supremacy of the Sailos. Internecine quarrels and fratricidal war among different kinsmen were quite common. The Palian and the Zadengs had to give way because of this.

The Zadengs took the help of the Palians to defeat the Hualngos of Burma. This success made them forget the role of the Palians. In a bid to eliminate the Palians, the Zadengs aligned themselves with the Sailo chief Haopuituala, and in further collaboration with the Chakmas of the Chittagong Hills defeated the Palians at the Pukzing Hill in 1830. Then they consolidated their position at a concentration of 4,000 houses near the Darlawng Peak. They also established cordial relation with the King of Manipur, and so they were sure of his help, if and when attacked. Again a fratricidal fight took place when Mangpura Sailo attacked the Zadengs. No help was rushed from Manipur as expected. The Zadengs were completely vanquished and the Sailos now without any rival from the other kinsmen established their supremacy and became powerful chiefs at the time of the advent of the British.

Among the Mizos falling within our study, the clans can be divided into two categories: dominant or chief's clans and the commoners or non-dominant clans which did not have any significant place in the political structure in the pre-British period. The chief's clans are Zadeng, Palian, Thangluah, Rivung, Rokhymand Sailo. The non-dominant clans include Pachuau, Chhangte, Chawngte, Hauhnar, Chuaungo, Chuauehang, Hrahse, Toehawng, Vanchhawng and Chhakchhuak. Despite the existence of the chief's clans and the chieftainship, the Lushai society lacked centralized political structure. The villages did not form the smallest unit in the pyramid form of the social structure. In fact, the concept of the pyramidal structure of the society was alien to the tribe under discussion. Independent village chiefs did not combine themselves into what is known as "Tertiary" sections and then further up into "Secondary" and "primary" sections.

The structure of Chieftainship in the Mizo tribe:

McCall (1949 :245) speaks of "about sixty chiefs" when the British Government took over the Lushai Hills. Some old records of the British administration (1878-1889 : 18-21) indicate the name of the chiefs, number of houses, the area of the respective villages, number of fighting men and guns.

The chiefs usually called "Lal" (i.e., Lord) were the acknowledged leaders in their respective jurisdiction. According to McCall (1949 :247) "if there is any capacity for rule or leadership in Lushai, it undoubtedly lies in the chiefly classes". From the above account it appears that the Chief was initially selected by the people at large. Later on the chieftainship became hereditary. The youngest son succeeded the father-chief in regard to the chieftainship as well as the property. Other elder sons were sometimes made subordinate chiefs in the newly set-up villages (*'Khawper'* with a few of the house-holds from the *'Khawpui'*, father-chiefs village transferred) on attainment of maturity. Though they were not required to pay any tribute to their father-chief, they had the moral responsibility to help the father - chief in his distress. On the death of the father-chief they became full-fledged chiefs. Sometimes when fathers lived long, it was usual that the sons disowned even this subordination. ^[3]

During the British period an important change took place in the succession process. Sir Robert Reid , the then Governor of Assam took steps for recognition of the eldest son as heir to the chieftainship, subject to their physical and mental normalcy. Following this changed method of succession, other sons became commoners.

(3) Ibid, Pp.245

During the period preceding the establishment of the British control, chieftianship was with very rare exception considered to be the prerogative of the Sailos. However, in view of better village administration through the machinery of the chiefs, the British started drawing chiefs from clans other than Sailo and allocating them vacant land for formation of new village units. These chiefs were called '*Hnam Chawm*' (Commoner) chiefs. The Sailo chief also established some Hualngo and Pawi chiefs to take charge of their sub-villages. These chiefs were recognized by the British as independent chiefs. Apart from them" there were some Pawi Lalcher and Fanai chiefs in the Southern part of the territory and they remained outside the influence of the Sailos.

The Lushai chiefs, leadership was confined to their respective village units. In other words, it was one-village authority. There was no central authority regulating relations among the constituent units. The state organization and the pyramidal authority and leadership structure were conspicuous by their absence. There was no classification of the chiefs. All the chiefs were independent in their areas of operation. The political authority naturally was widely distributed and diffused among a large number of village chiefs. To that extent the society can be termed as 'acephalous' society. Horton outlines the salient features of the acephalous society as , "In societies of this kind political authority is widely diffused; such authority positions as exist touch only a limited area of the lives of those subject to them".^[4]

(4) L.B.Thanga, *The Mizos: A study in Racial personality*, Gauhati, 1978.

Feuds among the Mizo Chiefs:

In the Mizo society, the apex cohesive authority was lacking despite the existence of numerous chiefs who were dominant but independent of themselves. This absence of vertical leadership pattern has led to the emergence of a phenomenon which has been termed 'self help' by John Middleton and David Tait (1958)^[5]. This 'self help' relates to a kind of over-expression of hostility between groups normally beyond the range of domestic kinship. The intermittent feuds among numerous village units under 'Lais' bring into sharp focus the prevalent power structure and relations in the Mizo society. In the absence of a super-ordinate authority vested with machinery for enforcement of sanctions and decisions, feuds between the 'Eastern and Western' clans were a recurrent feature. In 1877, several encounters took place over the ownership of some 'Jhum' fields. In the first instance, the chiefs of Khalkam and Poiboi were the contending parties; in the second it was between Lalbura and Sukpilal. Later Poiboi and Sukpilal were hostile to each other.

From 1885 onwards everything was reported quiet, enmity among hostile parties continued to remain. The later records maintained by the British administration throw enough light on the nature and causes of the feuds among different groups.

May be, it was the right of ownership to *Jhum* lands, or availability of *Jhum* land and problems thereof, or the need for protection from other tribes and clans, or the theft of salt, necessitated a strong and powerful institutionalized system of control to develop, to provide leadership to the people in the respective areas.

(5) Ibid.

The fact that the independent feuding chiefs could carry out their hostilities, high-lights the absence of a centralized political authority and for that matter, brings into focus the acephalous nature of the power structure existing before the advent of the British.

The structure of the Mizo society during the Chieftainship:

At comparatively low levels of complexity, and institutionalized social system, the elite positions are generally "undifferentiated" and "multifunctional" ^[6]. The proposition remains quite valid in the traditional Mizo situation. There was no separation of roles and "functions carried out by the same set of the tribal 'elite'. Differentiation leads to the emergence of a hierarchy of elites. In the traditional Mizo society there was only one level 'elite': it is the chief and his council of Elders known as '*upas*'.

A chief is repository of all power, and the fountain - head of justice. He is also the "father of the people" looking after their welfare. His role is multifunctional despite the institution of the chief's non-chiefly assistants. They are known as '*upas*' chosen from those who are *thangchhuahpa*, (recipient of a title for killing a certain number of animals in the chase or giving a public feast) ones who had done *Khuangchawi* (a particular public feast given by well-to-do Mizos). They constitute a kind of council which discusses all matters concerning the village and settled disputes among the people in the village. The chief presided over the meeting of the council which was generally held in Chief's house. In theory, chief enjoyed absolute power. The chief who was strong, controlled practically everything, while the chief who was weak, acted under the advice of the *Upas*.

(6) Ibid.

The entire land of the village was held by the chief. He could requisite the services of the villagers to build his house free of cost. He was also entitled to revenue like *Fathang* (a tribute in the form of de-husked rice), *Sachhiah* (a share of every animal killed or trapped by the villagers) and *Chichhiah* (a due on salt) from the villagers under his jurisdiction. He was entitled to a share of the best honey collected by the people called *Khuaichiah*. He also received fines after deciding a case in the shape of a *Mithun* (wild Bison). The chiefs could expel anybody from the village or his territory. Moreover he was entitled to the land in the best location. The chief was also the master of *Sals*, persons captured during raids. All power was theoretically in the hands of the chief, but in practice the chief had to be guided by custom. The nomadic instinct was so strong in the people that, if the chief was unduly harsh, they would migrate to other villages, may be, villages of rival chiefs. This was called *Pern*. This meant loss of man-power and resources.^[7] This acted as a check on the arbitrary and autocratic actions of the chief. According to McCall:

"The chief and his *Upas* had powers limited only by the temper of the people they ruled. Until they overstepped the mark the people had no other course open than to submit".^[8]

Even in judicial matters the chief had to be guided by customs. To cite an instance, when the son or daughter of a chief was involved in a dispute pending with the council for arbitration, the chief would voluntarily withdraw and allow the *Upas* to try the case according to their best judgement.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid.

Administrative setup during the Chieftainship:

For proper administration of the village the chief appointed several functionaries: *Ramhual* and *tlangau*; *Ramhuals* are expert Jhum cultivators who tender advice to the chief regarding allotment of Jhum plots. They are required to pay heavier *fathang* than ordinary villagers to the chief. The *tlangau* is the village crier whose duty is to proclaim the chiefs orders. Apart from them there were *Zalens*, men of possession, *thirdeng* (black smith), *Khawchhiar* (the village writer), *Sadawt* (the chief's private priest), *tlahpawi* (*Sadawf's* assistant) and, *Puithiam* (village priest).^[9] These functionaries, though appointed by the chief were paid by the villagers directly in kind. This stresses their obligation to the public.

Despite certain checks inherent in the system, the chief was the emblem of authority and source of leadership to the people within his jurisdiction. In addition to general supervision and administration, he was responsible for maintenance of village pattas, water points and for fostering the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* (an almost untranslatable term for a compelling moral force- the core of the Mizo's code of ethics. It enjoins everybody to be kind, hospitable and helpful to others. In peace or war, or in dealing with individuals or groups this spirit of '*tlawmngaihna*' guides the Mizos' thought and action.) . The elders and other functionaries appointed by him assisted him in proper discharge of his roles. The chief and his council are to be seen as one unit. The 'elite, situation and roles thus remain undifferentiated at the simple and 'primitive' level of the Mizo society.

(9) A.G.McCall, *Lushai Chrysallis*, London, 1949.

It is, therefore, also a cause of 'multifunctional' elite to the extent that the same role-holders i.e. the chief and his council initiate and control action in major spheres of activities in the society.

Events that shaped the present day Mizo life and their consequences:

The important events which considerably shaped the present day Mizo life and institutions are : ^[10]

- (a) Consolidation of the British administration.
- (b) Christianization.
- (c) Introduction of the constitution of India and the provision of the Sixth Schedule therein governing the administration of the then Lushai Hills along with other scheduled areas.
- (d) The Mizo insurgency in 1966 and the introduction of village grouping. The far reaching changes that these influences brought about led to the emergence of a new class structure — creation of a "privileged class" and the consequent decline of the old power structure.

The above mentioned events except the Mizo insurgency, are discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs. The Mizo insurgency is discussed in detail in Chapter-V of this thesis.

(10) L.B.Thanga, "The Mizos: A study in Racial personality", Gauhati, 1978.

Consolidation of the British administration:

The first phase of the Anglo-Mizo relations was marked by hostility, and sporadic incidents of raids of varying intensity were quite common. Probably it all started with tea plantation on the foot hills of the Lushai Hills. In fact, after the 1872-73 operations the British authorities remained quiet for some time, but the raids by the Mizos continued unabated. A serious attack involving death of Lieutenant J.F.Stewart of the 1st Leinster Regiment along with three others on 3rd February 1888 evoked deep resentment and anger. Ultimately, the British Government decided to launch another expedition to mete out due punishment to the offending chiefs of the Lushai Hills. The operation was carried out under the command of Colonel F.V.G. Tregar of the 9th Bengal Infantry in January 1889. The British Government decided on 11th September 1889 to start another expedition on a bigger-scale. That expedition is known as the Chin-Lushai Expedition 1889-90. Three columns took part in the expedition and Bengal, Burma and Assam were involved. Another force composed of the men from the Surma Valley Battalion of Military Police under W.W.Daly advanced. Mr.Daly came to the Aizawl range, and built a stockade on a site which subsequently became the Headquarters of the Lushai Hills District. The object of these expeditions was to secure release of the captives to set up posts and establish communication, and to punish the chiefs and others responsible for raids.

Administrative re-organization and the formation of Lushai Hills district:

The Chin-Lushai expedition which was completed in March 1890 resulted in administrative re-organization of the area resulting in two districts, viz the North Lushai Hills and South Lushai Hills with Headquarters at Aizawl and Lunglei respectively. The North Lushai Hills formed part of the chief commissionership of Assam, while the South Lushai Hills was tagged with Bengal.

Later, on 1st April 1898, these two districts were amalgamated and a new district called the Lushai Hills District under the Chief Commissioner of Assam was formed under a proclamation by the Government of India No.591-EB (Assam Secretariat, Foreign.A.May, 1898 No. 13-46). By another proclamation of 1st April, 1898 the new district was placed under the charge of Major John Shakespear who was designated "Superintendent of Lushai Hills".

Impact of the British administration on the institution of Chieftainship:

The extension and gradual consolidation of the British administration influenced the power relation, the leadership structure and the institution of chieftainship to a great extent. The administration followed the policy of "the internal control of the villagers by their own leaders, the chiefs" (Reid: 1942). The principle was to "interfere as little as possible between the chiefs and their people" and "to impress upon the chiefs their responsibilities for the maintenance of order in their villages". ^[11] Major John Shakespeare, the first Superintendent noted in a note recorded on 22.3.1905:

"it is better to uphold the Government of the Chiefs and to govern through them, rather than to try to govern without them".

(11)Ibid.

The reduced status and rights of the Chiefs:

Though the British required the institution of the chiefs and administered the district through them, only certain restrictions and curtailment of the traditional rights of the chief's was ordered. As a result, the chief's power and wealth started diminishing with the coming of the British. In the words of N.E.Parry :

' On the other hand the British as we have stated earlier, to protect their interest in governing the area with minimum expenses favored the chiefs in contrast to the common people. This however could not check the growth of an enlightened section of the Mizos (because of education and Missionary activities) viz., traders, nurses, teachers, public men.'^[12]

Despite the policy of least interference, steps were taken to curtail the power and freedom of the chiefs. The most important of these is what is known as 'Land Settlement. The land was vested in the British Government who then distributed land to the chiefs, though generally in accordance with the existing possession pattern. In the process land was allotted even to persons called *Hnamchawn* chiefs, who do not belong to the ruling clan but are appointed chiefs by the British administration.

(12) N.E.Parry, "*The Lakhers*", Firma KLM London, Pp.12-14.

McCall points out abolition of several rights and prerogatives of the chiefs, which lowered their status to a considerable extent which are mentioned below.

- (1) Right to order capital punishment.^[13]
- (2) Right to seize food stores and property of villagers, who wished to transfer their allegiance.
- (3) Proprietary rights over land now arbitrarily reserved by the Government, in the interests of the public living in neighboring areas in British India.
- (4) Right to tax traders doing business within the chief's jurisdiction.
- (5) Right to freedom of action in relation to making their sons chiefs under their own jurisdiction. (The practice of appointing the youngest son next heir was given up in favor of the eldest son.)
- (6) Right to help those *Bawis* (dependents) who were, by custom, not open to redemption.
- (7) Right to freedom of action in relation to other kinds of *Bawis*, who used to constitute the means whereby the chiefs could cultivate and acquire the ability to sustain their villages in peace and war.
- (8) Right to attach the property of their villages when they wished or deemed fit, with or without fault on the part of the villagers.

This abridgement of the traditional rights of the chiefs resulted in erosion of their authority in relation to the new administration as well as people at large. A new power structure was in the process of coming up.

(13)) L.B.Thanga, "The Mizos: A study in Racial personality", Gauhati, 1978.

There are divergent opinions on this changing power structure in relation to the chieftainship under the British administration. Pakem (1981) is of the view that autocratic power of the chiefs over their people increased considerably under protection of what McCall described as 'Pax Britannica'.^[14] In the absence of people's retaliation, the chiefs backed by the Governmental authorities became a vehicle of oppression. In this connection he referred to the system of free 'Coolie labor' for the British officials on tour. The chiefs used to pick up people for this. Even in judicial matters, he adds, the authorities upheld the chiefs decisions making them sole authority for the people.

Though the British authorities governed through the indigenous system of the chieftainship, the abridgement of powers abetted by the emergence of a new class following large scale Christianisation, paved the way for diminution of the power and prestige of the chiefs. This aspect is discussed below in detail.

Christianisation:

The first Christian Missionaries came to Aizawl in 1894. They were Rev.J.H.Lorrain and Rev.F.W.Savidge of the Arthington Aborigines Mission.^[15] They learnt the Mizo language, wrote it in the Roman script, translated some portions of the Bible and also prepared a dictionary called ' A Grammar and Dictionary of Lushai Language' (Dulien Dialect). After sometime, Rev.D.E.Jones of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission came and joined Rev.Lorrain and Rev.Savidge. However, after three months of joint work Rev.Lorrain and Rev.Savidge left Aizawl.

(14) Ibid.

(15) Ibid.

Rev.D.E.Jones worked alone in almost all important villages for sometime. In 1899 two Mizos were converted to Christianity for the first time. Later other missionaries joined Mr.Jones. Rev.Savidge and Rev.Lorrain also came back under the sponsorship of London Baptist Missionary Society and concentrated their activities in the Southern part of Mizoram. Gradually two mission groups had a sort of division of area of work. The Northern part fell under the Presbyterian (Welsh Presbyterian) Mission activity with the unit headquarters in Aizawl. The Baptists confined themselves mostly to the Southern Area with their unit headquarters at Lunglei. The church became very popular and the evangelization process went on rapidly. The Presbyterian meeting in 1917 decided to observe the entire month of September every year as a Special Campaign month. The result was easily discernible. The number of Christians went up to 90 in 1905 from 15 in 1900, to 7168 in 1915 and 34,893 in 1925. Now more than 96% of the total population of the state of Mizoram, follow the Christian faith.

The impact of Christianity in the Mizo society:

The spread of Christianity gave rise to a significant phenomenon in the Mizo society - the emergence of the 'articulate Lushai'. It accelerated the process of the detribalization of the Mizos. Education was virtually the sole responsibility of the Church. The Government was content by providing small grants in aid. This factor coupled with the non-exposure of the people in such a remote corner to any other influence made education and Christianity virtually synonymous. Salaried jobs ensuring freedom from the difficulties of *Jhum* cultivation were accessible to those who had academic experience and for that matter Christian affiliation. Old customs were in the process of dismantling.

The power and prestige of the chiefs was on the wane. It is the Church and educational mission which started molding the mind of the people- their attitudes and ways of living. New education and Christian ideas - the importance of the individual, made a large segment of the people aspire for democratization and freedom from the chieftainship system.

Thus, in the Mizo villages hitherto characterized by the chiefs and their subjects, primarily *Jhum* cultivators a new element emerged - a new privileged educated class connected with the mission and Government, became powerful. This class is, to quote Major McCall:^[16]

" imbued with the thrill of seeking independence of the chiefs and freedom from customary communal discipline, their motivation being based on their superior academic experience, often cemented by acceptable salaries. It is this oligarchy that can well be called articulate Lushai..."

From the above mentioned facts, it is to be noted that the the impact of Christianization on the Mizo society is that it created a literate and powerful middle class and also prepared the people to aspire for freedom from the oppressive organization of chieftainship. The successive war time changes, political upheavals and nationalistic fervours, nationally and internationally, activated these new middle class who though weak in terms of number, were on equal footing with the middle class people of the plains.

Detribalisation and westernization:

The advent of the British rule had some-what altered the socio-economic structure of the Lushai Hills. The turbulent years of Anglo-tribal conflict soon gave way to a more peaceful life in Lushai hills. The British sought to de-tribalize the Lushai through the introduction of Christianity, western education, modern hygiene, medicine.

However, during the process of detribalisation, the British followed a superficial policy of non-interference in their life and culture. In other words, it was felt by the British that the only way to 'tame ' these 'savages' as they were referred to, was to bring changes in their mode of production. So trade marts were established at the foot-hills so that the tribal need not raid. Three such trade marts in the Lushai foot hills were at Tipai-Mukh, Lushai-hat and Jhalnacherra. ^[17]

In these marts the tribal people sold or bartered their rubber, ivory etc. for salt, iron, brass-utensils, tobacco and cattle. The shifting cultivators were taught to produce potato, cabbage etc. Links with the outside world were established through road communications.

Between 1871-72, the road between Sungoo valley and Dalekmai and between Demagiri and Lunglei was complete. The Silchar-Aizawl road was completed by 1872. The East Bengal Railway was extended upto Chittagong in 1896 connecting Chittagong with Calcutta. By 1898, Silchar was connected with Calcutta and soon a branch line was opened till Lalabazar at the foot hills of the Lushai district. The water-scarcity was taken care by establishing elevated water reservoir at Aizawl in 1900.

(17) Suhas Chatterjee, *Mizoram Under British Rule*, Mittal, New Delhi, Pp.183-184.

The British rendered immense service to the Lushais when the periodic famine devastated the Lushais in 1881-82. Western medicines and hygiene were introduced with education. Momentous changes in the life patterns of the tribes were taking place. But interestingly the British insisted that they retain the tribal dresses and hair-cuts and not dress and cut hair like the British or by-then-westernized Indians.

In the Mizo hills, the British emphasis was on structural detribalization while encouraging the retention of tribal way of superficiality. However, the production process of Mizos was being drastically changed. The food-gathering Mizos were introduced to commercial crop production like rubber and vegetable, cattle rearing, poultry, piggery and trading.

Impact of Detribalization of Mizos on their Ethnicity:

The process of detribalization of Mizos by the British resulted in the emergence of a middle class which became the natural leaders of the Lushai's. The extension of administration integrated all the sub-tribes by stopping their constant mobility as inter-tribal feuds. As a result, the disintegrated groups were gradually losing their sub-ethnic identities to the extent that in the role of British period, the Census reports started classifying them as Lushai, Kuki, Pawi, Lalcher, Hmar, etc ^[18]. Almost the entire population in and around the major administrative centre of Aizwal and Lunglei were as Lushai, their immediate neighbours on the South as Pawi, and inhabitants of the south-east corner of the district as Lalcher.

(18) S.K.Chaube, Internal Politics in North East India:, New Delhi, 1973, Pp.161.

Strong groups of population on the northern side were called HMAR and the inhabitants of the Southern hills of Manipur were given the name of Kuki. Benefits of administration and church education went to the people of northern and central parts. Thus the Lushais emerged as the most advanced group followed by the HMAR. It was from these two sections that the early leadership of the Mizos emerged .

Under the initiative of the church and the administration, the Mizos already had the experience of organization when they had formed the Young Lushai Association in 1930. It was socio-religious organization dominated by church leaders and prominent citizens who collectively worked for the social welfare of the people. This was the first middle class attempt at actualizing modern concepts of Association. The main objective of the YLA were (1) to utilise the leisure constructively (2) Aim at the improvement of Mizoram and (3) advocate Christian way of living. The YLA soon realized the term "Lushai" included only the Zo tribe. Thus the term was replaced by "Mizo" to include all the sub-tribes. R.Vanlawma, the first matriculate of the Mizo's was its general secretary. The formation of Mizo Union was only a logical follow-up. The former was social while the later was full-fledgedly political. The removal of the Mizo union office bearers, on the ground that they lacked 'college education' shows the importance of modern education among the Mizos and the movement for the abolition of 'chieftainship' showed the emergence of a modern middle class in the Mizo hills and their westernized perspective. The integrationist and secessionist debates also shows the dilemma between the old chiefs and the new middle class. In effect, it was the reflection of a society in transition - a society making a wild leap: from tribal stage to a bourgeois society.

The Mizo dilemma and uprising against chieftainship:

The Mizos were generally complacent under the British rule. After a long period of violent life, hard struggle for existence, they had settled down to a peaceful life. The peaceful life of the Mizos was broken by the abrupt British decision to withdraw from India. They were not certain as to what was their political future after the British withdrawal. They first had to mobilise themselves under a single political organization. But the Mizos had other problems to confront - Chiefly Autocracy.

The Mizo tribals had evolved a strong patriarchal system where the Chiefs has supreme power over most of the society.^[19] This development was the result of a long evolution of a political system, during which Sailo Chiefs emerged as the most prestigious among the Mizos.^[20] It was these Sailo chiefs whose rule in course of time became autocratic and oppressive. Each chief ruled his own territory. The Sailo chief were so dominant that all the earlier British officers who came in contact with Mizos suggested the policy of reconciliation with the Chiefs.^[21] They administered a district through the chiefs whom they conferred even greater power they enjoyed traditionally. British officers held conference with the chiefs council with 22 elected chiefs. The council was taken to be representative of the people. Thus, the Mizo society was divided into groups as minority of chiefs and majority of commoners. The commoners were not only victims of chiefly oppression, but they also had no means of approaching the Govt, without going through Mizo Chiefs.

(19) Suhas Chatterjee, *"Mizo Chiefs and Chieftainship"*, New Delhi, 1995.

(20) Surojit Sinha, *"Tribal Politics and state system in Eastern and Northern India"*, Calcutta, 1904.

(21) Ibid.

Therefore, when the British announced their decision to withdraw from India, the Mizo had two major problems. One, whether to remain in India or withdraw from India after the British departure , and two, how to liberate themselves from chiefly oppressions. But the Indian National Congress's announcement that it would abolish all the middleman practices like, Zamindari system and chieftainship, connected the two issues solving the problem for the Mizos.

The role of the church education:

The impact of the British administration and church gave rise to a new leadership wedded to the democratic ideas and committed to fight the vested interests of the chiefs.

McCall lamented:

" In traditional Lushai there was no place for the politician. In modern Lushai the politician is needed but unavailable." ^[22]

But his apprehension was short lived. Politicians and the political party under the name of Mizo Union appeared on the scene. This new phenomenon brought to the surface the inner contradiction of the Mizo psyche, its unmistakable dichotomy. On one side there was the appeal to the traditions of the people, the question of ethnic identity which includes the continuance of chieftainship, while on the other the aspiration of the emerging class was insistent on democratisation of the polity and abolition of the privileges and autocracy of the chief. On one side advocacy for separate state or merger with Burma (objective of

(22) L.B.Thanga, "The Mizos: A study in Racial personality", Gauhati, 1978.

the United Mizo Freedom organization founded by L.B.Thanga and Mizo Union dissidents) at the time of transfer of power consequent on India's independence in 1947, and on the other integration with India.

In other words, it meant that if they remain in India, they could liberate themselves from the bondage of chieftainship, but if they withdraw from India, they would have to put up with the oppression. The choice of integration with India was forcefully put forward by Mr.H.K.Bawichuaka, one time Secretary of Mizo union during evidence at the Bordoloi Sub-Committee. He told the Sub-Committee:^[23]

" If the Lushai Hills choose to be independent, it means eternal severance with the other Mizo countries outside Lushai Hills. If it goes to Burma, the same is the case, so the best interest of those living in the Lushai Hills is to be connected with India."

The Mizo Union became very powerful. The Superintendent of the Lushai Hills who had even opined that the Mizos might join Burma before the Bordoloi Sub-Committee revised his opinion and said that the Mizo's future lay with India.^[24]

However, Peters disfavoured abolition of the administrative machinery where the chiefs played a significant role. Bordoloi Sub-Committee wanted to go slow and set up an interim local council pending establishment of the District Council.

(23) Bordoloi Sub-Committee Evidence Part I

(24) Comments of Mr.L.L.Peters, Superintendent at the meeting of the Mizo Union on 1.10.1947

Reorganization of the Mizo commoners and the formation of the Mizo Union:

The first task of the Mizo commoners was to organize themselves. The Mizo middle class tried to form an association by precluding the chief and formed the Mizo Commoners association. Subsequently, they dropped the word commoners. This started a process of mobilization. Most of the Mizos supported the Mizo Union because it was for the abolition of the chieftainships. A small minority of Chiefs however opposed the Mizo Union and formed the United Mizo Freedom Organization. Needless to say that the Mizo Union was in favor of remaining in India whereas United Mizo Freedom Organization wanted to have an independent sovereign status outside India. In the process that followed, the Mizo Union emerged victorious.

The non-cooperation movement by the Mizo Union:

The Mizo Hills remained with India only on prospect of having a chiefless society. But after Independence, the alteration of the government to this institution was slow to come, partition the problem of the refugees, integration of the princely state, secessionist demand from the Naga, and the threat of commoners uprising had kept the new government of India occupied. It had first to consolidate its new found Independence before it could concentrate on other local and regional micro issues. But for the Mizos this was life and death issue and on which they had mobilized the entire population behind the idea of Integration with India. The common Mizos were becoming increasingly restless, which the institution of chieftainship perpetuating the independence had little meaning. Pressurized by the people, the Mizo Union could no longer wait for the government of India. They, therefore, decided to launch a non-cooperation movement.

When Indian Independence was drawing near, a sense of uncertainty and apprehension filled the minds of the more enlightened leaders of the Lushai Hills. Therefore during the formation of the Mizo Union as the first political party in April , 1946, there was practically no organized agency through which the people of Lushai Hills could voice out their aspirations and grievances. In fact, the Mizo leaders became aware of the current political developments in the Indian sub-continent. Those who were educated in the colleges of plains during the Indian national movement had witnessed what was happening at the national level.

The British Administration of the Lushai Hills:

The British Administration in the lushai hills mainly aimed at securing the loyalty of the Mizo people at the cost of minimum expenditure so that they would no longer create problems in the neighbouring British territories. Besides, as far as possible, the British tried to keep the lushai Hills isolated from the plains. The political situation in the lushai hills district under the British administration was characterized by the dual autocracy of the District Superintendent and the local chiefs. It should be remembered here that the Mizos lived in isolation from culture, ruled by their local chiefs. Hence, the British administrators carefully saw to it that the internal rule of the villages by their respective chief, remained undisturbed.

Before 1947, the Governor of Assam administered Mizoram as a district through the District Superintendent of the area.

The great distance between the capital of Assam, Shillong and Aizwal with poor communication system enabled the District Superintendent to exercise his powers "both autocratically and aristocratically".^[25] He exercised both civil and criminal jurisdictions. Moreover, the provisional Government did not wish to interfere with his administration since he was an agent on the spot. Thus, the real administration of the District was in the hands of the Superintendent who successfully managed to use the local chiefs as administrative instruments. The Mizo Chiefs who ruled over the villages were thus submissive to the Superintendent, as the latter had the authority to punish, remove and replace the chiefs as situation demanded. On the other hand, so long as the Mizo chief carried out the orders of the Superintendent to his satisfaction, their protection was safe-guarded by the British.

Chiefly oppression of the Mizo commoners:

With the coming of the British administrators, the common people of the Mizo society had to perform dual obligations with new additional burden of coolie_ while they had to pay taxes and build the Chief's houses etc. The common people were virtually at the hands of both the British Superintendent and their chiefs. Everything depended upon the sense of values of Superintendent. As a result, the Administration at Shillong did not understand the aspirations and the actual administrative conditions under which the Mizo people were living. Added to this the District Superintendent, an Englishman, never really understood the sentiments and feelings of the Mizos.

(25) V.Venkata Rao, "Century of Govt, and Politics in North East India (Mizoram), Delhi, 1991.

The local Chiefs, on their part, owed their office to the good-will of the British and hence their main obligations were directed to the British administration, not to the welfare of the subjects. As long as they could please their British over lords, the danger of their disposal from office was out of question. So they became irresponsible, autocratic and burdensome for their subjects who paid them all their necessities. In order to ensure the stability of their positions, the chiefs started a very bad practice of bribing the superintendent with live stocks. *Sarep* (smoked meat), eggs, rice etc, which they frequently demanded from their subjects. For the common man, the visit of the officials to his village meant for his live stocks or other. This was an irksome for the common people. Besides giving all the taxes such as *fathang*, (rice tax) and *Sachhia* (share of meat) etc, to the chief, a common man must not complain even if his fruits or vegetables in the garden were fallen by the Chiefs family members without permission whatsoever. Nobody dared to criticise the actions of the Chiefs openly.

As *Jhuming* was vital part of the Mizo culture, anything which concerned, *Jhuming* came to be the most sensitive issues. During the 1940's there were complaints to the Superintendent as to how *Jhum* lands were distributed by the Chiefs regarding the preference given to *Ramhuals* and *Zalen*. These *Ramhuals* and *Zalen* were selected by the chief from his favourites and they enjoyed the privilege of assisting the Chiefs in his day to day administration along with the *Upas* or Councillors. The commoners did not find the reason why these *Ramhuals* and *Zalens* who had no contribution to the public, should choose *Jhum* land before them. On the other hand, the *Ramhuals* and *Zalen* tried to please the chief by any possible means so as to retain their dignified positions. This was greatly

resented by the commoners and the abolition of this system became one of the first demands of the Mizo Union Party. The Mizo Union submitted a memorandum to L.L.Peters, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills in 1949 in this regard. However, the Superintendent replied to the memorandum fully safeguarding the authority of the Chiefs, as well as the positions and rights of *Ramhuals* and *Zalens* ^[26].

Lack of support for commoners from the British administrators:

The reply of the Superintendent to the memorandum submitted to him by the Mizo Union, strongly convinced the commoners that there was no room for them in British Administration. The two World Wars had a great effect on the social and political outlook of the Mizos. Those who served in the army during the Wars came home with a more wider knowledge of the outside world. They were regarded by their kinsmen as moneyed and well-to-dos. Moreover there were some Mizo Boys with education and political bending who were looked upon as learned and leaders. At this time, some Mizos at Aizwal ran business successfully. The flow of money and the experience of serving in the army, getting recognition in Government service, professions, trade and commerce and living outside the confines of the hills resulted in the emergence of a new class in the Mizo society who wanted recognition of their status and hence they came into conflict with the local chiefs. There were also some Mizo Unionists who were fully conscious of the British instrument of Mizo. The Mizo leaders accused the British of keeping the Mizos ignorant.

(26) Notice No.7320(a) G. of 28.8.1948 by L.L.Peters, Superintendent, Lushai Hills.

Thus, the more progressive sections of the Mizo society, were fully aware of the tendencies of the local chiefs. The resentment against the oppressions of the superintendent and the chiefs gained momentum among the commoners all over the District and found enthusiastic leadership in educated commoners which in turn, led the people to organize themselves into political party, the Mizo Union on 9th April, 1946.

District Conference:

During the time of political uncertainty of Mizos, Mr.A.R.H. McDonald, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills named District Conference in January, 1946. This was the first body in which the commoners were included in any kind of administrative body with 20 representatives of the chiefs. The conference would consist of 20 representatives of the chiefs. The conference received a great response when in January 1946 the first meeting of the conference under the Chairmanship of the Superintendent himself, passed the abolition of the power of the Chief to expel any villager from his village. The commoners felt that, with the Superintendent on their side, they would receive a sigh of relief from the oppressions of their chiefs. It was McDonald who gave permission to the first political party in the Mizo Union. ^[27]

Hostile attitude of the Superintendent towards the Mizo Union:

As the Mizo Union party was formed with the permission of the Superintendent, it was felt that he was on the side of the commoners. As such, the party attracted members from all walks of life, Government servants, teachers,etc.

(27) Mizo Union Constitution: A Pamphlet, Aizawl, 1946.

This gave the hills, a rapid growth of the Mizo Union party. But seeing the developments and the rapid growth of Mizo Union party which put six District Conference in the back ground, the Superintendent presented a hostile attitude towards the party.

He suspected that they had some connections with the Indian National Congress.^[28] On the other hand, the Mizo Union leaders suspected that the Superintendent had some specific intention to lead them under the crown colony scheme. Added to this, the Teacher's Conference of the South Lushai Hills under Mr.Carter passed a resolution that they welcomed the Crown colony scheme for Mizoram. When the Mizo Union leaders who worked all these decades under the British rule, with their experiences under it, strongly opposed the continuation of the British administration who safeguarded the autocracy of the local chiefs. To them, the absence of the British in Mizoram meant the end of the oppressions from their chiefs and with that alone would the commoners survive.

The anti-chief attitude of the Mizo Union:

The anti chief attitude could be found in the Mizo Union right from its birth. In its first conference on 34th September, 1946 at M.E.School, those members from villages openly shouted slogans against the chiefs. Pu Lalbuaia said that shouts from outside could be heard through the windows like 'Lai on ban lsh Chuan ka ughawng ka Fikang' (I will cut my neck unless the chiefs are deposed)^{9[29]}

(28) Saprawnga, Ka Zin Khawng, (Aizawl, N.D) P-125.

(29) Ibid.

The Assembly resolved that the 'Upas' Chiefs (elders/councillors) should be elected by the people, that *Ramhual* should be abolished. *Kuliph* (hard labor) be stopped etc. and satisfied the draft constitution of the Mizo Union. On 7th November, 1946, the third District conference met again under the Chairmanship of Macdonald. As was apprehended, the Superintendent declared:

"The first business of the meeting today is whether to inform the Governor or not that the Mizo Union does not represent the Mizo people and that only the District conference represents the people".³⁰¹

This was a drastic step by the Superintendent to reduce the influence of the Mizo Union. As a reaction to this, the Mizo Union submitted a memorandum to the Superintendent, which read in English thus:

"We had already submitted to you on 6.11.46 that this conference is not qualified to represent the people. What we want is, if the conference is deemed to represent the people of Mizoram, the representatives of the commoners must be doubled to the representatives of the chiefs. If this is not complied with, we cannot participate in the meeting merely to be overruled."^[31]

With its memorandum, the Mizo Union boycotted the District Conference, which then became inactive. When the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee, popularly known as the Bordoloi Commission visited Lushai Hills in 1948, it co-opted the two Mizo Union leaders - Kowtinkhuma from North Lushai Hills and Chi Sprowuga from South Lushai Hills.

(30) Memorandum to the Govt, of India, by Mizo National Council, Aizawl, 1965.

(31) Cited in Vantland Hnena Hriatirna, Aizawl, 1946, Memo.No. 10772-1873 G-of 13.11.1946.

These two leaders and other influential personalities met the commission. A common trend observed in the suggestions of different groups was that the Mizo needed some kind of special protection and guidance. They were also unanimous in their demand for autonomous Status.

In July, 1947, L.L.Peters replaced Macdonald as the first Superintendent of Independent India. At this time, political consciousness among the Mizos, harbored by the Mizo Union was developing very fast. The Mizo Union welcomed him with high expectations. Looking at the situation and apprehension of the Mizos as to what their political future would be, Mr.L.L.Peters invited some 50 prominent personalities of Aizwal for a meeting. One of the resolutions of this meeting was " to request the Governor of Assam to inform them in writing whether the Lushais could be permitted to join either Pakistan or Burma or that the Mizos should be given the right of secession from India". In his reply under Notice No.7629-30-G of 2.9.1946, the Governor of Assam notified that:

- (1) There can be no question of the Lushais leaving the Indian Union as in law , the lushai country (through) being an included Areas was already part of Assam.
- (2) That the Lushais must remain with the Indian Union and cannot join either Pakistan or Burma.
- (3) That in view of the constitutional status stated alone, the question of opting out after 9 or 10 years does not arise .^[32]

(32) Letter No. 7629-30-G/2-9-1946, from the office of the Governor of Assam.

Pro-chief attitude of the British administration:

As regard to the local Administration, Mr.L.L.Peters formed District Advisor Council as a replacement of Macdonald's District Conference. At first Mr.Peters did not openly show his favours to the Chiefs. But in course of time, he prone to be corrupt and an ardent safeguard for the chiefs. Most of the veteran Mizo politicians of those days termed Mr.Peters the corrupt and the source of mal-practices in the administration. It is said that in order to get a plot of land for the house site or the other, one had to offer him a cock, or eggs or fish or testicles and hump of an ox which were his favourite dishes or had to please his wife. This kind of bribe could be only afforded by chiefs and very few rich families. As a result, he steadily favoured the chiefs and safeguarded their interests. It is also said that once he toured for the first time from Aizwal, before reaching lunglei, he had received a *thul* (basket" full of eggs, as bribes from the chiefs of various villages he visited. It seems that Mr.Peter did nothing to improve the wide gap between the chiefs and the commoners, rather, he purposely favoured the chiefs. Administrative set up remained unchanged, with commoners to their discontentment. This was greatly resented by the Mizo Union. It is a sad thing to mention here that, the Mizos had high hopes for ending their miseries under corrupt local administrator of the Lushai Hills. But their hopes for help from Indian leaders remained unfulfilled. This had a deep adverse effect on the Mizo attitude towards the free India.

Civil Disobedience Movement:

The Lushai educated youth wanted to have their own elected representatives in the government. The Mizo Union was originally constituted to check illegal extractions by the chiefs and protect the villagers from exploitation. The Chief's Council, consisting of, representatives of the chiefs and nominees of the Superintendent, set in process measures to counter the activities of the Mizo Union. The party retaliated by launching a movement to boycott the chiefs altogether. It started as a peaceful non-violent movement in 1948. The villagers were instructed by the Mizo Union workers not to carry out the orders of the chiefs or pay them any taxes. But very soon, violence broke out and Government also got involved on the ground that it was supporting the authority of the chiefs. The people were urged to defy the authority of the Government as well as the chiefs and join together in a full scale Civil Disobedience Movement.

The Lushai Hills District, bordering both Burma and East Pakistan, was of great strategic importance . It was imperative that a solution should be found to avert a break down of law and order. The last superintendent of the Lushai Hills appointed in 1947 was L.L.Peters, a staunch British officer with long experience of work in the hill areas but quite out of tune with the new generation of hill leaders then emerging. His prescription was "Bring out the troops, shoot to kill, and lock up the Mizo Union leaders." His wife, however, was said to be a very humane and understanding woman, who was greatly liked by the people. Superintendent Peters was strongly opposed to the idea of any talks at Government level with the Mizo Union leaders.

After independence, an Advisory Council was elected in Lushai Hills to advise the Superintendent, and the Mizo Union got all the seats in that Council except two, won by the UMFD. The Mizo Union came into conflict with Supdt.L.L.Peters who was openly siding with the chiefs.

The Mizo Union which claimed to represent the Mizo people especially the commoners submitted various complaints regarding the defects in the administration set up by the District Superintendent. But they never got proper attention and reply from the Superintendent. Therefore, the Mizo Union leaders felt necessary to put pressure on the authority so that they would be listened to and that their status in the society would be recognized. They regarded Mr.L.L.Peters as the source of all their grievances. To worsen the situation, Mr.Peters issued an order, copies of which were given only to the chiefs, that any subject who "misbehave" must be reported to the Superintendent by the local chiefs that the culprits would be punished. The vague order gave good chance to the chief to accuse Mizo Union Activists of his village of "misbehaving" who had by now openly opposed his authority. With this encouraging order in their pockets, the local chief sent many Mizo Union activists even for minor reasons. Pu. R.Thumlira, the final President of Mizo Union , said that whenever the victims of this administration were presented before the court, what the District Judge would always ask was "Are You a member of Mizo Union ?" He further stated that on many occasions, the seriousness of a person's case depend upon whether he was member of Mizo Union or not. In late October, 1948, a meeting of the leaders of Mizo Union head quarters, Aizwal and Aizwal District Working Committee members was convened. Without even consulting their rural units and sub-headquarters at lunglei, the meeting resolved that;

"in order to bring the ruling of partial judgements to an end and bring right ruling to Mizoram, the meeting demanded , for the sake of true judgement, the transfer of the main obstacle Mr.L.L.Peters from Mizoram. If that was not accomplished, the only way for the people is "Non-violence, Non-cooperation with the Government".

They left the detailed programmes for their implementation to the leaders of the Headquarters. After much thinking and deliberations, the Mizo Union leaders at Aizwal fixed the 27th December, 1948 as a deadline for the transfer of Superintendent, Mr.L.L.Peters. If the government took to action, then the Mizo Union would launch the Non-cooperation movement from 28th December, 1948. The leaders of the Headquarters prepared a notification called "Mizo Union Thupuan No.31/38 of 1.12.1948", in which they clearly outlined the various accumulated grievances of the commoners. It stressed that-

"since sometime back, the Mizo Union members have been ill treated by the officials from top to bottom , in matters of judgement, we never received proper attention....We are being falsely accused just because we are trying to improve the lot of common man within the framework of laws for which we are unlawfully punished....We are forced to go for Kuli much more frequent than others and if reported, whatever might be the cause, we are promptly locked up (Hajat) without any clarification from our end; we are punished just because we are not willing to double the bamboo planks for the chiefs walls....So we feel that our system of law is favouritism and that there is no way for the Mizo Union members to get true judgement ... we can not bear this... any more. As the superintendent Mr.L.L.Peters is mainly responsible for our sufferings, we have asked the Assam Government to take him away from our land before December 27th 1948. If he is not taken away as demanded, the Mizo Union will start non-cooperation movement from 2th December 1948, against the superintendent and the chiefs. To show our non-cooperation -

- (1) We will not submit or clarify any case to Mr.Peter and his officials. This does not mean that we are going to take judgements to our hands, but no one could stop any amicable settlements between the contending parties.
- (2) We will not obey the orders and parwana of Mr.Peters and his officials.

- (3) We will no longer pay 'Sachhiah', 'Buhchhun' and others to the rural chiefs, and we will no longer build the Chief's houses."

The notification clearly shows that this non-cooperation was only against the mal-administration of Mr.Peters and his officials, not against India or Assam government. ^[33]

Before releasing the 'Mizo Union Thupuan', the Mizo Union President Mr.R.Thanhkira sent a memorandum to the government of Assam, stating all their grievance and complaints on 24.11.1948. The Mizo Union Head quarters deputed Mr.R.Thanhkira and Mr.Hrangaia to pursue the memorandum. The deputation met Shri.N.K.Rustomji ICS, Advisor to the Governor of Assam who told them that the Governor was unhappy with their programme of non-cooperation. He tried to convince the Mizo leaders to withdraw their decision. They were further told that the government would not tolerate such kind of movement. The District administration reacted by arresting the Mizo Union leaders - H.Vanthuama, General Secretary and Lalbuaia, Treasury, on 4th December, 1948. The same day the Mizo press at Kulikomau which printed the Mizo Union Thupuan was closed. Mr.R.Thanhkira was arrested in Shillong but was released on bail. On his return, he was again arrested by the police at Zarkawl on 21st December, 1948, before he reached home. Other seven leaders of the Mizo Union were arrested the next day.

(33) Notification by Mizo Union - Mizo Union Thupuan, No-31/38- 1.12.1948.

Those arrested were -

H.Khuma (Bara Borar), Chawnghunaia, V.Rosiana (both from Kulikawn) Vanchilanga, D.K.Kawnga (both from Mission Veng) Hrangia (Thakthing Veng) Ch.Chhunga (Saron Veng).

The government of Assam did not take any steps to improve the situation and the Mizo Union's deadline 27th December, 1948 passed. On 28th December, 1948, as an implementation of their programme, the jailed Mizo Union leaders started fasting to show that they meant business in their movement. The next day on 29th December, 1948, the Mizo Union at Aizwal organized a big procession. Starting from the Southern part of the town, the Mizo Union activist shouted slogans - "Go home Peters" etc.

The procession marched towards Aizwal jail in the heart of the town demanding the release of their leaders. Before the procession could reach them, the Mizo Union leaders were charged with Assam maintenance of Public order Act 1947 Sec 2(1) by which they were to remain in jail for 6 months without trial. At the same time, they were hurriedly transported to other jails in the plains, and the superintendent sent police to disperse the procession.^[34]

When they came to know that their leaders were already shifted, the procession dispersed in dismay. In Aizwal, the movement was directed against Superintendent and government officials. The Lushai clerks, who acted as the main local agent of the government did not enjoy much reputation in the public and hence they were not target of the Movement.

(34) Weekly Reports from the Superintendent of Lushai Hills - 30.12.1948, Aizawl.

There was total failure of law and order in the whole District for a few days. To show their non-cooperation with the government, the Mizo Union members stopped payment of government dues, *Fathang*, *Sachhiah*, and also refused to build the chief's houses. In Aizwal, the public was strongly against *phutluih kuli* and 'Personal Residence Surcharge'

Though not consulted in the decision making for the movement, the Mizo Union sub-head quarters at lunglei organized a procession of the same kind. All pamphlets and instructions they had received from Aizwal were seized by the Police. With great difficulty and lathi charges, the lunglei police could at last disperse the procession.

Rural units of Mizo Union in villages followed their leaders in the town. As they did not get proper guidance, the Mizo Union activists at once attacked the houses of their chiefs, *Upas*, the Ramhuals who still retained their positions even after repeated requests by their head quarter's leaders. Not only the houses, the commoners also destroyed their gardens. These village administrators were the main targets of the movement in villages as was the District administration in the town. However, no human casualty at the hands of the Mizo Union activists were reported. In villages, the personality and sense of values of the individual chief greatly determined the intensity of the movement. A kind chief received radical actions from his villagers. It should be noted here that Aizwal town had no chief and thus anti-chief movements concentrated in rural areas. However, the villagers received full support and encouragement from their leaders in the town.^[35]

(35) From the Superintendent, Lushai Hills No-11487 - 8-g of 1.1.1949.

In retaliation, the Superintendent deployed whatever force he could gather - the Police and the Assam Rifles under his subordinate officials. These deployments visited each and every village, arresting and beating publicly the Mizo Union activists. The local chief received these deployments with open arms and furnished all necessary information. The forces, wherever they went, demanded from the villagers, rice, poultry etc.

They seized fire arms and Mizo Union party documents. In some villages, they assembled the Mizo members and ordered them to withdraw their membership from the party. If the members refused, they were beaten before the public, many of whom received casualties and could not continue their cultivation. Among those beaten, the middle-aged men were in majority rather than energetic youths. Many of them were sent to Aizwal till there was no more space in Aizwal jail. Many of them were fined on various charges. The amounts of fines varied from Rs.30/-, Rs.40/-, Rs.70/-, Rs.100/-, Rs.200/-, Rs.300/-, which were huge amounts for the time.^[36]

The ill treatment and unscrupulous partiality by the officials, made the Mizo Union members, both in town and villages, deeply loyal to their party. This clearly revealed that commoners had developed a strong sense of political conviction and that they had become strongly against the local government. Therefore, they presented a firm united stand against the local autocracy.^[37]

(36) R.Thanlira - Mizo Union, Nawrh (Aizawl)

(37) An account of the movement available in N.Rustomji, *Enhanced Frontiers*, OUP, Delhi.

Aftermath of the Non-cooperation movement:

To have a spot verification of the political situation and to seek ways by which the Mizo problems could be solved, Shri.M.K.Rustomji ICS, Advisor to the Governor of Assam arrived at Aizwal on 21.1.99. He summoned one of the Mizo Union leaders, Mr.R.Dengthuama who was jailed only the night before. The two had discussions on the issue. It was believed by other Mizo Union leaders that apparently Mr.R.Dengthuama was convinced by Shri.Rustomji to call off the movement. Nari Rustomji reported the situation prevailing in Aijal and surrounding areas in those days.

" On Arrival at Aijal, I found the atmosphere disturbingly tense. My staying as the Superintendent's guest did not make things easier for me, as it gave the impression that I would be biased at the very outset against the Mizo Union. There was some justification in this apprehension, as the first interviews arranged by the Superintendent were with the members of the Lushai Chiefs council. It was then that I met for the first time, Pu Lalsailova, Chief of Kelsih and President of the Chiefs Council. He was a charming man, ever smiling and kindly, the epitome of old world courtesy and we soon became friends. The Chiefs urged the most drastic measures against the Mizo Union leaders, a considerable number of whom had already been put in the lock up by the over-zealous Superintendent. The public, complained the Chiefs, were being misled by the Mizo Union. They were stoning the houses of Chiefs and threatening to murder. The administration in the district was on the verge of collapse and the authorities must at once intervene, to protect the lives and properties of the Chiefs, who had served for generations, as the bulworks of the Government. I met, in due course, the Mizo Union leaders and held protracted discussion with them, both singly and as a body to thrash out a formula, to resolve their grievances against the Chiefs. The Mizo Union leaders were poles apart from the Chiefs and their old world ways. They stormed and ranted from morning till evening, threatening devastation if their demands were not fulfilled (Pu Vanthuama and Pu Thanlira were the two leaders conspicuous in that meeting)". I (Nari Rustomji)

"set off valiantly with my naval escort , a gay band of young men with guitars slung across their shoulders and lustily singing all the way, as only Lushais know. We met, as we proceeded, parties of political prisoners, firmly handcuffed, who had been called up by the Superintendent from Lungleh, the southern division, to meet me at Aijal (Aizwal). Pu Dengthuama, among them I remember especially, as we have often reminisced in later days of our first strange meeting on a jungle track. When

we reached our destination it was night and we camped in the finely preserved house of the old chief. It was rumored that many of the villagers had left their homes and fled to the forest for fear that we had come to arrest them. I soon had messengers sent out, to reassure the villagers that I had come to hear their grievances and not to punish them, and that I should be happy to meet them at their convenience, next morning. In my party was young Pu Lallianzuala, an earnest Seventh Day Adventist Evangelist. He had brought with him a case full of Missionary literature, and no sooner had we reached the camp than he sped to the village in the night and set about enrolling new entrants to the faith. Also accompanying me was Rina Sailo, sone of Pu Lalsailova, President of the Chief's council. Rina had been recently appointed to the newly formed frontier service and I had called him up from Naga Hills, where he was posted, to lend me a helping hand. We spent the evening, chatting with the chief and hearing from him the heroic exploits of his grand father, who after years of bitter fighting, had come to an honorable settlement with the British, in token of which they had presented him with a giant size silver cup, shaped like a sports trophy and handsomely inscribed, which the present chief displayed before us, with ancestral pride."^[38]

"The Next morning, we held meetings among the villagers and explained that the Government was determined to take all steps to ensure that the people were not exploited. Their problems could best be settled by peaceful discussions and not by acts of violence directed against the Chiefs. By the time we returned to Aijal, the tension had already considerably lessened, to the extent that even the fire eating Superintendent agreed to my proposal to release the Mizo Union leaders from jail and start off again on a clean slate. Everybody was happy and the sundry rival parties organized a grant joint farewell for me, as I left Aijal for Shillong."

"My visit to the Mizo District gave me confidence in myself, as this was the first occasion on which I had been called upon to bear sole responsibility in a situation of extreme crisis in the tribal areas. I had broken all the rules, I had taken decisions against the advice of the experts in hill administration - and the experts themselves were surprised at the successful outcome. The Mizo civil disobedience movement of 1948 was called off, and a climate had been created for a happy settlement."^[39]

(38) Nari Rustomji, *Enhanced Frontier*, New Delhi, 1973, Pp-96-98.

(39) *Ibid.*

The next day, Shri.Rustomji left for Shillong with a light heart and at the same time, Mr.R.Dengthuama was released on bail. Before he left the prison, the other jailed Mizo Union leaders fervently requested Mr.R.Dengthuama not to make any agreement with the superintendent until and unless their leaders were released from the plains. In spite of his friends requests and much against the wishes of the party activists, Mr.R.Dengthuama made a compromise with the superintendent. He even did not consult the Mizo Union leaders at the head quarters, lunglei. Mr.Dengthuama issued "Mizo Union Thupuan" , Aizwal, dated 21.1.1949, under the seal of General Head quarters, Aizwal, whereby he called off the non-cooperation movement. The notification stated that Mr.L.L.Peters, during his tenure of office, promised to recommend for the release of the Mizo Union leaders from plains, to return all the fines imposed during the movement, and to lift all the restriction imposed upon the Mizo Union activists because of the movement etc. Mr.R.Dengthuama urged the local units to report to the superintendent or the sub-divisional officers, that they had stopped the movement. He also informed the units that the sooner the movement stopped, the more likely Mizoram would function as District council administration.^[40]

As the notification was issued under the seal of the General Headquarters, Aizwal, all the Mizo Union units in the district obediently called off the move notification contained. The prompt release of the Mizo union leaders appeared to be sincere gesture on the part of the Superintendent of his promises.

(40) R.Thanlira, op.cit.

However, the administrative set remained unchanged and thus there were various factors towards the discontent of the politically conscious Mizo Union leaders. In years to come, the Mizo Union remained the main pioneer of Mizo autonomous movements, till its merger with the congress in 1974.

It may be pointed out that although the leaders of the Mizo Union party called the movement as "non-violence-non-cooperation", its characteristics and trends appeared to be a kind of civil disobedience. Even some of the Mizo Union leaders like Mr.R.Thanhira, President and Mr.H.Vanthuama, General Secretary of the party during the movement do not deny the civil disobedience character of the movement. Both of them said that the movement could also be called "Civil Disobedience Movement". This may be justified by non-payment of taxes and government dues, disobedience to the government by refusing to do government obligations were fully carried out by the Mizo union activists which indeed were the characteristics of civil disobedience. Pu lalhuaia said that they were very much influenced by the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. This statement is supported by the "Mizo Union Thupuan No. 31/38 of 1.12.1948 2(Z)" that there must not be any kind of violence in their movement. ^[41]

Impact of the non-cooperation movement on the Mizos:

The movement which involved more than 80% of the total population of Lushai hills had deep significance in the political consciousness of the Mizo. First, it made known to the people of other states who the Mizos were and what type of people they are.

(41) Mizo Union Thupuan No-31/38 of 1.12.1948.

Second, the movement gave a strong sense of solidarity and spirit of unity among the Mizos. Third, it taught the Mizo people the value of endurance and perseverance. Fourth, the movement enlightened the political consciousness out of the general masses and trained the Mizo people for their future political development. Fifth, the movement truly testified the sincere loyalty of the party members to the union and their selfless sacrifices for the general welfare of the Mizo people. As a whole, it may be right to say to the credit of the Mizo Union that its leaders were sober, realistic and far-sighted. They were always ready to sacrifice their personal interest for the cause of the public.

When one look back to the various achievements of the Mizo Union and their selfless sacrifices, the movement they organized, petitions and memorandums they have submitted to the Government of Assam for the upliftment of the Mizo people, it may not be wrong to call those early Mizo Union leaders "Patriots" for the Mizo. ^[42]

Under this backdrop, it is interesting to note that, the newly formed "United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO), which was opposing the Mizo Union and championing the cause of the chiefs, was not looked upon with much favor by the Government, as there were indications that it was working for the break away of the Lushai Hills District from the Indian Union and for linking the district with the Chin Hills of Burma.

(42) R.L.Thangawma and G.G.Verghese, A History of the Mizos, Vol-II,p.4, Delhi, 1997.

Introduction of the Constitution and the Provision of the Sixth Schedule:

In response to the resolution of the disobedience movement, the Government of Assam formed an Advisory Council before Constitution of the District Council. The recommendations of the "North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly", known as the "Bordoloi Committee", was incorporated in Part 'A' of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.^[43] The Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union formed in the South-Eastern part of the district got the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Later the Sixth Schedule (Articles 244(2) and 275(1) of the Constitution of India) containing provisions for the administration of Tribal areas was extended to the erstwhile Lushai Hills District of Assam which was given the status of an autonomous District. Consequent on this the Mizo District Council was inaugurated on 25th April, 1952. Within this District, a Regional Council called the Pawi Lakher Regional Council was formed on 23rd April, 1953 for certain Southern parts of the district. The District and the Regional Council consisted mostly of elected members and a limited number of nominated members.

Important Enactment by the Government of Assam and the District Council:

The new District Council passed the Lushai Hill Act No. 11 (Reduction of *Fathang*), 1953^[44]. The rate of *Fathang* was reduced and it was now paid to the District Council after abolition of the chieftainship.

(43) L.B.Thanga, "The Mizos: A study in Racial personality", Gauhati, 1978.

(44) Ibid

Other taxes like *Sachhiah*, *Thirdengsa*, *Khuachihhiah*, and *Chichhiah* were completely withdrawn. In 1954, two important legislations were enacted, facilitated by the friendly atmosphere between the Mizo Union Party and the Congress Ministry in Assam. The first was the acquisition of the chiefs rights, which came into force on April 1, 1954. The second one was Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act of 1954.

The "Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act 1954, came into force from April 1, 1954 in the area under the jurisdiction of Lushai District Council and from April 15, 1954, in the Pawi-Lakher Region. The rights and interests of 259 Lushai chiefs and 50 Pawis-Lakher chiefs were now vested in the government. The administration of the land under these chiefs was also handed over to the District and Regional councils respectively and the Mizo chiefs wrongly put the blame for it on the Mizo Union Party.

By an Act of the Parliament, called the "Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act No. 18 of 1954, the name of the "Lushai District" was changed to "Mizo District", with effect from April 29, 1954. The term "Lushai" gradually disappeared from Mizo District. Since the name of the "Lushais" has been changed to "Mizos" from April 1954 onwards, henceforth the people of the district are referred to as "Mizos" instead of "Lushais", and "Aijal" is spelt as "Aizawl" as per the wishes of the Mizos.

By another enactment, The Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act No.1 of 1956. the Mizo women were given the right of inheritance.

Structural Reforms:

The post of the superintendent had been abolished and the whole area was placed under the Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Executive Members of the District and Regional Council. As mentioned earlier, the Mizo Union, holding the reins of the District Council

Administration, abolished the special privileges of the Lushai chiefs and their elders. However, all the chiefs were compensated in cash for the loss of their power and tribute. Since the voice of the people was very strong, the chiefs had no choice but to accept their fate calmly and be content with the compensation given to them. Some of the chiefs utilized the money received wisely, but majority of them squandered it and left a trail of misery for their dependents.^[45]

The Powers of the District and Regional Councils:

The District Council and the Regional Council were given powers to make laws with respect to:^[46]

- (a) Allotment, occupation or use, or the setting apart of land other than any land which is reserved for rest of the purposes of agriculture, or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes or for any other purpose likely to promote the interests of the inhabitants of any village or town. Provided that nothing in such laws shall prevent the compulsory acquisition of any land, whether occupied or unoccupied for public purposes by the Government of the State concerned in accordance with the law for the time being in force authorizing such acquisition.
- (b) Management of any forest not being a reserved forest.
- (c) Social customs.
- (d) Regulation of *Jhuming*.
- (e) They have also powers to assess and collect land revenue and to impose taxes.

(45) Ibid.

(46) Ibid.

- (f) Any other matter relating to town or village administration, public health and sanitation.
- (g) Administration of Justice.
- (h) Powers to establish Primary School and to launch self help schemes and development work.

The District council being an elected body, a new power structure emerged where the hereditary chieftainship had no place and a strong anti-chief body came to power. It was therefore, an important land mark in the history of Mizo power relations. Following the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971, the erstwhile Mizo district was converted into the Union Territory of Mizoram, a new political unit consisting of three districts, viz., Aizawl District with Headquarters at Aizawl, Lunglei with Headquarters at Lunglei, and Chhimituipui district with Headquarters at Saiha. The Mizo District council ceased to exist. Only in the Southern district of Chhimituipui three councils, viz., Pawi District Council, Lakher District Council, and Chakma District Council were formed to cater to the needs of those areas. In the entire Union Territory excluding these three District Councils, village councils were setup for matters relating to village administration including village police and public health and sanitation. These village councils are also mainly elected bodies. Thus the introduction of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India paved the way for, and consolidated a democratic power and authority structure.^[47]

(47) L.B.Thanga, "The Mizos: A study in Racial personality", Gauhati, 1978.

As a consequence of the abolition of the chieftainship by the enactment of the Acquisition of Chiefs Right, by the Government of Assam, the chiefs whose administration of land being handed over to district and regional councils, were compensated for the loss of their power and tribute. Since the voice of the people were very strong, the chiefs had no choice but to accept their fate, and be content with the compensation given to them. The abolition of the institution of chieftainship was simultaneous and in line with the abolition of Zamindari system in the rest of India.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter - III

Scarcities and Famines

Natural calamities have always influenced human society. History proves that many a time it has changed the course of the life of man. The present state of Mizoram and the Mizo-hills during the British period have witnessed such disastrous calamities through bamboo flowering and consequent famines as no other region in North-East must have experienced. The sufferings of the Mizos due to famine were unbearable. At a point, the then ruling British Government had to interfere for the same cause.

Famines and the Mizos:

Though the British were the first to record the famines, the famines were not new to the Mizos. It is a part of their life and history. In fact Mizo chroniclers conjectured that the previous tribe who inhabited the present Mizo land had vacated the hills due to the severity of these recurrent famines which they failed to cope up with. According to their calculations, the Mizo tribes migrated to the present habitat in about 1724 AD from the land between Run Lui and Tiau rivers in Upper Burma where they lived during the period 1540-1723 AD^[1]. Retrospective calculations by the tribal elders demonstrate that a major famine was experienced in the area in 1719 AD which was just before the Mizos reached the area. Since then they have experienced the hardship of such rat-famines in 1737 and 1767 AD. The Mizo oral historical testimonies recorded that during the last of these 18th century famines, the remaining former occupants of these hills evacuated leaving it totally to the incoming Mizos.

(1) D.Rokhuma, *"What is Anti-Famine Campaign Organization Doing ?"*, Aizawl, 1988, p.96.

The experiences of these cyclic famines and hardship associated with it taught the Mizos about the periodicity of the phenomenon, prediction and imminence of the next famine, the difference between the two varieties of the famine and their causes and impacts. It is also obvious that despite the body of knowledge gathered around the phenomenon, there is precious little the Mizos could do about it. They were totally helpless against this natural calamity. In fact repeated famines depleted their population considerably despite the continuous migration of their people from their place of previous settlement. Starvation death during famines until the next harvest was considerable. Due to the nature of the tribal society, they neither deserted their community nor any nuclear families migrated to other places. The Mizos therefore temporarily migrated to the plains of Cachar and Sylhet during the famines and lived on the charity of the plainsmen. They returned back to the hills only when the severity of the famine had subsided. In these process some smaller sub-tribes permanently settled in the foothills near the plains and never went back to the high hills. The Mizos settled near the Hailakandi district of Assam thus trace their migration to the area ^[2]. In fact the recent anthropologists detected a distinct migratory trend among the Mizos towards the plains of neighboring Assam and Bengal, which was put to a halt by the advent of the British in the region who made conscious efforts to stop the migratory movement of Mizos and to confine them within the hills ^[3].

(2) Oral Testimony collected from Katlichera, Assam, January 2002.

(3) V.Ruata Rengsi, "Pre-Colonial Technology of the Mizos", Unpublished Ph.D thesis, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1998.

The historians conjecture that if such efforts were not made, the major portion of the Mizos would have come down to settle in the plains of Cachar and Sylhet as done by the other tribes like Kacha Nagas, Hmars and Brus. During such settlement some Mizo tribes even picked up the technology of settled rice cultivation in the foothills by terrace cultivation. Despite their history of headhunting, there is no record of hostility between the tribes and plainsmen during the temporary migration to the plains due to famine hardships.

From the repeated experience of famines, the Mizos also learnt to differentiate that in reality, there were two varieties of famines that occurred- Thingtam and Mautam. The former occurred due to the flowering of one variety of bamboo plants which the Mizos called *Thing* and the other the *Mau*. The former occurred at about a thirty year cycle and was less severe in its impact and vice versa. Moreover, *Thingtam* was more localized in its impact occurring mainly in the areas west of Langkaih river from where it generally spread to the rest of the area over a course of a year. *Mautam* on the other hand affected the areas east of Tuirini river before actually hitting the rest of region^[4]. *Mautam* produced a larger number of rats and lasted longer while *Thingtam* was of shorter duration. It was also noticed that the *Thingtam* famine did not affect the Lakher tribes of the hills. The reason perhaps was the *Thing* variety of bamboo were not found in that area.

(4) D.Rokhuma, *op.cit*, p.97.

The tribal elders also confirmed that the arrival of Mautam was always preceded by the swarming of an insect called Thangang (brown locusts) ^[5]. Such swarming was taken by the Mizos as a sure sign of an imminent famine. The swarming generally start at dusk and continue till late night slowly moving towards the high mountains. The teeming millions of swarms would create a strong sound similar to the sounds of monsoon cloud. Eyewitnesses recorded that the insect was the size of a grain of a corn, dark brown in color and spotted. The trees of the entire hills would be full of these insects. The zoologists believe that the flowering of the bamboo plants led to the migration of these insects into the region. The famine also brings other hardships as it was inevitably followed by Dysentery and Cholera causing further havoc of the people. This was because of lack of proper human food. The people would eat just about anything to satisfy the hunger during the famines. The havoc caused by each of these famines is therefore a milestone in the oral history of the tribals and the survivors of these calamity use them as a calendar mark.

Thus if an elder Mizo was asked to track down the memory lane he would say "before or after that great famine" ^[6]. The impact of the famine on the demographic structure of the tribe was such that if a youth survived a *Mautam*, the tribals would be sure that he would live long, to see another seeding of a different variety of bamboo called *rangia* which does not attract rats. But the tribals confirmed that there were very few who saw two *mautam* famine.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Ibid.

Famine under the British administration:

When the British entered the Mizo hills, (part of the Indo-Burmese range of hills, then known as lushai hills), they witnessed an amazing ecological phenomenon: a severe famine apparently caused by the rats. The Mizo hills are covered extensively by various species of bamboo, which periodically rot, flower and seed. The bamboo seeds appeared to be a delicious food item for jungle rats, which emerged in massive numbers to devour them, and the consumption of bamboo seeds seemed to produce a vast increase in the rodent population. Once the millions of rats had exhausted the bamboo seed, they began to attack the standing crops in the fields. As they devoured the grains, the resulting scarcity of food led to massive hardship, starvation, and deaths.

In the famine of 1881, which was the first to happen under the British rule, about 15,000 people perished.^[7] In 1912, another famine resulting from the same circumstances took place, affecting a region covering the Mizo hills, Chin hills, Chittagong hills and the Chin hills falling under the Burmese jurisdiction.

The government of Burma organized a great battle against the rodent and destroyed scores of thousands of them.^[8] In the Mizo hills, on the initiative of the administration, the tribals set and reset traps in their fields. Individual farmers could trap as many as 500 rats in a single night, and were often seen with basketfuls of dead or flattened rats on their backs, which they had taken out of their long log-traps early in the morning.^[9]

(7). Suhas Chatterjee, *Mizo Chiefs and Chieftdom*, (New Delhi, 1995), p. 13

(8) *Report for 1912 of the Baptist Mission Society Mission in the South Lushai Hills*, Assam.

(9) *Ibid.*

The Mizos ate rats. Trapped rats would be fried over the fire and then used as food. But the abundant supply of rats at these times would have diminished their value.^[10] Moreover, a diet of rats would hardly make up the loss of rice, which was their staple food. Some of the tribals, who had rice left from the last harvest, struggled to protect it from the invading rats. The unfortunate remainder, who constituted the majority, would search the forest for roots, jungle yams, and other wild produce.^[11] Wild sago palm was collected from the forests, dried, pounded and its pith sifted, the powder being made into a kind of dumpling that was wrapped in a leaf and boiled. The resulting food for the family was very sticky, insipid mass, full of gritty particles. Others ate a kind of yam found in the jungle.^[12] The plant itself was a creeper. The upper part of the root was inedible, but lower down, it changed into a long tuber rich in starch and somewhat resembling a potato in taste. The root was vertical, and often very long, so to get out of the tuber, the tribals frequently had to dig to a great depth in a very hard soil.

Tragic instances were related of tribals searching for these wild produce to satisfy their hunger.^[13] It was reported that the entire forest in many parts of the country was honey combed with yam pits - most of them four to ten feet deep and large enough to admit the body of a man.

Impact of famines:

The colonial administrators found it interesting that the tribals could correctly predict the next famine from indications in their surroundings.

This was on the basis of their past experience. The Mizos had for ages gone through the ravages of the bamboo flowering, and dreaded its impact on their lives. They had observed that there were two distinct varieties of bamboos in their regions, which they named as

This was on the basis of their past experience. The Mizos had for ages gone through the ravages of the bamboo flowering, and dreaded its impact on their lives. They had observed that there were two distinct varieties of bamboos in their regions, which they named as *Mau* and *Thing*.^[14] The colonial botanists found that the Mau variety was known to European botanists as *Melocanna bambu soidef* and the *Thing* as *Bambusa Tulda*. Both these varieties had periodic reproductive blooming; in other words, they rotted, flowered, and set their seeds every thirty to fifty years. It was during these times that the devastation described by the Mizos as *Tom* occurred. With the aid of the Mizo elders, the colonial administrators constructed a record of the past famines, and on that basis could predict the approximate years of the impending series of famines. For example,

Mautam 1862	Thingtam 1929	Mautam 2007
Thingtam 1881	Mautam 1956	
Mautam 1911	Thingtam 1977	

On the basis of this calculation, the administrators had made advance preparation for the impending 1929-30 famine. Indeed, by 1925, the signs of bamboo flowering were already visible. This time the administrators had an active ally in combating the natural calamity - the Missionaries.

(14) Lalbiakthanga, "The Mizos: A Study in Racial Personality", New Delhi, 1978

The Baptist Mission Society was one of the first groups of Missionaries to arrive in the Mizo hills. They had witnessed the ravages of the 1881 famine, and had been active in reducing the suffering of the people in the famine of 1912. This time they began preparation to counter the natural disaster that the Mizos were about to experience.

Rev.J.H.Lorrain of the Baptist Mission post at lungleh wrote to the Superintendent of Lushai hills,

"I am taking this liberty of writing to you regarding the expected thingtam famine and I have no connection with the government I trust the expression of my own opinion as to the means which might be employed successfully to counteract the effect of such a visitation will not be unwelcome to one like yourself who has the welfare of the lushai people so much at heart."^[15]

Lorrain then went to suggest measures to counter the catastrophe. These were

- 1) ordering the tribals to save a little grain in rat-proof baskets, and
- 2) application of liverpool virus to spread a deadly epidemic amongst the rodents, which could destroy them totally.

Though, the government appreciated the initiatives of the missionaries, but disagreed for some crucial reasons:

- 1) The tribals themselves produced a bare subsistence.^[16] Most of them did not have a full year's rice, hence to enforce compulsory saving might create more hardship for them and even promote reactions.

(15). Rev.Lorraine to the Superintendent of Lushai Hills 17 January 1925.

(16). J.Needham, Sub Divisional Officer, Lunglei, to the Supt. of Lushai Hills Dt.5.2.1925.

2) No virus had been found to be effective in controlling rat population in other parts of the country. Moreover, the most deadly and rapid spreading virus, the plague bacillus, had had little effect on the rat population of north and western India during the past 28 years.^[17]

This rendered the application of liver-pool virus out of question. The superintendent suggested the use of rat-traps and a poison (Barium Carbonate) instead. The later would be most effective as well as easy to apply. But the most important task was to reduce the food supply available to the rats: thus the bamboo forest were to be burnt, and standing crops in the fields were to be protected.

Native Knowledge and Western Science:

The discovery of the rat famine related to bamboo reproduction by the British was through tribal knowledge of the phenomenon. Although the European Christian Missionaries who had actually witnessed the unfolding of the events, were perplexed. It was from the tribal elders that they understood the phenomenon and accordingly informed the colonial authorities. The first two famines (*Thingtam* in 1861 and *Mautam* in 1881) were not directly witnessed by the British as they were still fighting a battle of conquest against the British and had not gained any foothold inside the hills. Therefore the idea they formed were from Christian missionaries who were already inside the Mizo habitat and the tribal victims of the famine who came down to seek refuge.

(17) Report of Col.Hodgson, Director of Pasteur Institute, to the Supt. Lushai Hills,19.3.1925.

A look at the structure of knowledge developed by the western science on the phenomenon show that the tribal knowledge was no different from it.

Famines are simply food shortage. The shortage could be due to natural or artificial causes^[18]. Among the natural causes, shortage caused by infestation of vermins have been listed as one^[19]. But such famines were 'minor and localized'. Rats have been also listed as one of the vermins who through depredation cause food shortage. Rats eat almost anything that humans eat. Perhaps the most serious damage is to the seeds of grain both before and after harvesting. Grain stored on farms is often not only eaten by rats but also rendered unsuitable for human consumption by being mixed with rat dropping. With population explosion among the rats the destruction of food stuff also increases. Therefore as far as food stuff of human beings are concerned the rats have been identified as a major destroyer^[20].

Bamboos are arborescent grasses belonging to the family of *Poaceae* and are grouped under the subfamily *Bambusoideae*^[21]. Out of the 110 general and 1110-1140 species of bamboos in the world, India according to the latest reports accounts for 18 general and 128 species of bamboos. North-East India has extensive bamboo vegetation covering an area of 3.05 million ha.

(18)'Famines' in International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, David, L.Sills (eds), Vol.5, MacMillan Co. and Free Press, New York, 1968, pp.322-327.

(19) Ibid.

(20) The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.23, E.B.Inc, Chicago, pp.410-412,1994.

(21) K.K.Seethalakshmi and M.S.Mukesh Kumar, *Bamboos of India: A compendium*, Kerala Forest Research Institute and International Network for Bamboo and Rattan, pp. 1-8.

Out of this, the state of Mizoram accounts for highest forest cover with bamboos. It has 9 general and 20 species. The reproductive cycle of the Bamboos also vary from species. Based on the flowering cycle they are classified into three type ^[22]

- 1) Annual or continuous flowering (species which flower every year and do not die).
- 2) Gregarious or periodic flowering when the whole clump flower in an extensive area and dies after seed setting. The flowering may continue for two or three years in an area or in the same clump.
- 3) Sporadic or irregular flowering which occurs in isolated clumps in one or to two in an area or in parts of one clump. Thus flowering periodicity of bamboos varies from three to one hundred and twenty years.

One of the most unusual flowering phenomena occurs in many bamboos. All plants of a species flower at about the same time at lengthy intervals as mentioned above. During flowering, individual aerial stems sometimes live for much less time than their species cycles and flower only at the end of the cycle when an inborn signal initiates the formation of *inflorescences*. Fruit development in a few species has also been reported. The size and shape of bamboo fruits vary according to the species. The morphology of fruit was a dependable character for identification of bamboos. Research have furnished an account of bamboo fruits belonging to 17 general and 22 species.

(22) Ibid.

Although bamboo fruit are generally known as *caryopsis*, based on morphology, researchers classified them into three types:

1. *Caryopsis*: The *pericarp* as membranous, thin, soft and adheres to the seed coat. The fruit has an apparent ventral suture which is nearly as long as the whole fruit. An articulate navel is located at the fruit base.

2. *Glans*: have hard, smooth, *crustaceous pericarp*, separated from the seed coat. The fruit has no ventral suture and navel.

3. *Bacca*: has thick fleshy *pericarp* separated from the seed coat. It indicated that the morphology of starch grains can be used as a distinguishing character for identification.

The gregarious flowering of bamboo may over saturate the food supply and assure bamboo production. This phenomenon however seriously affects the normal balance of nature. Animals dependent on bamboo vegetative growth such as the Panda, loses a favored food source entirely after a flowering episode²³¹. A glut of bamboo fruit may also incite an explosion of population of rodents that eat the fruits. For example the flowering of *Muli* or *terak* bamboo (*melocanna bambusoides*) in its native habitat around the bay of Bengal in cycles of mostly 30-35 years lead to disaster. The accumulation of avocado sized fruits promotes a rapid increase in rodent population which lead to the loss of human food supplies and epidemic of rodent carried disease .

(23) As in Note 12, Vol.1, p.744.

(24) Ibid.

A research at the Dehradun institute of forest Research on the connection between bamboo fruit contained.

1. Starch (on zero moisture basis)	50.240 %
2. Protein	11.556%
3. Fat	0.231%
4. Ash	3.030 %
5. Moisture	9.400 %
6. Others	26.493 %

Shillong based zoologist A K Ghose reported ^[25] that it has high protein of nearly 12 percent and very high starch, content of about 50 percent besides vitamin A which helps augment the fertility of rodents ^[26]. It is also conjectured that some hormonal change in the rats due to the excessive protein that the bamboo fruit contained enabling the female rats to produce a litter much earlier in age than in normal circumstances. Even in normal circumstances however the rats are prolific breeders ^[27]. Although larger types reproduce once a year others produce several litters during a single season. Some have only one to two young at a time while others have large numbers. Most rodents are polygamous and mate for the duration of a single breeding season and few like beavers have permanent mates. The rather high of breeding is intensified by the fact that in many of the smaller rodent sexual maturity is reached at an early age, normally earlier in the females than in the males.

(25) D.Rokhuma, op.cit, pp. 131 -132.

(26) Reported in The Telegraph, Calcutta, July 6, 2001.

(27) As in note 12.

The females bred when less than a year old. The house mouse reproduce through out the year with an average of 5.5 litters and 31 young per female per year in building houses and 10.2 and 57 young per year on farms in the United States. Wild Norway rats are able to breed at three to four months and can produce up to seven litters a year containing 6 to 22 young. Therefore the reports that rodents produce prolifically after consuming the bamboo fruits were not untrue. The tribal elders from ancient times had understood the connection between the increase in rat population and the consumption of bamboo fruits and the resultant famines, which have been subsequently confirmed by the findings of modern science.

Bamboo flowers: The cause of famine

By 1925, the bamboos had started to flower, as a result, the rats of jungle increase enormously. People who were already scared took all possible measures to destroy the jungle rats. In December 1924, 45,000 to 50,000 rats were killed in Aizwal sub division alone.^[28]

To fight the menace, the people, the administrative machinery and non-governmental agencies like the Church joined hand. The famine was caused by the enormously increased number of jungle rats, which almost finished the standing crops of the fields. Rats increase due to the consumption of the bamboo seeds was understood, but why the rats multiply in numbers after having the seed was unsolved problem.

(28) N.E.Parry, Supt.of Lushai Hills to the Commissioner, Surma Valley, Silchar Dt. 19.1.1925.

Alexander Mackenzie wrote in 1884,

'the famine arose according to the concurrent testimony of all persons concerned, from the depredation of rats. In the previous season bamboos had seeded, the supply of food thus provided caused an immense increase in multiplication of rats'.^[29]

There was corroboration of this from Missionary witnesses, and like others, they were also perplexed by the possible connections between the bamboo seed and the multiplication of rats. The Baptist Mission report stated:

"The periodical flowering, seeding and dying down of certain species of bamboo all over the hills was followed last autumn by an enormous increase in the number of jungle rats.... the connection between the flowering of bamboos and invasion of rats is a disputed point, but the theory which seems to be most satisfactory is that the bamboo fruits has the property of making the rats which eat it, extraordinarily prolific. Whatever may have been the cause directly, the bamboos had seeded and the rats began to increase and swarm everywhere."^[30]

A letter to the administration was written by, Rev.Lorrain,

"It appeared that the rats began to get more than extraordinarily troublesome years before the simultaneous seeding of the raw - thing bamboos but as soon as the seeding was over, they increase to such an extent that no human power could save the crops from their degradation."^[31]

(29) Alexander Mackenzie, "The North East Frontier of India", New Delhi, 1994, Pp.325-6.

(30) Report for 1912.

(31).Lorraine, 1925

The bamboo seeds caused the multiplication of rat's number, was a fact known to people, but still the problem remained the same, unsolved. Few felt that perhaps the seeds had some properties that made the rats extraordinarily prolific in terms of reproduction.^[32] Perhaps there was some hormonal change in the rats due to excessive protein that the bamboo seed contained, enabling the female rat to produce a litter much earlier in age than in normal circumstances.^[33] Others brushed aside this theory, saying that whenever there is an increase in the supply of food, it is normal to find an increase in the rat population.^[34] Perhaps rats were migrating from deficit areas to areas of abundance. The third theory was that it was only a visible increase, not a real one. Generally the rats lived in their holes, but with the bamboo flowering they came above ground to eat the delicacy and became more visible to the people. This would be misconstrued by the people as an increase in the number of rats, as they were not used to seeing so many at a time. The theory that gained most credence was the first one.

(32). Report for 1912

(33). Dr.S.Trivedi, Dept.of Forests, Govt of Arunachal Pradesh and Prof.H.Y.Mihanram, Department of Botany, Delhi University have conducted research on the phenomenon.

(34). Hodgson, 1925

Although the people, the administration and the Missionaries were firm in their belief of this theory, the administration made no attempt to establish its scientific basis. They concentrated on relief and rehabilitation.

Ritual, Myths and Legend Formation:

The famine, which is a significant phenomenon, had a major impact on the domain of Mizo culture. Though the Mizos had developed enough knowledge about the calamity, they were hopelessly ill-equipped to counter such natural disaster. The only thing they could do was escape to safer places to escape the hardship. Their knowledge was empirical and not scientific hence they developed hardly any technology to escape the turmoil. Since it was severe in its impact and was natural in character they considered it a curse of Gods above. Hence they took to religion to evade the punishment. There were particular rites to ward off the curse.^[35] Every year in the month of *Chhippa* (corresponding to June) they performed a ceremony called *Chakalai*, to drive out the evil spirit that caused the famine. The day of the ceremony was fixed by the chief himself. At noon on the fixed day the village crier would send the message that *Chakalai* would be performed that night. When the night fell, each householder threw out all the half-burnt firebrands from his house, shouting *Chakasila, chapho sila, hiakha thlong la, thlatla tlongla* which meant go away famine to Haka or Thlatla. On this night the women would not weave. At dawn rice was cooked with very little water and every one ate as much rice as he could and the whole day was *aoh* for the entire village.

(35) N.E. Parry, *The Lakhers*, Calcutta, 1931.

Practically all division of the Lushai-Kuki family believe in a spirit called *Pathian* which is supposed to be the creator of everything and is a beneficial being but however has little concern with men. ^[36] Far more important to the average man are the numerous *Huai* or demons who inhabit every stream, mountain and forest and to whom every illness and misfortune is attributed. The village *puithiam* (sorcerer) is supposed to know which demon causes which kind of trouble and what kind of ritual and sacrifice will appease him. The entire life of Lushais (Mizo) is spent in propitiating these spirits. The famine was believed to be caused by one such spirits. The Mizos are not really nature worshippers; they did not worship sun or moon or any of the forces of nature. They appease spirits or *huais* who are uniformly bad as they only bring calamity and suffering to men. During the epidemics that follow the famines, the Mizos feel that bad spirits had possessed the village. The sick were abandoned and people scatter, some families taking up their abode in the *jhum* huts, other in the jungles. The neighboring village close their gates to all coming from the infected neighborhood and to terrify the *huai*, who was supposed to be responsible for the epidemic, a gateway was built across the road leading to the stricken villages, and on the sides an arch of rude figures of armed men made of straw with wooden spears are placed. A dog was also sacrificed. The Hindu Mizo sub-tribes in Tripura and Hailakandi district of Assam like the *Riangs* perform an elaborate Hindu ritual in front of a constructed idol of famine deity. During the famines, the other Mizo tribes ceaselessly pray to *pathian* the savior.

(36) J.Shakespear, The Lushai-Kuki Clans, London, 1921, Pp.62-79.

As far as the more practical part of the anti-famine campaign was concerned, the tribes began to make huge baskets with covers to store the food grains to protect them from the invading rat population. They also begin to cut the bamboo to construct new houses, as after the flowering, the plants would die and there would be a scarcity of bamboo stick for such construction.

The famine also gave rise to myths and rumours. For example, the explosion in the rodent population after eating the bamboo flower was explained by the villagers by saying that during *mautam* even vegetables like brinjal and insects like caterpillars turn into huge rats. ^[37] It was also believed that if bamboo fruits were fed to cows, their milk production increased. They believed, even cats and other domestic animals grew huge in size and reproduced more off-springs than they normally did. ^[38] It was also reported that rats grew as big as piglets during *mautam* and they were born of mother earth rather than rat-mothers. ^[39]

Colonial Aid And Famine:

The Mizo tribals had experienced many such famines, and were used to the hardships, starvation and death that accompany the phenomenon. What they were not used to was being assisted in such times of crisis: this was the difference that the British made to the tribals.

(37) D.Rokhuma, op.cit., Pp.137-138.

(38) Ibid.

(39) Ibid.

Their first taste of British aid was when they began to migrate towards the plains. The tribals would not normally descend to the plains except for raiding purposes or trading, but the hardship due to scarcity of food pushed them down to the plains. In the first batch, about eighty families from the village Kalgom, followed by the eastern Chiefs and then the western Chiefs, migrated to the Dhaleshwari river valley via Jhalnacherra.^[40] This caused alarm among the tea labourers of the plains, as they feared the tribals, but the administration apprised them of the situation and calmed them. The distressed tribals were desperately looking for food and livelihood till the famine subsided. They were willing to sell their labour and trade forest products which they had brought along. The administration facilitated their entrepreneurship by temporarily abolishing the duty charged on such products at forest toll stations. They were offered employment in clearing the jungle and felling of trees - jobs to which they were well suited. Within the hills, the administration realised the importance of having a communication network for taking relief to the tribals. So they employed the tribal manpower to construct roads and railways. The missionaries also employed them to construct houses, clear jungle, prepare gardens, etc.

But the problem of food supply still remained. About 18,000 *maunds* of rice and 2,000 *maunds* of paddy was exported to the interiors of Mizo hills in 1881-82 alone.^[41] During that crisis the total expenditure in famine relief stood at Rs.2,240. Of this 1,100 was used for the purchase of paddy and rice, and Rs.1040 for hire of boats to transport the supply.

(40) Mackenzie, 1884.

(41) Ibid

The missionaries and the administration also supplied cooked food to the hungry. Private traders were encouraged to send rice up to the main markets of Tipaimukh on the east and Changsil on the west.^[42]

They were asked to open their storehouses of rice and paddy, and they were also provided with Frontier Police protection against possible attack from the tribals. The Government itself opened two storehouses at Tipaimukh and Guturmukh; these were not to compete with the private traders, but to act as a reserve. In addition, government officials visited the affected areas. In 1881 Rai Han Charan Bahadur, the Special Extra Assistant Commissioner, accompanied by Mr. Place, Sub-divisional Officer of Hailakandi, visited the frontier areas. Bengalee doctors from Silchar and Chittagong were impressed to treat the sick. In 1911-12, W.N.Kennedy of the Lushai hills borrowed a sum of Rs.80,000 from the British Government to help the Mautam famine victims.^[43]

The administration also took initiatives to reduce the spread of the famine. Since invasion of rats was the main cause of the famine two methods were applied to combat their attack. One was to destroy the rats in large numbers. The Government provided the people with rat traps, designed specially on the French model and further developed by Dr.Chitre. They also used log traps around the paddy field, and rewards were announced for killing rats. In one night alone farmers trapped about 500 rats in one trap by setting and resetting it. But the destruction of rats in such massive numbers did not seem to make any impact on the exploding rat population.

(42.) Ibid.

(43). Vumson, *Zo History*, Aizwal, New Delhi, p. 139

The other initiative was to encourage the people to save: this came mainly from the missionaries. People made large rice bins with clappers attached to the bed by a string. During the night some member of the family who was awake would occasionally pull the string to flap the clapper and make a sound to scare the rats.

It worked for a time, but soon the hungry rats got used to the sound and were not afraid any more. Nor did other saving devices work for long, as the tribal economy was basically a subsistence economy, and they hardly had any surplus to save, except for the Chief and his patrons. The Government did not want to antagonize the tribals by making it compulsory to save, but it arranged to see that those who had surplus food shared with those less fortunate. Tribals were employed to descend to Demagiri and bring back sacks of rice to the hills. Thus the combined efforts of the colonial administration and the Church were able to relieve the distress of the famine affected people to a considerable extent. Significantly, this effected a metamorphosis of the image of the Raj in the minds of the tribals. The British first came into contact with the tribals of Mizo hills in 1826, when the later raided the Sylhet plains and perpetrated head hunting and kidnapping. After the discovery of tea in Assam, there was a rush to acquire foot hill lands for starting tea gardens in the Cachar area as well. This threatened the tribals, who feared that soon the Europeans would invade the hills and deprive them of their home land. Since then, they had led a valiant fight against the white men, resisting every advance of the British towards their hills. In fact, they would often attack the plains, loot settlements, kidnap people, and practice head hunting on the British subjects. This was to register their protest and to scare the Europeans from invading the hills. The white skinned Europeans were objects of hatred

for the Mizos. They were also amazed at the physical look of these new comers. The Europeans were also ridiculed for their white skins, as 'half-cooked' people.^[44]

But the same Europeans came across as kind and helpful people during the successive famine related hardships, as Church records testify :

In many ways we have been able to alleviate the want and distress around us and gratitude of the poor people has been most pleasing to witness. Scores of men and women who had no food to eat, have been enabled to go down to Demagiri to a fresh supply of food by the loan of a few pounds of rice apiece. Many others have been kept from want by being employed in building, road making , jungle cutting, gardening, and other works about the compound. While not a few who have been unable to work have been assisted with gifts of rice. It has been a peculiar privilege to be living in the Lushai hills this year and thus be able to help the people in their hour of need. They have always looked upon us as their friends and at such times,² as this, the poor especially find our presence a source of comfort and strength for they feel that they come to us in their extremity and be sure of a helping hand.^[45]

The same was true of the administration too. The same report further stated,

Whatever feelings of resentment may have lingered in the hearts of some of these hill people against those who have occupied their country in order to prevent a repetition of their headhunting raids upon the peaceful inhabitants of the plains, this famine must have surely dispelled it. For there are hundreds who would have starved to death this year, but for the kindly help rendered by the government in bringing up thousands of sacks of rice to supply their need.^[46]

This report stated the situation after the second famine under the British rule. Since then, three more famines have stalked the hills of Mizoram. The relief measures provided by the Raj, had a profound effect on the overall image of the Raj in the minds of people, who

(44). Ibid. p. 116

(45). Report for 1912.

(46) Ibid.

began to look up to the Raj, as a kind and merciful system manned by white skinned Europeans. The administration was paternalistic, and the White men were now addressed as Saab-Pa (White Father), Mirang Bawipa, Mikang Topa, or Mirang Topa, or Mirang Lalpa, meaning white master , nice white people, or even the white lord. One British officer, Lewin was so popular among the Mizos that, he was known to the villagers as Thangliana- a Mizo name. While the administration attended to the requirements of the people, and their needs, the administrators merged totally with the people, learning their languages and within a short time participating in their festivals, rituals and even their routine social life.

The Famine of 1959

As anticipated, in October 1958, the Mizo District Council predicted the imminence of famine on the basis of Mizo calendar and cycle, following the flowering of bamboos and passed a resolution to take precautionary measures. The tradition worked this way. "Reverting to the chronological sequences, the next event of importance was the Mautam in 1959, and the consequential famine in the following year". The Mizos have for ages dreaded the flowering of Bamboos. The flowering of bamboos culminated in the unprecedented increase in the rat population in the country side causing havoc to the standing crops leading ultimately to famine. According to their prediction based on the chronological records of the periodicity of the occurrence of famine, the Mizos had a famine in 1959, the first in post independent India. Sensing the impending doom, the Mizo District Council had resolved on 29th October, 1958,

"With the flowering of the Bamboos in the Mizo District, the rat population has phenomenally increased and it is feared that in the next year the whole

district would be affected. As a precautionary measure against the imminence of famine, following the flowering of bamboos, the District Council feels that the Government be moved to sanction to the Mizo District Council a sum of Rs.Fifteen lakhs, to be expended on a test relief measure for the whole of Mizo district including the Pawi-Lakher region..."⁽⁴⁷⁾

The Assam Government of which Mizoram was then a district, headed by Chief Minister Bimola Prasad Chaliha rejected the resolution on the ground that such anticipation was not scientific; famines could not be predicted. It even ridiculed the connection between bamboo flowering, increase in rodents and the consequent famine as tribal beliefs. Such rejection not only betrayed the total lack of understanding of the society and environments of one of its constituent district on the part of the Government of Assam, it also reflected the basic lack of empathy with its tribal population. This is significant considering the fact that, at the withdrawal of the British from India, the Mizos were apprehensive about merging with India fearing that a tiny tribal group like the Mizos would be thoroughly marginalised and ignored in the giant structure of Indian nation. After a acrimonious political process, the Mizos had agreed to merge with India on the hope that their oppressive institutions of chieftainship would be abolished in an egalitarian India and that they would be granted maximum autonomy.

True to the anticipation of the Mizos, the Mautam (famine) stuck Mizo hills district in 1959. The Assam Government was taken totally by surprise at the rapidity of the events and the disaster that a single bamboo flowering phenomenon could effect.

(47) V.Venkata Rao,et.al. *"Century of Government and Politics in North East India :Mizoram"*, Vol-3, New Delhi, 1991, Pp.235.

The Mizos were dying in large number due to starvation. When the Government woke up to the situation, it found it had hardly any roads connecting the Mizo district to send relief materials. In fact the only highway that linked Mizoram to Silchar was actually can be used by jeeps and truck loads of food could not even be sent to the starving tribals. Earlier, a famine of considerable magnitude had taken place in 1911-12. People saw the flowering of the bamboos all along the hill sides and realized its significance. So, as a precaution, extra strong storage bins for food stuffs were arranged and every one thought that the serious famine could be avoided. But, as the paddy started ripening in the "*jhums*", rats appeared in the fields overnight. The havoc created by the rats was terrible and very little of the grain was harvested. To sustain themselves, many Mizos had to collect edible roots and leaves from the jungles. Others moved out to far away places. Considerable numbers were said to have died of starvation. Children were always the last to suffer and parents often collapsed in their efforts to obtain food for their little ones. Many welfare organizations tried their best to help the starving villagers in the remote corners by head-loads. There were no roads to facilitate supplies to the remote villages. There were no organized porters, animal transport or mule tracks to carry the air dropped food supplies.

In order to placate Pu Laldenga, who had been propagating "Mizoram for Mizos", the Government of Assam sought his help in the famine relief supply measures in 1959. This increased the prestige of Pu Laldenga. Mizo Youth were voluntarily involved in relief works in town and the remote villages. The Mizo villagers only saw the Mizo National Famine Front Volunteers delivering food stuffs in their villages and gave all the credit to Laldenga and his band of volunteers. Being in close contact with the MNFF volunteers, the poor villagers were bound to believe the words of the MNFF and take it as gospel truths

that the Assam Government had neglected the Mizos and had not taken any remedial measures before and during the famine period. Somehow the famine months came to a close.

The MNFF under the leadership of Pu Laldenga, Pu Lalnunmawia, Pu Sainghaka and Pu Vanlalhruaia (known as Harry to his friends) got the praise and all the credit for the supply of food stuffs to the remote villages. The bulk of the relief funds were believed to have been spent by way of subsidy on transport of grain, purchase of vehicles and petrol and construction of godowns for storage of rice. Whatever little food stuffs which reached the remote villages were the ones which had been carried by people as head loads. In the hilly terrain, it is difficult to carry more than 25 Kgs and that too to a maximum distance of 15 miles a day. Due to defective packing unsuitable for air dropping , led to wastage. Due to bad weather, the Air Force had to unload rice meant for certain southern villages , in dropping zones of areas having clear weather and thus some villagers got sufficient or even excess quantity of rice when some did not get any rice at all.

In the absence of proper supply of food grains from Silchar, people in the interior villages got the wrong impression that the people of the plains were intentionally holding back the rice bags in Silchar. The MNFF aired it as an economic blockade staged by the Assam Government.

The Mizo Union blamed the administrators in Assam, while the MNFF blamed the Mizo Union for not taking adequate precautions when, as the bamboos started flowering, their educated leaders were warned in time about the impending "*Mautam*". The Mizo District Council started sending information about starvation deaths which the

administrators took as another method of maligning the Congress Ministry in Assam and treated the information as false and cheap propaganda.

In 1959, prior to converting the Mizo Cultural Society into "Mizo National Famine Front", Laldenga had staged a demonstration and conducted a procession when Chief Minister of Assam, and the Tribal Affairs Minister Capt. Williamson Sangma visited Aizwal. The MNFF demanded food for the Mizo Hills District which led to the state government seeking the help of MNFF in distributing food supplied to remote villages, brought by vehicles and air dropped by the Air Force planes.

The initial indifference of the Assam Government to the distress of the Mizos and the inordinate delay in initiating relief measures caused serious discontentment among the Mizos. The fact that the Mizo Union, an associate of the ruling Congress in Assam, was at the helm of the affairs in the Mizo Hills District, gave Pu Laldenga and his MNFF an additional handle to direct their propaganda campaign against the Mizo Union. The part played by the Chaliha Ministry and by the District Council was purposely hidden by the MNFF, and they took all the credit for saving the lives of the Mizo villagers.

Cases of starvation deaths officially reported by the Mizo Hills District Council were denied by the Assam Government as grossly exaggerated and gradually the relationship between the Government and the Mizo Council controlled by the Mizo Union became strained. The Mizo Union leaders, who were staunch supporters of the Assam Government, gradually drifted away and became more and more critical of the Chaliha Ministry. Discontentment grew in the minds of the Mizo people. The District Council was equally unhappy, as it was felt that the Assam Government did not attach importance to the Council, to the extent expected.

The first shock was experienced by the Mizo District Council authorities, when questions were raised as to whether the Mizo District Council was entitled to use "service stamps"; whether its members were entitled to use Inspection Bungalows etc. Such simple issues were allowed to remain undecided for long. The Government of Assam had been neglecting the development of the district, or providing financial support.

The resolution of the Mizo District Council asked the Government of Assam to take precautionary measures and sanction Rs. 1,50,000/- as relief money to be spent on the Mizo districts including the Pawi-Lakher region to ensure counter-steps against the imminent famine. But contrary to the resolution of the District council, the Assam Government did not heed to the request of the District Council, rather criticized the basis of prediction of the occurrence of famine ^[48]. True to the prediction of the District council, the bamboo flowering in 1959 resulted in an unprecedented growth of rats eating up all the standing crops, grains, fruits and anything that was edible to them leading to a massive food shortage. The Government of Assam was caught unawares. Also the arrival of the relief materials were slow and inadequate due to the lack of awareness of the severity of the famine by the Government. Moreover the non-development of road communications also hampered the relief measures.

(48) Vumson, Zo History, Aizwal, not dated.

The Riang and Chakmas were eating wild *arami*, a kind of grass and there were reports of starvation death and flight of people before the relief arrived. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ The indifference and the callousness of the Government of Assam alienated the Mizos.^[50]

When the relief was found to be slow in coming , the District Council charged the government with incapability. Vanlalbiaka, a member of the District Council was quoted as saying,

"If we continue to be neglected ...the peoples feeling will be for secession from Assam." ^[51]

He recalled that even the British had come with all-out help to the Mizos when such famines occurred during the colonial period . The Assam Government on the other hand charged the District Council which was dominated by the Mizo Union with non-cooperation, ^[52] which was not quite correct. When Captain Williamson Sangma, the Minister for Tribal Area Development visited Aizwal , a demonstration was organized to pressurize the Assam Government to declare Mizoram as a famine affected area. The Government of Assam sanctioned a sum of Rs. 190 lakhs for a famine affected population of 332390. The break up of money used was as follows : ⁽⁵³⁾

Rs: 04.90 lakhs - Gratuitous Relief.

Rs: 28.00 lakhs - Relief Work.

(49) Ibid

(50) Ibid

(51) V.Venkata Rao, op.cit, p.237..

(52) Ibid.

(53) Ibid.

Rs: 66.00 lakhs - Subsidy on transport of grains.

Rs: 13.00 lakhs - Purchase of vehicles.

Rs:03.00 lakhs - Cost of petrol etc.

Rs: 00.87 lakh - Accommodation to IAF and IAC personnel.

Rs: 00.62 lakh - Construction of rice go-downs.

To help supplement the government's weak relief measures, the Mizo cultural society formed a new group called the Mizo National Famine Front to render voluntary services to the people most affected by the famine. They helped the villagers by making sure they received their share of Government aid. Laldenga, a clerk in the district council office, did tremendous work to mitigate the disaster. In doing so the Mizo National Famine Front had earned the goodwill of the people and the villages even recognized them as leaders of the Mizo people.

The initial bottlenecks and red-tapism regarding relief measures very belatedly taken up by the Assam Government caused serious discontentment among the people. Cases of starvation deaths officially reported by the District Council were denied by the Assam Government. After the tragedy, there was acrimonious debate in the district council about the indifference and callousness of the Assam Government, while the starving Mizos were dying. As the sense of alienation and marginalization of the Mizo people was complete, ideas of separatism and secessionism had begun to emerge. More so as such apathy and rejection from "a people (Indians) with whom we have nothing in common" was already at the time of the merger.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter-IV

Political Movement for Merger

The British decision to withdraw from India came as a bolt from the blue for the Mizos. They were complacent under the British rule and did not think of an independent existence outside the British authority. With the imminence of the transfer of power, the Mizos had to promptly decide their future in order to safeguard their interest. For this they needed a political platform. Moreover, they had another problem. The oppressive institution of chieftainship, which the commoner had to get rid off. In fact the whole society was polarized into two : The vast majority of commoners and the minority of chiefs who ruled over the former.

The development was the result of a long evolution of a political system, during which the Sailo chiefs emerged as the most prestigious clan among the Mizos ⁽¹⁾. It was these Sailo chiefs whose rule in course of time became autocratic and oppressive. Each chief ruled his own territory. The Chief used to take the best plot of land and the next best was taken by the *Ramhuals*. The Chiefs allowed the people to cultivate their land, and in return, took tributes in kind (*Fathang*) which consisted of six kerosene tins of paddy and all animals killed in the hunt called *Sachiah*. He was entitled to a share of a *Mithun* (wild Bison). The chiefs could expel anybody from the village or his territory. Moreover, he was entitled to the land in the best location ⁽²⁾. The people had to pool their labor to construct the chiefs house and cultivate his land occasionally.

(1) *The Mizo's in the context of state formation* in Surajit Sinha (ed) *Tribal Politics and State System in Eastern and North-Eastern India*, Calcutta, 1989.

(2) Vumson , op.cit, pp.244, and also S.Chatterjee.

The chief would also summon the people to work for his favourite councillors (*Upas*). This left the commoners with no time for their own work. Often there were forceful confiscation of the commoner's property too. The Sailo Chiefs were so dominant that all the British officers who came in contact with the Mizos suggested the policy of reconciliation with the chiefs.⁽³⁾ They administered a district through the chiefs whom they transferred even greater powers than what they enjoyed traditionally.⁽⁴⁾ British officers held conference with the chief's council with 22 elected chiefs. The council was taken to be the representative of the people, thus polarizing the Mizo society into two, as already mentioned. The commoners were not only victims of chiefly oppression, they also had no means of approaching the government without going through their chiefs. The British administrator's policy of siding with the chiefs against the commoners aggravated the situation. Hence in 1946, they were confronted with a huge crisis : one resulting from the evacuation of the British and the other the chiefly oppression. Ironically the political party which was born to counter the perpetuation of the chiefly rule also served the purpose of acting as the representative of the Mizo people in deciding the political future of the Mizos. With Mizo Union, the Mizos now were ready to confront the crisis that stood before them. The educated among them provided the leadership in tackling the crisis. R. Vanlawma, the first matriculate of the Mizos who as secretary of the Young Mizo Association had acquired some experience in organizational skill, took lead in forming the first political party of the Mizos - the Mizo Union.

(3) Surajit Sinha, op.cit p.32

(4) R.N.Prasad op.cit p.75

The Mizos were a tribe who had a fairly strong institution of chieftainship. The chiefs had over the years grown autocratic and their rule oppressive. The British ruled the Mizos through these chiefs. As a result the autocracy of the chiefs had the blessings of the British administration. McDonald, one of the last British Superintendents of the Lushai hills district convened a District Conference (16th January 1946) of the Mizos comprising of both the chiefs and commoners. This conference was to act as the representative body of the Mizos for all emerging political purposes. But finding that the representation of the chiefs and commoners were not commensurate with their population, the commoners boycotted the conference and held a separate meeting where they formed a political organization called the Mizo Commoners Union with R.Vanlawma as the General Secretary and Pachunga - a wealthy businessman as the President. Subsequently, the word 'commoner' was deleted to include the chiefs too in the political party.

Although the word 'commoner' was deleted from the name, the Mizo Union did not give up its anti-chieftain's character. It framed a constitution where it was committed to the abolition of chieftainship and build an egalitarian society . The Mizos were thus ready to tackle the emergent situation arising out of British withdrawal from the Lushai hills.

The Mizos were yet undecided about their future. They were not sure whether to remain in India after the British or decide to form an independent state. The British administration in the area discouraged them to remain in India. They were encouraged to join Burma or remain independent with defense, foreign relation and communication remaining with India. Under the leadership of District Superintendent McDonald, a constitution towards this end was also framed in the District Conference. But this conference was boycotted by

the Mizo Union on the same issue. Meanwhile the Cabinet Mission plan envisaged a federation scheme for India where its regions would be grouped into sections with a center at the top. In this scheme Assam was placed with Bengal in the Muslim majority section. The Assamese leadership resented this and wanted to mobilize opinion to oppose the scheme. The Assam premier called Mizo Union secretary Vanlawma to opt for India as a district of Assam and oppose joining the Muslim majority section as it might eventually be carved into Pakistan state. Vanlawma agreed on the condition that premier Bordoloi would use his position and power and safeguard the rights, interests and culture of the Mizos and also secure them maximum autonomy in free India. Vanlawma was also promised membership in the sub-committee on the Excluded and partially Excluded Areas, to be formed under the aegis of the Constituent Assembly.

Meanwhile the pro-chief and pro-British leanings of some of the office bearers of the Mizo Union had become clear. Thus on the pretext of not having college education, the office bearers were removed and a new executive body was elected. Khawtinkhuma, an M.A., was elected the President and Vanthuama the General Secretary. This new body was educated and enlightened and was from the commoners background. They were impressed by the Congress commitment to abolish all forms of medieval oppressive institutions like monarchy, land lordship, and chieftainship etc. Since they were committed to the abolition of chieftainship from the Mizo hills and also resented the British for perpetuating the chiefly rule, they decided to merge with India for atleast a trial period of ten years.

Thus when the Bordoloi Committee on Excluded and partially Excluded Areas (Assam) invited the Mizo Union to send its representatives to the committee as co-opted members,

the President and General Secretary of Mizo Union themselves joined it. The sub-committee was an integral part of the constituent Assembly which was to frame the constitution of India. As such joining it meant, consent to merge with India. Thus by joining it, the Mizo Union made their intention to merge with India officially.

The former office-bearers of the Mizo Union complained that they have been removed unconstitutionally and therefore refused to vacate the office. Thus Mizo Union was split into two - the Right Wing consisting of the former office bearers and the left wing consisting of the new executive body. The distinction between the two were also clear. The right wingers were a set of conservative Mizos who were pro-British, pro-chief, and preferred to remain independent or even merge with Burma. In this context, it is interesting to write the view of R.Vanlawma, who later became the member of the right wing. He said,

"We Mizos are very politically conscious people. We know everything about the congress and its activities. We read newspapers and discussed the issues. But the congress was fighting the British, we did not want to fight the British,".

The left wingers were young enlightened Mizos who were radical in ideology as was reflected in their commitment to abolish a medieval institution like chieftainship and were inclined to join India , as India promised a socio-democratic order. They were against joining Burma or remaining independent as it would mean the prevention of the chiefly rule . They were also against the British remaining in the Lushai hills on the same grounds. However, as the left wing Mizo Union officially joined the Bordoloi committee, the right wingers vehemently opposed the idea of merger with India. They unleashed a debate arguing against joining India. The left wingers also joined the debate and argued in favor of merger with India and the lack of preparation of the Mizos to form an independent

state. The debate soon spread to the entire hills and the population became divided on the issue on the lines of the two factions. In fact in Aizwal, the head quarters of the hills and the center of socio-political activity became divided too. The southern Aizwal favored secession from India; whereas the northern Aizwal favored merger with India. Soon the fight took a written form. Pamphlets and leaflets were printed and distributed among the people. As the first Mizo Union leader, R. Vanlawma pointed out in this context, "Mizos love to read. You know we have very high literacy. These pamphlets were read and discussed in every neng (locality). The pamphlets made tremendous impact." Most of the pamphlets were political write ups which argued in favor of secession from India and the formation of an independent Mizo state. As the debate, both verbal and written, mounted, the Mizo Union left wing sent its volunteers to the rural areas where majority of the Mizos lived. Some of the pamphlets were pro-chief and some write ups preferred to join India and which were very much against the chiefly rule. The pamphlets which were pro-chief, used strong language. They even invoked religion. They used biblical characters like 'Quovadis' meaning - 'Where are you going' etc. Some of the write ups were sober. They carried the day, and they talked of the oppressive chiefly rule and which tried to make people understand that joining India will bring an end to the chiefly rule and some more advantages. These villages were illiterate, ignorant of developments in the world and struggling to make the two ends meet.

An impoverished economy, exploding population and primitive methods of cultivation made their life very hard. But to top it all, was tyranny of the chiefs which made their existence pitiable. They were looking for an end to this misery of the Chiefs rule. Hence,

when the Mizo Union volunteers came to the countryside to tell them that their misery would end if they side with the Mizo Union and join India, they were hopeful. They became immediate supporters of the Mizo Union and were enthusiastic about joining India, even though they had very little idea about India or its people.

Barely forty days before the coming of the Indian independence, another new political party came into existence. It was called United Mizo Freedom Organization. It was formed by some members of the right wing Mizo Union who had failed to muster enough support for the creation of an independent Mizo state. Its founder President was Lalbiakthanga, a former President of the undivided Mizo Union. Prominent activist of the UMFO was Lalmawia an ex-soldier of the Burmese army. The party was financially assisted by the wealthy men among the Mizos and encouraged by the chief's council. Hence its essential character and objective became quite clear to the people.

It aimed to merge with Burma and initiated some negotiation with the Burmese government towards such a merger. But the efforts were not successful as the Burmese Government felt that the Mizo had already opted for India from which it could not retract now.

It is ironical that just when it seemed that the Mizo Union had chosen between chiefly autocracy in an independent Mizoram and a social democratic order in free India and then resolved to join the Indian Union, the debate was revived again. It is true that the tribals of north east India felt that they were being taken for granted and their views were not sought while integrating them with free India. While "things were pretty messy in north east India which epitomized not only in terms of human composition but also in the multiplicity of problems. The response of the Indian leadership to the challenge of the

region was however unequal evidently due to their preoccupation with the all India problem ⁽⁵⁾. The leaders of Indian plains knew very little about the people living in the hills. Amongst the national leaders who cared to talk about the tribals was Jawaharlal Nehru. ⁽⁶⁾ The tribals of the hill were suspicious of the people of the neighboring plains. During the fifty years of British rule, the only 'Indians' the Mizos had come into contact with were the Bengalis of Cachar, Sylhet and Chittagong who filled up various offices in the British administration. ⁽⁷⁾ The Bengalis were commonly known as 'Sylhetias' who were not very much liked by the tribals. One reason why the Mizos were apprehensive of joining India was that it meant the continuation of the 'rule' of the 'Sylhetia babus'. ⁽⁸⁾

The Mizo Union leader Vanlawma felt reassured when Bordoloi, the prime minister of Assam requested him to join India and promised autonomy. But when the offer came down from full membership (which was given to the Nagas) to co-opted membership, he lost no time to cite it as another instance of the cunning nature of the leadership headed by the people belonging to the plains.

(5) S.K.Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, New Delhi, 1973, p.85.

(6) *ibid*_

(7) L.B.Thanga, *Basis of Autonomy Movements in Mizoram : Historical Background* in R.N.Prasad, *Autonomy movements in Mizoram*, New Delhi, 1994, 72-79.

(8) *Ibid*

Bereft of his leadership of the Mizo Union, Vanlawma was looking for an opportunity to regain his position and glory in the Mizo politics which was provided by this issue. This issue was politicized and had a snowball effect on the Mizo politics, on the eve of British withdrawal from India.

The Bordoloi Committee:

By the time the idea of forming the Constituent Assembly was mooted, the tribals in north east India were already agitated about the future political status of these areas. The issue was very seriously discussed in the Excluded Areas of Naga and Mizo hills. In fact, in Naga hills gradually a strong group was emerging which articulated its desire more in favor of an independent Naga hills rather than merging with India.

The constituent Assembly which was to frame the future Constitution of India, could not ignore the specialized requirements of the excluded and partially excluded areas. To assist the Assembly for the purpose, a sub-committee was formed to report on the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas. The sub-committee was to work under the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas of which Sardar Patel was the Chairman. The sub-committee was then to have Gopinath Bordoloi, the Assam Premier as the Chairman.

B.N. Rau, the constitutional Advisor to the Constituent Assembly and a Civil servant who had spent several years in Assam was also a member of the committee. The other members were J.J.M.Nichols Roy, the leader of Khasis, and a Minister in the Bordoloi cabinet, A.V.Thakkar a Gandhian social worker, Rup Nath Brahma, a prominent plain-tribal intellectual and Mayang Nokeba.

The last was subsequently replaced by Aliba Imti Ao, the President of the Naga National Council.⁽⁹⁾

The committee which was officially formed in February 27, 1947 extensively toured the province of Assam which included visits to the Lushai hills, North Cachar sub-division, Mikir Hills and the Naga hills district. In addition, the representatives of the tribes visited the head quarters.

The committee received memoranda from various representatives and political organizations and also recorded evidence given by prominent citizens and officials. The committee co-opted two members from each of the district it visited.

From the Nagas, it was Mr. Kezhol while another Naga leader Aliba Imti Ao was already a member.⁽¹⁰⁾ From the Mizos it was Khawthinkhuma and Saprawnga. Among the Naga leaders Kezhol resigned due to inner party conflicts on the issue of joining Indian Union or remaining outside it and Imti Ao had a note of dissent on the same reason.⁽¹¹⁾ As far as the Mizos are concerned, there were two which claimed to be the representative organization; one was the Mizo Union which was a new political party and the other, District Conference, comprising of leading members of the Mizo society. The District Conference was convened by the District Superintendent himself. The Bordoloi committee accepted the Mizo Union as the representative of the Mizo people rather

(9) *Report of the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee (Report)* reproduced in B. Hansaria, *Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India : A study* (Gauhati, 1983), p. A-183-184 (Henceforth Report of NEF)

(10) B. Bangaria, *ibid*; p.8

(11) Report of NEF, Pp. 184-185.

than the conference stating :

"... the District Conference convened by the Superintendent of the Lushai hills as an elected body (was) purporting to be representative to the whole of Lushai hills. The election to this body which consisted of twenty chiefs and twenty commoners with the superintendent himself as President was boycotted by the Mizo Union which was the only representative body of the Lushais at that time and (hence the Conference) could not be regarded by us representing more than a section of opinion largely that of the officials and Chiefs controlled by them." ⁽¹²⁾

In fact the District Superintendent wanted that the District Conference be treated as the representative of the Mizo people. The refusal to do so by the Bordoloi Committee and appointing co-opted members from the Mizo Union party infuriated the Superintendent. He complained about it to the Committee that the co-option was done without consulting the District Authority. ⁽¹³⁾ His annoyance was directed at the Mizo Union leaders who were co-opted for the committee. This was recorded by Saprawnga in his memoir that when McDonald came to record his evidence before the commission, he saw Saprawnga and Khathinkhuma sitting along with other members. Pointing at them he said, "What are these two doing here ? They know nothing". ⁽¹⁴⁾

The committee visited Aizwal, the head quarters of the Lushai hills district on 17th and 18th of April 1947. During this visit it noted that the people, even though isolated from main-stream political life due to the device of 'Excluded Areas' "were not found lacking in political consciousness". ⁽¹⁵⁾

(12) Report of NEF, p.A-184.

(13) ibid

(14) Ch.Saprawnga, *Ka Zin Kawng (My Journey)* ,an autobiography in Mizo p. 142.

(15)Report of NEF,p.A-192.

The people of Lushai hills who were benefited by the activities of the missionaries among them cannot be said to be behind the people of the plains in culture, education and literacy. In literacy particularly they are in a better position than a good number of the plain areas."⁽¹⁶⁾

The commission through the evidence and memoranda also 'noticed that a school of thought did exist among the Mizos which favored 'independence'.⁽¹⁷⁾

The commission suspected this to be the influence of "instigation by certain elements". The commission also noted the District Conference convened by the district Superintendent and drafted a 'constitution' by which Mizo hills would manage all its affairs while surrendering only the Defense to Government of India.⁽¹⁸⁾ The committee also appreciated the anxiety expressed by the people of the hills about their land and exploitation by the advanced sections of the people belonging to the plains of India. Hence they demanded perpetuation of the devices like the 'Innerline' which were introduced by the colonial authorities and also introduction of new protective laws which would not only ensure the preservation of the life and culture of the tribals but also grant them maximum autonomy.⁽¹⁹⁾

With the visit of the committee, the political climate in the Mizo hills was activated again. The small fractions of the Mizo Union intensified their rivalry.

(16) Report of NEF, p.A-190.

(17) Report of NEF, p.A-192.

(18) Ibid

(19) Report of NEF, p. A-194-196

Both the parties submitted separate memoranda to the commission, the right wing in their memorandum stated that the Mizos differed from the rest of Indians in every way and hence their position would not be secure if they integrated with India. Hence they wanted to be left independent as they were prior to the British conquest of the Mizo hills. Thus the memorandum of the right wing made the 'official' demand of independence for the first time.

According to the schedule prepared by the Superintendent both the rival groups presented themselves before the sub-committee.⁽²⁰⁾ The right wing was led by Pachunga and Vanlawma while the left wing was by Dengthuma and Saprawnga. Eventhough they could not present any common political demand, the right wing supported the proposals of the District Conference.⁽²¹⁾ The left wing was in favor of joining India provided the interests of the tribals were assured of constitutional safeguards. But it insisted on provision for a review of the present arrangement after a period of ten years. The essence of all the evidence presented before the committee was the apprehensions about the plainsmen and insecurities of a small community while merging with a massive nation with whom they had very little in common.

Hence although they favored joining the Indian Union, they demanded maximum autonomy to the district to rule themselves and protection of their rights and interests against exploitation by the people of the plains.

(20) S.K.Chaube, op.cit, p. 162

(21) R.N.Prasad, op.cit., p.80

(22) *Report of the North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub Committee*, Vol II.

Even McDonald, the District Superintendent made similar demand in his evidence before the committee.⁽²³⁾ H.Vanthuama, General secretary of the Union (left wing) stated that the Lushai hills would be within Indian Union only as long as the Lushai hills was economically backward. As soon as it becomes economically viable, it would part with India. In fact he stated that after ten years, the Mizo would secede from India.⁽²⁴⁾ Pachunga of the right wing wanted the Lushai hills to be directly under the jurisdiction of the Government of India.⁽²⁵⁾ R.Thanlira, Dengthuama and Bawichuaka pleaded for maximum autonomy. Bawichuaka demanded unification of all the Mizo inhabited areas under one administration and a National Council with independent judiciary, legislative and executive to administer the district.

But Bawichuaka insisted on a ten year period following which the Mizos would have the right to self determination.⁽²⁶⁾

The memorandum signed by Khawlinkhuma and Vanthuama read,

"...At the time when India becomes independent, the Lushai hills district will also be federated with the province of Assam and be connected therewith in certain subjects which shall be desired by negotiations between the provincial legislature and the Mizo National Council. The district will henceforth be called Mizoram including the contiguous areas of Cachar, Chittagong hill tract, Manipur and Tripura, ... The village with its Village - council will constitute the unit and basis of administration within Mizoram. ...the financial provision should be made by the centre

(23) Ibid

(24)Ibid

(25) Ibid

(26) Ibid

from year to year until such time as the Mizos shall assert that they are able to maintain their territorial integrity and self-determination without this financial provision... all the points suggested by the party shall be subject to revision after ten years." ⁽²⁷⁾

Thus by the time of the visit of the Bordoloi commission the general opinion of the Mizo leadership was in favor of joining the Indian Union.

It was not that there was no contemplation regarding opting out of India. Both Vanlawma and Saprawnga recorded in their memoirs that there was a stream of opinion who favored remaining independent . ⁽²⁸⁾ But the anti-chief wave which swept the Mizo hills which hastened the formation of Mizo Union still blew strong. ⁽²⁹⁾

The Mizo Union Party was committed to the abolition of chieftainship. This anti-chief current prompted the Mizo Union to favor merger with India. Bawichuaka, the Mizo from the lakhipur of Cachar district who later became the Secretary of the Mizo Union had another concern which he expressed in his evidence before the committee :

" If Lushai hills choose to be independent it means eternal severance with the other Mizo countries outside the Lushai hills. If it goes to Burma the same is the case. So the best interest of those living in the Lushai hills is to be connected with India." ⁽³⁰⁾

(27) *Memorandum to the Bordoloi Committee by Mizollnion*, 22-4-1947

(28) Vanlawma, *Ka Ram Le Kei, and I: A Political History of Mizoram* , Ch.Saprawnga, op.cit; Aizwal, 1974.

(29) Ibid, Also L.B.Thanga, 'Basis of Autonomy Movement in Mizoram, Historical Background', in R.N.Prasad, *Autonomy Movements in Mizoram*, New Delhi, 1994, Pp.72-79.

(30) S.K.Chaube, op.cit, p. 171.

There were instigations too. Synchronizing the visit of the Bordoloi Commission, the Naga leader A.Z.Phizo and Kavichusa visited the Lushai hills.⁽³¹⁾ By this time the Naga National Council had resolved to seek severance of ties with India and establish itself as an independent state. The Naga National Council encouraged other tribals to make similar demands. In the meeting of the Mizo Union held on 24th September 1946, T.Sakhrie, the Joint Secretary of Naga National Council was present who highlighted the Naga situation to the Mizo people.⁽³²⁾ This time Phizo invited the Mizo people to join hands with the Nagas and fight for political independence. Phizo even offered to form a Naga-Mizo state where Mizo language would be the lingua franca.⁽³³⁾ But the Mizo leader rejected the offer.⁽³⁴⁾ Not only the rejection, but the Mizo Union leaders joined the Bordoloi Committee.

The evidence before the Committee and the memorandum submitted to it made the Mizo desire to merge with India, officially. However, this was not the end of the crisis. Surprisingly the movement for independence of Mizoram strengthened only after the visit of the Bordoloi Committee in which Mizos had officially declared their desire to join the Indian Union, as can be seen in the next sections.

(31) C.Pahlira, *'Mizo Hills in Indian Union'* in Tribal Mirror 1967, Vol.11, cited in S.K.Chaube, op.cit B.E.-Goswami, *Mizo Unrest: A Study of Politicization of culture*, Jaipur, 1970, p. 139.

(32) B.B.Goswami, Ibid; C.Pahlira , op.cit, p.141.

(33) Ibid

(34) Ibid

Growth of Separatism:

The aftermath of the visit of Bordoloi Committee witnessed the intensification of the separatist movement. This happened because it was felt that joining the Bordoloi Committee and expression of the desire to be integrated into the Indian Union by the left wing Mizo Union whom the Committee had accepted as the mouthpiece of the Mizos had given it the seal of finality. Now a sustained campaign had begun to mobilize public opinion against such integration. So long the opinion was divided between pro-integrationists and anti-integrationists, the anti-integrationists wanted to remain independent. But no concrete plan or proposals were formulated for the independent Mizoram as a sovereign nation state. There was only a sketchy constitution framed by McDonald in the District Conference. Apart from that there was only a mention that finance, defense and communication of the future Mizo state would be with the Indian state when the Mizo state would have only treaty relationship. There was a very feeble stream which toyed with the idea of merging with Burma. Significantly, this feeble stream gathered strength after the visit of the Bordoloi Committee. The other striking feature of this period was that rather than public meeting and debates, the mobilization was carried on through leaflets and pamphlets which were printed and circulated around the townships like Aizwal, Lunglei and Sialsuk. Thus the visit of the Bordoloi Committee marked a watershed in Mizo politics.

In May 1947, a pamphlet written and published by D.Rongkaka was circulated in the Mizo hills. The title of the publication was *Zoram Independent* and it was in Mizo language.

The pamphlet made a strong case for the independence of Mizoram saying that India was

being partitioned into two separate nation-states on the basis of religions as the difference between the Hindu and Muslim religions compelled them to part ways. Since Mizos too belong to a different religion ie, Christianity, they would not be compatible with the Hindus and must live separately.

It further said :

"Every nation in the world aspires independence and self-rule. India had struggled to achieve this independence. The muslims of India had fought hard for their independence. The practice of slavery has been abolished but if we Mizos refuse to struggle, we will certainly become slaves (of Indians). Independence is preferable to such slavery. We speak one language which is reason enough for us to strive for independence, as speaking a single language qualifies us to be a nation. Some sections feel that we could join India for the time being and seek our independence later on. But it would be very difficult to secede later as there would emerge a new powerful pharaoh in time who would not remember our Joseph. If he ordered you to kill your first son you would be in no position to refuse. Thus our future generation would be in a very different situation if we join India now.

All around us different religious groups are having their own states.

The Burmese are Buddhists. The Indians are Hindus and the Pakistanis are Muslims. Therefore, why should not we Mizos who are Christians have our own state? Because of our religion alone we should be away from the Indians.

At the moment some of us are concerned about how to fill their own bellies. But let us think not just about the present but also the future we must preserve this country for our children and grand children - not just ourselves.

If Mizoram is independent, everybody will be happier, because together we shall work towards building it. We might have troubles in the initial stages but this struggle will be worthwhile.

We have heard people talk about the richness of Mizo country. We have evergreen trees, bamboos, vines and many other medicinal herbal plants. We have trees bearing delicious fruits. We can increase their production and export them to the neighboring countries.

We shall also improve our handicraft. We shall make changes. During the British rule we were not allowed to make guns. After Independence we will be free to do so. We shall also improve our education." ⁽³⁵⁾

The pamphlet created quite a stir among the educated circles of the Mizos. This added to the intensification of the campaign already led by the Pachunga faction of the Mizo Union. After the memorandum to the Bordoloi Committee this faction launched a mobilization drive with the idea of an 'independent Mizoram'. Following Ronghaka's pamphlets another pamphlet written by Pachunga, Dahrawka and Hmartawnphunga was published on June 7, 1947. It said that the Mizo Union under its former leadership had contemplated joining Burma. It was only under the new leadership of Khawhinkhuma that the policy was changed to joining India. It continued, that even if the Mizo hills was given the status of an autonomous district, it would still be under Indian rule. Hence the Mizos should demand total independence. ⁽³⁶⁾

R. Vanlawma, the founder General Secretary of the Mizo Union also came out with a pamphlet circulated in the Mizo hills. It was titled 'where are you going' and was also in Mizo language. He criticized in it the left wing faction of Mizo Union for campaigning 'Mizo Union for our country' instead of 'Mizo Union for Mizoram'. He felt that most of the Mizos wanted independence but were not ready to demand it. Vanlawma cited the instance of Bible saying the children of Israel were afraid to leave Egypt but a fire guided them until their destination, Canaan was reached.

(35) D. Ronghaka, *ZORAM INDEPENDENT*, (pamphlet circulated in Aizwal) Aizwal, May 5, 1947.

(36) Pachunga, Dahrawka, Hmartawnphunga, *Independence*, (a pamphlet) Aizwal, June 7, 1947.

Similarly the Mizo would be saved from the idolaters (Hindus) by God who had also saved them from the invasion of the Japanese. The Mizos were afraid of their future. But they should not be. The holy spirit which guided Peter saying 'Get up and follow me' will also guide the Mizos.⁽³⁷⁾ Another pamphlet was circulated in the month of July. This pamphlet was written by K.Zawla advocating independence for Mizoram. He lamented the decision of the Mizo Union to join India and preferred to live under the British rule for few more years. He wrote in the following words:

"When I have a quiet moment for myself, I often used to cry for the predicament of the Mizo man. They were forced to carry the bagages of the British and Indian officials. But now I cry for the so called educated Mizo men who want to sell Mizoram to the Indian Government. As soon as the Mizos join India they would be imposed several taxes like poll tax, school tax, land tax, house tax, property tax, vehicle tax, bullock tax, car tax and so on. They would have to pay more taxes than they ever paid to the British. In other words we will be virtual slaves of the Indians.

Therefore the best thing we can do under the circumstances is to remain under the British rule for 3 to 5 years more during which we could learn from the British Government about running our own administration.

Moreover, if the British stay in Mizoram, even the chiefs will not be too overbearing as they would be ruling under some laws. Since the British rule would be only for a limited period, the Superintendent also would not be corrupted by the abundance of power. After these 3 or 5 years we could join either India or Burma according to our collective desire. We can become the slaves of Indians at any point of time."⁽³⁸⁾

(37) Vanlawma, *Khawl Lamah Ngei Kawl Dawn*, a pamphlet (Quovadis) June 18, 1927. The reference is taken from Holy Bible, Chapter Exodus, 14:19

(38) K.Zawla, *Zo Ram Din Hmun Dik Hmuh Chhvah Theihna Tur (A Guide Towards Making the Right Political Decisions for the future Mizoram)*, [Aijal; Mission Compound, July 29, 1947]

In an interview when he was asked to show some of the documents he said,

" I have only the typed copies of these. Original pamphlets and other documents were mostly destroyed by the army when they raided my house."⁽³⁹⁾

These political pamphlets reflect remarkable political awareness and also the dilemma and confusions in the Mizo mind. After joining the Bordoloi sub-committee which sealed the fate of the Mizos, certain fear and apprehensions had filled the Mizo mind. There were misgivings about the state of affairs in free India and how the Mizos would be treated in it. These pamphlets did create an impact in the minds of the common Mizo people too. All these culminated in the formal launching of an organization which aimed at the seceding from India.

The Culmination:

The circulation of these pamphlets had definite impact on the Mizo mind. These pamphlets were able to create an awareness about other alternatives than joining the Indian Union. Taking advantage of this situation some of the right wing Mizo Union members formed another organization to act as a counter to the Mizo Union. It was called 'United Mizo Freedom Organization' which was established on 5th July 1947. The dissident Mizo Union member Lalbiakthanga, the first MA of the Mizos became its President and L.H.Liana its secretary.⁽⁴⁰⁾

(39) Interview with R.Vanlawma, on 8th July 1997.

(40) B.B.Goswami, Op.cit 136, S.K.Chaube, Op.cit, p.162, R.N.Prasad, Op.cit, p.255.

Its secessionist character and objective as was evident from the name itself, earned it the support of the chiefs and rich businessmen who provided it with financial assistance. Vanlawma said about UMFO, that it was not a political party. They wanted the British to continue in Mizoram. They wanted that the Tiau river should not become a boundary between Mizoram and Burma.⁽⁴¹⁾

Vanlawma further said,

"We were always free to cross the river. If it becomes the border, we Mizos would be cut off from each other between India and Burma. UMFO wanted that if the British had to have, then they should leave the Mizos to themselves, not transfer them to the Indian government."⁽⁴²⁾

The Chief's Council selected Lalmawia, the founder leader of the Lushai Students Association and an ex-army officer in Burma to work out a modified plan to keep Mizoram out of India and also mobilize public opinion in favor of it.⁽⁴³⁾ (Lalmawia later became the President of the party when Lalbiakthanga left the party). But when the party prepared its constitution it did not make its secessionist character very explicit.

This was done to depict that this party's aim was not different from the (left wing) Mizo Union Party which was already immensely popular among the masses.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The constitution listed the objectives of the party as :

1. To look for a country with which we could identify ourselves and which we admire and which can provide us the benefits.

(41) Ibid.

(42) Interview with R.Vanlawma on 8th July 1997.

(43) B.B.Goswami, Ibid.

(44) This was certified by Vanlawma, Op.cit, p.216.

2. To promote true democratic spirits where people can choose their own leaders and to reject all traces of authoritarianism.
3. To make our country as strong as possible so that it need not depend on other countries.
4. To improve our culture.
5. To try to better our communication and understanding between ruler and the ruled.
6. To develop the best ways of self administration.
7. To ensure freedom of speech and press and
8. To ensure freedom of religion .⁽⁴⁵⁾

Lalmawia who served in Burma had contacts with the tribal chiefs of Burma. It is said that on the instructions of the Chiefs council, he discussed the feasibility of forming a Union of the Hill areas of Burma and the Lushai Hills with the tribal chiefs of Falam - Zahrelian. Lalmawia and the other chiefs agreed to unite. But the Burmese Government did not encourage the idea of merging Mizoram with Burma as it had already opted for India.⁽⁴⁶⁾ This fizzled out the United Mizo Freedom Organization movement (UMFO) for merger with Burma and with it the UMFO party, because by then India had become independent.

(45) *MIZO ZALENA PA WL : PA WL DIN DAN* (United Mizo Freedom Organization : Constitution), (available in Mizoram State Archives, Aizwal, written in Mizo)

(46) R.N.Prasad, *ibid*, B.B.Goswami, *Ibid*.

One of the most important contributions of the UMFO was starting a movement for joining Burma. For some time the movement caught the fancy of certain sections of the Mizo people. The arguments advanced in favor of merger with Burma was that Mizos were ethnically very close to the Burmese and their languages were very similar. Economically, along with Burma, the Mizos could enter the international market for its bamboo and other goods. Politically it would be more advantageous to join Burma as it was smaller than India and hence Burma would grant the Mizos a voice in the political affairs.⁽⁴⁷⁾ However, there was very little time for the UMFO to become popular or mobilize public opinion in support of its programmes. But it could not make any inroads into the Mizo Union stronghold. The base of the Union was the masses. The masses refused to receive the ideas of UMFO. The people wanted to be rid of the chiefs whereas the UMFO was the party of the chiefs. In fact the party was known as the Zalen Pawl⁽⁴⁸⁾ or the 'party of the privileged'. Hence they rejected the UMFO and without the support of the common people the UMFO simply faded out.

Campaign for Integration

Amidst the secessionist campaign by the efforts of individuals through pamphlets as well as organizational efforts of UMFO, the Mizo Union sustained its integrationist campaign.

(47) Vanlawma, Op.cit, p.217.

(48) B.B.Goswami, op.cit, Pp.137.

What is more significant while the separatist campaign was confined to the educated classes and the urban centers, the Mizo Union shipped to the rural areas where they intensified their mobilisation.⁽⁴⁹⁾

It was here that the Mizo Union caught the pulse of the people, because it was in the rural areas where the Mizo masses lived and it was in these rural areas that the people bore the brunt of the chiefs rule.⁽⁵⁰⁾

As matter of fact, as against the 'party of the privileged' which was what UMFO was, the Mizo Union was always a party of the common people. As referred earlier it as originally called the Mizo Commoners Union and was formed as a counter to the District Conference which was dominated by the Chiefs. Even though it dropped the word 'commoner' and allowed the chiefs to be its members, it never gave up its anti-chief stand. By its constitution it was committed to the abolition of the institution of chieftainship and it was this objective which made the party immensely popular. It had become a peoples' party due to its anti-chief character. As pointed out earlier, the entire Mizo society was reeling under the extreme oppression of the chiefs. Being on the top of the hills, Mizos had very little cultivable lands. But out of that too the best lands would be taken away by the chief for himself as well as for his favorites. The villagers had to work hard on those mountainous lands but most of their time was taken away by the chief for working in his field. The technique of production (*jhuming*) was primitive.

(49) Vanlawma, op.cit, p. 139.

(50) Ibid.

As a result the production was hardly sufficient for the family. There were natural calamities which affected the production. But as a part of it was always taken away by the chiefs, occasional hunting provided them with an animal or a beehive but all these had to be shared with the indolent chiefs. These idle chiefs had the power to expel any commoner from the village, award any punishment or order fines. The commoners could not even have a window in their houses. The weak villagers had to silently go through these oppression as it was a social institution. But they wanted to get rid of this oppression. So when the Mizo Union promised this, there was overwhelming support to it.

The Congress promised that after independence it would build a socio-economic order in the society by abolishing oppressive medieval institutions like monarchy, land-lordship, and the Chieftainship. This attracted the Mizo Union towards integrating with India. The objective of the Mizo Union and the promise of the Congress had the same end which was the deciding factor for Mizo Union in favor of integration with India.

The desire for freedom from the oppression of the chiefs was so strong among the people that it submerged the urge for a sovereign nation state.⁽⁵¹⁾ Once the decision was taken, the Mizo Union had to take it to the people. The Mizo Union volunteers were sent to the villages to campaign for integration. This group appraised the villagers that integration with India meant freedom from chiefly oppression which was received very well by the villagers.

(51) *Ibid*, p. 139.

The villagers composed songs like :

BAITHAK ARVA,
 ARTUI KHANN LEH LAL HNUNG ZUI RENGKA
 NING TAWH
 SAZAI LIAN PUI PUR AN NI⁽⁵²⁾

(One is tired of chief's orders. We have to give him his eggs and chickens and do whatever he wants. Due to his work one gets delayed for his own work. It is indeed a punishment.)
 The other group also had sent their volunteers to the interiors to campaign for independence. But these volunteers despite their efforts failed to make any impact on the villagers.

On this too the villagers composed songs :

UNION LEH UNION A DANG MANGE
 MIZO UNION VANTLANGKAN TAN RUAL LAIIN
 DAWPUI UNION VE LHE RUAL ELNA⁽⁵³⁾

(The two parties both known as Mizo Union are very different. While one is trying to unite the Mizo people, the Union of the Dawpuri area (Pachunga faction) speak ill of others and caused disunity...)

(52) Cited from Mizo Hla (Mizo songs) by Sena Samuelson, Love Mizoram, Imphal, 1985, Pp.53-5»>

(53) Ibid.

Also,

UNION LE UNION A DANG NGEI E

KEINI UNION MIZORAM TUDINNANE

NANGNI UNION VE CHUVAI DAWRWA⁽⁵⁴⁾

(The two Mizo Unions are very different . One spoke for independence of Mizoram and the other wants to join India.)

and finally,

INDIA ZAWM DUH CHU LAL BANNA

INDEPENDENCE DUH CHU LAL LALNA⁽⁵⁵⁾

(Joining India would ensure the abolition of the chiefly oppression but independence means its continuation)

These folk songs reflect the mind of the Mizo people and it was the last one which decided the fate of Mizoram.

The Mizo Union had already officially opted for merger with India through its participation in the Bordoloi Committee. Hence there was no need for any Agreement (as in case of the Nagas) of signing of the instrument of Accession (as in the case of the princely states of Khasi, or Manipur.) The overwhelming support to the party provided the decision of the Mizo Union its legitimacy.

(54) Ibid

(55)Ibid.

L.B.Thanga records the events.

" I remember the popular slogan which used to rent the air night after night in Aizwal by the volunteers of Mizo Union. 'What do we want ? To join the Indian Union' 'why ? to abolish the chiefs' 'Can we be independent ? No, we have no resources' , 'Can we join Burma ? No we shall get no salt, Iron for our daos' ;
'Can we remain as a crown colony ? : We do not want because the British will not abolish the Chiefs" ⁽⁵⁶⁾

Thus it was the people's movement which prompted the merger of Mizoram with India. The other option of joining Burma or remaining independent were drowned in this movement. Mizoram was destined to be an integral part of Indian Union.

Final Acceptance of Inclusion

As the day of British withdrawal (14th August midnight) drew nearer, the campaign of the two parties also reached a high pitch. It also seemed that the two parties would also clash leading to violence and bloodshed. In the meantime McDonald's term as District Superintendent was over and he was succeeded for a very brief period by Perm who was in turn succeeded by L.L.Peters.

Peters had sensed the militant moods of the two rival camps and to bring reconciliation between them , he convened a meeting in which all the accredited political leaders numbering fifty were invited. The participants in the meeting were Khawtinkuma,

(56) L.B.Thanga, *Basis of Autonomy Movements in Mizoram : Historical Background* in R.N.Prasad, op.cit, Pp.78-79.

M.A., Thanlira, B.A., Vanthuama, Chaukhama (Pastor) Kawlkhuma (SA, Brigadier), Khuma, Lalbuaia, Hrangeia, Muka, Rosiama, Vanchvanga, Vankhama, Laihnuna, Chunruma, Zairema (Pastor) , Rina, Zawla, Lalhema, Lalbiakthanga (MA), Saiaithanga (Pastor), Liangkaia (Pastor) , Lairopuia, Suaka, Hmingliana, Lalana, Lianhnua, Kamlova, Pasena, Lalsailova (Chief), Lalbuanga (Chief), Lalzuala (Chief), Lamlira (Chief), Ch.Ngura (Chief), Zami (wife of Khawtinkhuma), Kapthluaii, Biakveli (wife of Buchhawna) Lalrongenga (Ex-subedar) , thansela (Ex-subedar), R.Zuala (Ex-Jamadar), Rev.Sena, Rosema, Lalupa, Dahrwka (MA), Kapthianga, Saihlira (BA).⁽⁵⁷⁾

During the deliberation in this meeting the Mizo leaders and citizens expressed their concern about the future of Mizoram and wanted that the present protective regulation, like Chin Hills Regulation of 1896 and Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 be continued. They also expressed their anxiety about their compatibility with the Indians due to which they wanted the present integration with India be a trial period of ten years. Subsequent to this the Mizos should be allowed to review the present arrangement.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The resolutions of the meeting was then recorded and submitted to the Govt. of India, which expressed unanimous acceptance of the *fait accompli* of Lushai hills in independent India with a ten years stipulation and demand for continuation of the Chin Hills Regulations and Bengal Eastern Frontier Organization.

(57) *Proceedings of the meeting of the Accredited leaders of All Lushai Political Parties*, Aizwal, 14th August 1947.

(58) Ibid

The full text of the resolution read,

" It is resolved that owing to the unexpected acceleration of the date of the transfer of power by the British Government and as the Lushais have not yet definitely informed in detail as to what is to be the proposed future constitution and the form of administration of the District and as section (7) subsection (2) of the Indian Independence Act Bill does not clarify the situation, it is accordingly thought necessary that His Excellency, the governor of Assam should kindly inform them in writing as to what these are to be also whether the Lushais are at this stage allowed the option of joining any other domain. i.e. Pakistan or Burma. Resolved further that superintendent convey the above request of the Lushais to the Advisor , His Excellency, the Governor of Assam to clarify these points.

2. Resolved if the Lushais are to enter the Indian Union their main demands are :

- (a) That the existing safeguards of their customary laws and land tenure etc. should be maintained.
- (b) That the Chin Hills Regulation 1896 and Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873 should be retained until such time till the Lushais declare that through their District Council or other parallel District Authority these can be abrogated.

B. That the Lushais will be allowed to opt out of the Indian Union when they wish to do so subject to a minimum period of ten years." ⁽⁵⁹⁾

This resolution was the final acceptance of the inclusion of Mizoram in the Indian Union signed by the accredited leaders of the Mizo people. The Govt. of India had no time to reply to this letter, but the demands presented in the resolution were incorporated in the recommendations of the Bordoloi Committee which the Constituent Assembly accepted. Only the ten year term was not given any consideration. The Mizos too did not insist on it in the following years.

However, the 14th August midnight proved to be a very tense night. The left wing Mizo Union wanted to celebrate their victory by taking out a procession on the 15th August marking the event of Indian independence. ⁽⁶⁰⁾

(59) Ibid

(60) Vanlawma, op.cit, p. 140

The Pachunga faction of the union resolved to prevent it and its volunteers were ready with remnants of the Second World War weapons. ⁽⁶¹⁾ The founder of Mizo Union Vanlawma requested the Mizo Union President Khawhinkhuma not to take out the procession as it would result in internecine violence. ⁽⁶²⁾ Realizing the volatility of the situation, Khawhinkhuma made personal interference and prevented the procession. ⁽⁶³⁾

But the Pachunga faction was also against the administration celebrating the Indian Independence and asked him not to hoist the Indian flag. Although the administration had made arrangements to celebrate the Indian Independence, the flag could not be hoisted as it did not reach Aizwal in time. ⁽⁶⁴⁾

Thus, it is clear that because of the difference of opinions some Mizo Union members joined the newly formed constituent Assembly as co-opted members and this implied the acceptance to merge with India. There arose a debate among the pro-Indian section and anti-Indian section. This time another dimension was added to the issue : There was also a strong current favoring merger with Burma. The pamphlets and leaflets were distributed by the parties to spread their views. The right wing party could not reach the masses as the left wing could. They campaigned to the villagers who were reeling under the oppressive chiefly rule telling that joining India would be the end of the chiefly rule. A resolution was passed with majority supporting the merger.

(61) B.B.Goswami, *op.cit.* p.132

(62) Vanlawma, *op.cit* p. 140

(63) *Ibid*

(64) Subdivisional Officer, Brief Report on the celebration of Independence Day on 15th and 16th August, 1947, Mizoram State Archives, Aizwal, *ibid* p.143.

CHAPTER 5

Chapter-V

Insurgency and The Revolutionary Movements for Self-Determination

The Mizos had fought for self determination in 1947 itself. But the promise of the advent of modernity in the Mizo hills prompted them to be absorbed in Indian Union. But a decade of apathy and marginalization by India resulted in the alienation of the Mizos. There were discontentment and suppressed rebelliousness. Such rebelliousness found expression after the neglect of the Mizos during the Famine of 1959. The Mizos realized development was related to autonomy and hence thought of re-launching the movement for self-determination. The lead way provided by the MNF which after its role in famine; was converted into a political party.

When the famine subsided, politics heated up. Since it was the Mizo Union, now an associate of the Congress Party which was at the helm of affairs at the District Council, during the famine, it affected its image. At the same time, due to the slow reaction of the Government of Assam, the relationship between the Chaliha - Government of Assam and the Mizo Union led autonomous District Council reached its lowest ebb. ⁽¹⁾ The Mizo Union leaders who were staunch supporters of the Congress Government at one time gradually drifted away and became more and more critical of the Assam Government in their public utterances. The District Council felt that the Assam Government did not care enough for the famine ravaged people of Mizoram and even by-passed the District Council on matters of crucial importance.

(1) S.K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, Hyderabad, 1972, Pp.45-46.

The hostility became evident when unnecessary questions were raised as to whether the District Council was entitled to use service stamps; whether the District Council members were entitled to occupy Inspection Bungalow and such trivial issues. ⁽²⁾ Things came to a head, and the Mizo Union eventually parted company with the Congress following sharp differences on the famine relief issue and the more serious State Official Language since 1960. The Assam Government sought to introduce a Bill which would make even non-Assamese to learn Assamese. This confirmed the worst fear of the tribals. There was a massive movement in the rest of Assam against the Bill. The Mizos too joined in this opposition. ⁽³⁾ In order to undermine and weaken the Mizo Union, the Assam Chief Minister, B.P.Chaliha encouraged the Mizo National Famine Front to reconvert itself into a political organization which could effectively check the monopoly of Mizo Union in Mizoram. ⁽⁴⁾ The MNF had already earned the gratitude of the people for their work during the famine and nurtured political ambition. They started publishing a daily paper Mizo-A W (Mizo Voice) whose editor was Laldenga, an accountant in the Mizo Union dominated District Council. The Front received a grant of Rs.1500/- for the publication of this newspaper. On 28th October 1961, the MNFF was reorganized and declared itself as a political party with Laldenga as its president and S.Lianzuala as the General Secretary. Its objectives were summarized as follows. ⁽⁵⁾

(2) Ibid.

(3) H.C.Borua, *"A Glimpse of Assam Disturbances"*, Gauhati, 1961.

(4) S.H.Pantu, *"Mizoram : Separatist Politics"*, M.Phil Thesis, NEHU, Shillong, 1984.

(5) Quoted in John.V.Hluna, *"Church and Political Upheaval"*, Aizawl, 1985, Pp.88.

1. To serve the highest sovereignty and to unite all the Mizos to live under one political boundary.
2. To uplift the Mizo position and to develop it to the highest extent.
3. To preserve and safeguard Christianity.

The party was renamed as Mizo National Front. Right from the beginning it made its military and secessionist intentions clear to the Mizo people, specially the youths.⁽⁶⁾ It emphasized on indoctrination of the youth elements and even promised to give arms to each of them. The party organized their political campaigns beginning with prayers. Laldenga used his great oratory to indoctrinate the youths by narrating and popularizing the Mizo past in glorifying words. They were given lectures on nationalism and preservation of Christianity from the domineering hindu nation. A section of the youths, drivers, conductors, businessmen, ex-chiefs, ex-servicemen, and anti-Mizo Union Mizo individuals were immediately over-whelmed by the objective and ideology of MNF. For them Laldenga had become a cult-figure. In the general elections of 1962, the Mizo Union contested and won two state Assembly seats while the third seat went to a Mizo Union supported nominee of the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU), another constituent of the A.P.H.L.C. Then on a directive from the A.P.H.L.C, both the Mizo Union nominees resigned their seats on October 24, 1962, but the EITU candidate refused to resign his seat. The two bye-elections were held in 1963 which were contested by MNF.

(6) S.H.Pantu, op.cit

It proved its increasing popularity by winning both the two seats that it contested from Aizawl West and from the Lunglei constituency. In the election to the village councils held in 1963, the Mizo Union secured 228 seats against MNF's 145, the Congress got 16, EITU 12 and independents 10. When the third legislature seat in the Mizo hills fell vacant due to the resignation of *Thanhira* (EITU), who was appointed as member of Assam Public Service Commission, the bye-election was won by Mizo Union President Chunga himself in 1964, although the MNF mustered all its strength to win this seat for its candidate, P.B.Rosanga, a young commerce graduate.⁽⁷⁾

The MNF meanwhile stepped up its activities specially of indoctrination, campaigning and mobilization.⁽⁸⁾ It propagated that before the coming of the British, the Mizos were an independent nation.⁽⁹⁾ In fact they were a "distinct nation created, moulded and nurtured by God and nature", and the administration of the Chiefs was close to the "Greek city states". They considered the Mizo Union led merger of Mizoram with India for joining India as an act of political immaturity, ignorance, and absence of farsightedness.⁽¹⁰⁾ The MNF leaders during their speeches demanded their "human rights" for freedom.⁽¹¹⁾

(7) S.KXhaube, op.cit

(8) B.B.Goswami, "Mizo Unrest: A study of Politicalization of Culture", Jaipur, 1979, Pp.-144

(9) Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, by MNF, 30th October, 1965.

(10) Ibid

(11) Ibid

The newspaper *Zalenna* (Freedom) under the editorship of a seasoned activist R.Vanlawma was used to circulate their ideas. Simultaneously pamphlets were also used with regularity for the same objective. MNF also brought in the factor of religion.⁽¹²⁾ It depicted India as a land of Hindus against Mizoram which consisted of Christians which face persecution under Hindu rule. Latthangliana alleged that "the Indian officials intentionally used Sundays for their official visit of Mizo hills, so as to render the Mizo Christians unable to observe their prayers. They want us to pay less regards to our sacred days."⁽¹³⁾ The Mizos would refuse to be dominated or assimilated into that fold of idol worshippers. He promised that under MNF rule Mizos would be free to practise their Christian religion without any hindrances. The MNF also created occasional brawls between the Mizos and the non-Mizos to drive a wedge between the tribals and the non-tribals in Mizo hills. The MNF manifesto declared that "Mizoram is for Mizos".⁽¹⁴⁾ To counter the MNF influence, the MU also initiated a movement for the separation of the Mizo hills from Assam and to constitute it into a state within Indian Union. It vowed to achieve it through Gandhian methods and recruited volunteers for this purpose.⁽¹⁵⁾ The situation became explosive due to the confrontation between the MU and MNF.

(12) B.B.Goswami, op.cit, p.145-50.

(13) J.V.Hluma, op.cit, Pp.90.

(14) Ibid, p.92.

(15) V.Venkata Rao et.al, " *A century of Govt, and Politics in North East India*", Vol-III, (Mizoram), Delhi, 1981, Pp.238.

To avoid a possible conflict between the two organizations, the neutral Mizos organized a conference at Churachandpur (Manipur) in January 1963. It was attended by members of both the organizations. The MU agreed to postpone the movement for statehood for Mizoram while the MNF agreed to drop its demand for secession of the Mizo hills from the Indian Union and adopt constitutional methods to achieve its ends ⁽¹⁶⁾ . The Churchandpur conference however resolved to work for the integration of all the Mizo areas of north-east India into one state unit. Accordingly in October 1965, a MU delegation waited on the Prime Minister Lai Bahadur Shastri and submitted a memorandum for the formation of a Mizoram state. Shastri assured the Mizo Union leaders that he would have a word with H.V.Pataskar, Chairman of the Hill Areas Commission, so that the latter examined the Mizo Union's demand while going into the administrative arrangement proposed under the Nehru plan of autonomy. ⁽¹⁷⁾ But the PM's sudden demise and the refusal of the Pataskar Commission to consider the demand for a separate state made both MU and MNF active again. Dissatisfied, the MU boycotted the Pataskar Commission. The rejuvenated MNF submitted a Memorandum to the new Prime Minister demanding grant of freedom to the Mizos (30th October 1965):⁽¹⁸⁾

(16) Ibid

(17) Ibid

(18) Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India by MNF, 30th October, 1965.

The Mizos from times immemorial lived in complete independence without interference. Chiefs of the different clans ruled over separate hills and valleys with supreme authority and their administration was very much like Greek city states of the past. Their territory and every part thereof had never been conquered or subjugated by their neighboring state... scattered as they are divided (by the British) the Mizo people are inseparably knitted together by their strong bond of tradition, custom, culture, language, social life and religion wherever they are. The Mizos stood as a separate nation even before the advent of British Government, having a nationality distinct and separate from that of India. In a nutshell, they are a distinct nation, created, moulded and nurtured by God and nature...

In other words, the Mizos had never been under the Indian Government and never had any connection with the politics and policies of the various groups of Indian opinion. When India was in the threshold of independence, the relation of the Mizos with the British Government and also with British India were fully realized by the Indian National Congress leaders.. Due solely to their political immaturity, ignorance, and lack of consciousness of their fate, the representatives of the Mizo Union, the largest political organization at that time representing all political including representatives of religious denominations and social organizations that were in existence submitted their demand and chose integration with free India imposing condition inter-alia that the Lushai will be allowed to opt out of Indian Union when they wish to do so subject to a minimum period of ten years...' During the fifteen years of close contact and association with India, the Mizo people had not been able to feel at home with Indian or in India nor have been able to feel that their joys and sorrows have really been shared by India. They therefore do not feel Indians. Being created a separate nation, they cannot go against nature to cross the barriers of nationality. They refused to occupy a place within India as they consider it to be unworthy of their national dignity and harmful to the interest of their prosperity. Nationalism and patriotism inspired by the political consciousness has now reached its maturity and the cry for political self-determination is the only wish and aspiration of the people *ne plas ultra*, the only final and final perfect embodiment of social living for them. Their only aspiration and political cry is the creation of Mizoram a free and a sovereign state to govern herself to work out their own destiny and to formulate her own foreign policy...

Though known as head hunters and a martial race, the Mizos commit themselves to a policy of non-violence in their struggle and have no intention of employing any other means to achieve their political demand. If on the other hand the Government of India brings exploitation and suppressive measures into operation employing military might against the Mizo people as is done in the case of Nagas, which God forbid, it would be erroneous and futile for both the parties, for a soul cannot be destroyed by weapons.

For this end it is in goodwill and understanding that the Mizo nation voices her rightful and legitimate claim of full self-determination through this Memorandum..."

The situation was tense. There was dissatisfaction in the Mizo hills with the administration of the Government of Assam. The MNF used the situation to its advantage. It attracted the younger generation on account of its radicalism and romantic idealism. The loyal Mizos foreseeing dangers advised the Government to decide once for all and concede all reasonable demands forthwith in one installment rather than allow itself to be bumped from one concession to another. Even the Governor of Assam Vishnu Sahay was of the same opinion.⁽¹⁹⁾ But the Government of Assam was indecisive. Vishnu Sahay even suggested that the Mizo hills should be constituted into a separate administration like Nagaland, Tripura and Manipur, before insurgency erupted there. But the Assam Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha was totally opposed to such an idea.⁽²⁰⁾

Meanwhile the MNF had prepared itself for a *coup de etat*. It trained its cadres and prepared for a multi-prolonged attack by the members of the Mizo National Army at the same time at different government offices in different parts of Mizo hills.

(19) V.Venkata Rao, op.cit, Pp.240.

(20) Ibid

The main targets being the Assam Rifle concentration in Aizawl and the treasury offices of the government. The idea was to take the government as well as the para-military forces completely by surprise by the armed attack and before the Government of India could send its army, the MNF would declare Independence, which hopefully would immediately be recognized by some countries. This would compel the Indian Government to withdraw its forces from the Mizo hills. Accordingly the attack was launched on 28th February 1966 which continued till 1st March 1966. About 800-1300 armed MNF soldiers took part in the violent action that took place simultaneously in Aizawl, Lunglei, Vairangte, Chawngte, Chimluang, Kolashib, Champai, Saireng and Demagiri. The MNF looted treasury, kidnapped government officials, killed security personnel, damaged property and set fires to the Bazaar. They disrupted communication and blocked roadways to prevent the Indian army from reaching the Mizo hills.

Within hours of all these, on 1st March 1966, the MNF formed a Government of its own with Laldenga, as the President of this Mizoram *Sawrkar*, Lalnunmawia as the Vice President, Sainghaka as the Home Minister, C.Lalkhawliana as Finance Minister, R.Zamawia as the Defence Minister, Ngurkunga the Information Minister and John F.Manliana as the Chief Justice and declared unilateral independence. The Declaration of Independence read :⁽²¹⁾

(21) MNF Declaration of Independence, 1st March ,1966.

"In the course of history, it becomes invariably necessary for mankind to assume their social, economic and political status are entitled to them by the laws of nature created by God. 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 race. 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 right, 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 to organize its powers in such forms as to them shall seem most likely to effect their rights and dignity. The Mizos created and moulded into a nation and nurtured as such by Nature's God, have been intolerably dominated by the people of India in contravention to the laws of Nature."

An account of the outbreak of insurgency in the Mizo hills and the measures undertaken after the outbreak of violence is detailed in the following paragraphs.

The Outbreak of Insurgency in 1966

The disturbance started on the night of 28th February 1966. The Front had a militia of 1000 to 1200 trained volunteers besides a large number of untrained youngsters. Armed with heavy and light machine guns and mortars, and simple weapons including lathis, they started the subversive action in a planned manner, simultaneously at all the administrative centres of the district. The plan was to surprise or overrun the Assam Rifles post everywhere and to gain control of the strategic points and means of communication, particularly Aizawl — Silchar road which was the life line of the district. At the initial stage they succeeded in disrupting all communications with the outside world. The link from Aizawl was maintained only by wireless. The Assam Rifles camp at Champai was overrun in surprise attack in the early hour of the 1st March, 1966 and all the arms and ammunition stores fell into the hands of the lawless elements. At Kolasib, the extremist elements had no difficulty in gaining complete control as there were no armed forces there. At Aizawl

after initial assaults on the treasury on the morning of the 1st March , they took two days to reorganize and recast their plans. Although they had secured entry into the treasury, they failed to enter into the strong room of Aizawl treasury where there was a huge amount of cash and other treasure. The District Jail at Aizawl was forcibly opened and prisoners set free. Despite heavy odds , the Assam Rifles held the post of Aizawl and relief columns reached Aizawl on the 7th March. At Lunglei the story was somewhat different. Although the offensive started on the 28th February when the Sub-divisional Officer was kidnapped together with some other civilians, yet the small security post held on. The Town fell into the hands of the extremists elements on the 5th March. The relief column reached on the 13th March overcoming stiff resistance put up by the Front. The bridge on the river Mat on the Aizawl - Lunglei road was blown off by the Front to prevent the armed forces from advancing further south . The extremists elements were believed to have withdrawn from Lunglei Treasury. All other Assam Rifles post and Border Security Force posts were subjected to varying degrees of pressure. When the Armed Forces regained control of the main line of communication and strategic points, the lawless elements took their heels leaving behind a trail of devastation at places and taking large quantities of arms and ammunition. The Armed Forces immediately started combing operation in course of which they shattered the hideouts of the Front Volunteers, seized armed depots, and arrested a large number of suspected criminals.

A three member Mizo Union deputation met the Prime Minister on 22nd June, 1966 and informed him that Assam Chief Minister Chaliha must be held responsible for the outbreak of insurgency in the Mizo Hills district. They questioned the propriety of Chaliha in

releasing Laldenga and Lalnunmawia who was now lamenting that he had been deceived by the M.N.F., and demanded the formation of the State of Mizoram.⁽²²⁾

From 15th September, 1966, the MNF resumed its armed attacks. About one hundred Mizo hostiles attacked the police station at Jairampunji in the Cachar district bordering the Mizo Hills District with rifles, grenades, and automatic weapons. Three constables died in this encounter. Such ambushes continued till 1970.

Various measures were taken up after the outbreak of violence . The entire territory was declared as "Disturbed Area" , with effect from 2nd March, 1966. The operation of the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Power Act, and the Disturbed Area Act, 1955 were extended to all over the district and armed forces with alacrity, brought the situation under complete control. The Mizo National Front was declared unlawful. Possession and use of firearms by the civilians was very much restricted. This was however, followed by amnesty granted to the extremists. Taking advantage of this, large number of active volunteers surrendered with arms before the authorities and avoided retribution with the very prompt exclusion of the relief and rehabilitation measures, all the vestiges of the holocaust caused by the Front were soon effaced. They uprooted families were rehabilitated at newly formed progressive and protected villages. Adequate compensation was paid to the victims of the Mizo National Front atrocities. Although the disturbance had been quelled within a few months, there had been 298 encounters between the security forces and Mizo National Front since 1966, till 1971.

(22) V.Venkata Rao, *op.cit*, Pp.245.

But the number of encounters was few and far between the last two years. The Government of Assam had renewed its offer of amnesty in August 1971 for the misguided Mizo who had been still living in Pakistan, now Bangladesh as fugitives. The amnesty has been offered on the following lines : - All such Mizo who surrendered to the nearest police, military or Assam Rifles outpost will be granted pardon in respect of all be given a cash grant of Rs. 100/- each to assist them in settling down.

While making surrenders, the persons concerned were required to take oath for their loyalty to the country and allegiance to the Constitution of India.

If a group of Mizo surrenders with serviceable arms and ammunition, the reward would be equally distributed among them. Arrangements have been made for payment of the reward immediately on the acceptance of the surrender.

The liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 had a crucial impact on the strength of the M.N.F. In December 1971, Bangladesh was liberated which resulted in the virtual collapse of the MNF. The Chittagong Hills in Bangladesh, which was excellent sanctuary to the MNF and the East Pakistan, which was the perennial source of supply of arms and ammunition, were now lost. Hence the MNF was demoralized and the insurgents in large numbers came out of their hideouts and accepted the rehabilitation benefits offered by the Government. Laldenga with his family left Dacca, went to Burma and from there went to Islamabad in West Pakistan.

A chronological records of the surrender made by the rebel M.N.F since 1972 are given below.⁽²³⁾

Seven members of the underground MNF headed by Major B.Khualchhawna surrendered to the Mizoram Police on 3.1.75 at Aizawl. The group included

1. Sgt. Rodinga, Hqrs Instructor
2. Vallalhmuka, Army Signal Staff
3. Lance Corporal Mangtea, K.Battalion
4. Private Tluangthanga K.Battalion
5. Private Hrangzama, T.Battalion

Major Khualchhawna joined MNF in 1964, left Aracan on 23.11.75, acted as Aizawl Town commander till he surrendered.

Khawpuithanga, General Secretary MNF surrendered before the Chief Secretary of Mizoram, Shri Surendra Nath, at Aizawl on June 2, 1975. Brig.General. John Sawmvela, Chief Justice of the MNF with 62 MNF / MNA members surrendered before Shri.S.K.Chibber Lt.Governor of Mizoram on 9th June, 1977 at Aizawl Theatre Hall. The MNF / MNA members who surrendered included - Mr.Kapzinga, Judicial Secretary Lieutenant Colonel Bawichhhuaka of "T" Battalion 2 warrant officers and 4 sergeants. Damkhosei Gangte, MNF Major along with his colleagues Lunghnema, Robuanga and 51 members surrendered with arms and ammunitions which were brought by them from P.R.C.China before the governor of Manipur , Shri L.P.Singh at Imphal on 30.6.75.

(23) Mizoram Today, Vol. IV, No.1, Dec. 1979, DIPR & T Govt. of Mizoram.

Captain Rualkhuma, accompanied by Capt.Lalfela, Lalzawmliana, Lieutenant Lalsangliana, Lieutenant Chuaukunga, Lieut.Thangfala, 2nd Lieut.Ngurthanga and 58 private surrendered with arms before Shri.S.K.Chibber, Lt.Governor of Mizoram on 10th September, 1975 at Sulu Theatre, Aizawl. Captain Thangkima, accompanied by 3 Captains, 6 Lieutenants, two 2nd Luietenants, 11 Corporals, 32 other ranks and 57 privates surrendered before the Lt.Governor of Mizoram, Shri S.K.Chibber on 19th November, 1975. Brigadier General Biakchhunga's group at Mizoram Police Headquarters on 1st August, 1979 before IGP Shri Ved Marwah, Mr.Lalhleia, Defence Minister MNF, Mr.Lalthawmvunga, Gen.Secretary MNF, Mr.Hranghmingthanga, Director MIB Mr.Laldinliana, Asst.MIB Col Vanthanga, AHQ Lt.Col. Lalbawnga, AHQ Lt.Col.Lalpianga , AHQ Lt.Col.Lalzama HQRS, Maj.Vawmkaithanga "L" Battalion, Maj.Biakzama "Z" Bn, 9 Captains, 8 Lt./2nd Lieut. And CRS altogether 100 persons surrendered. Second batch of Brig.Gen.Biakchhunga's group surrendered at Mizoram Police Head Quarters on 14th August, 1979 before I.G.P. Shri Ved.Marwah. The group included -

1. Brig.Gen. Biakchhunga

2. Major.Zoramthanga

3. Major.Valnalnghaka

4. Capt.Lalsangliana and other 99 members of various ranks and privates.

Malsawma Colney surrendered before I.G.P. Shri Ved Marwah in the last week of August 1979 at Aizawl.

Elevation of the status of Mizo Hills District to Union Territory:

The Mizo Hills District which continued to be a part of Assam till January 1972 was elevated to a Union Territory on the 21st January 1972, with the name of Mizoram. With Mizoram becoming a Union Territory, the Administration has been suitably changed and has become fully autonomous. The whole Union Territory was divided into three Districts having 30 Assembly Constituencies. A popular Ministry was installed in May, 1972.

Election Result - An Analysis:

The General Election to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly was held in March 1972. For the purpose of the general election, Mizoram was divided into three divisions²⁴¹, Aizawl, Lunglei and Saiha. Of the 30 constituencies, 21 were in Aizawl sub-division, 5 in the Lunglei sub-division and 4 in the Saiha sub-division. The Saiha sub-division is also known as the Pawi-Lakher region. There was no reservation of seats for any community as in Meghalaya, because Mizoram is entirely a tribal area, distinct tribes occupying distinct areas. Therefore, the question of representation of the minorities did not arise.

Mizoram was represented by one member in the Lok Sabha and no separate representation in Rajya Sabha. Election to the Lok Sabha was held on the basis of adult franchise. The total number of registered voters was 1,57,007 and the number of votes polled as 1,10,987. Thus more than 70% of the voters went to the polls which indicates the state of political consciousness among the Mizos. They seem to take delight in exercising their franchise.

(24) V.Venkata Rao, "A century of Govt, and Politics in North-East India", Vol.III,(Mizoram), Delhi, 1981.

The number of votes rejected was 2,832. This did not in any way affect the result of election. The number of candidates that contested the lone Lok Sabha seat was five. The candidates set up by the Mizo Union was elected by a minority vote. The candidate set up by the Socialist Party and the Independents forfeited their deposit.

With regard to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the total number of registered votes was 1,57,007 and the total number of votes polled was 1,15,185. Thus more than 70% of the voters exercised their franchise. The number of votes rejected was 3,996 which did not affect the result of any election.

The number of candidates contested in the general election to the 30 seat Mizoram Legislative Assembly was 1560. There were no uncontested returns. The number of straight contests was also few. In some of the constituencies the number of candidates for a single seat were eight.

Of the 156 candidates, 62 contested as independents, 29 as Congress candidates, 25 as Mizo Union nominees, 21 Mizo Labour Party Candidates, and 18 on the ticket of the Socialist Party. Thus, there were 4 parties in the field, 2 national and 2 local and others were independents. Of the 156 candidates, there were only 3 women candidates. This is a surprising thing because in Mizoram, the rate of literacy among the females is the highest in the country. The women occupy a position of equality in the Mizo society and yet they did not seem to take active part in the politics. Of the three women who contested the general election to the Assembly, two were independents and the third was set up by the Socialist Party. Unfortunately, all the 3 lost their deposits.

Of the 30 successful candidates, 21 belonged to the Mizo Union, 6 to the Congress and the rest were Independents. All the 3 independents were from the Pawi-Lakher region. The Socialist Party and the Mizo Union, was voted to power by a minority vote.

The number of candidates who forfeited their deposits was 74 which is nearly 50% of the total number of candidates. Of the 74, as many as 44 were Independents, 10 of the Mizo Labor Party and all the 18 candidates set up by Socialist Party and 2 of the Congress. It is noteworthy that no Mizo Union candidate lost his deposit.

The congress set up its candidates in all but one constituency - Tupang in the Pawi-Lakher region. The Mizo Union set up its candidates in 25 constituencies in the Aizawl and Lunglei sub-divisions. It did not enter the Pawi-Lakher region. The Mizo Labor Party set up its candidates only in the Aizawl sub-division. The Socialist Party which entered the Mizoram politics for the first time set up its candidates in the Aizawl sub-division only. It was the first left party to enter the Mizo Hills. It was also the second National Part to participate in the general election to the Lok Sabha and the Mizoram Legislative Assembly.

The highest number of votes were polled by the Mizo Union candidates. Harangia, who has been in Mizo Politics since Independence, polled 2,606 votes. The next highest vote was polled by another Mizo Union Candidate, Saprawnga, a moderate in Mizo Politics, who held the office of Chief Executive Member for a number of years. The third highest vote (2290 votes) was polled by the then Chief Minister of Mizoram, Ch.Chhunga.

In the election, 66,871 votes were wasted which was inevitable wherever the single member constituency system and simple majority system are adopted. It may be said that the Mizoram Legislative Assembly does not represent a majority of the voters. It represents 48,314 of the 1,57,007 registered voters. Each successful candidate polled on the average 1610 votes.

One significant feature of the general election in 1972 was that the Mizos had no stomach for leftism. As a consequence, the Socialist Party was torn to pieces. It polled 1704 votes of the 1,15,185 votes polled. Similarly, the Mizo Labor Party polled 12,856 votes even though the leader of the party Bawichhuaka is an experienced politician who had two decades of service in the Mizo District Council. Bawichhuaka himself polled 346 votes of the 2613 votes polled in his own constituency and narrowly escaped the forfeiture of his deposit. Of the 18 candidates setup by the socialist party, one third polled less than fifty votes each and eleven polled less than 200, and on the average 94 votes.

On the inaugural function of the Union Territory of Mizoram on 21st January 1972, about 75 MNF personnel who had been apprehended by the security forces were granted pardon and hence joined the mainstream of life. The offer of amnesty to the rebel Mizo were continued and a good number of them made their surrender to the authority.

Village groupings

The Union Territory has taken a long stride in the path of economic progress following the grouping of villages, a scheme that was put through in 1967 owing to the armed insurrections. The group centres were now the beehives of administration and activities connected with agriculture, house keeping, education, sports and religious pursuits. The

older section of the Mizo still cast a nostalgic look over the hill tops where they spent the best part of their lives, but the spiritual youth has evinced a keen interest in leading a life of co-ordination in preference of the drudgery of isolation to which their grandpa were so accustomed. An elaborate network of the administrative set up , and extensive relief works taken up therein have accelerated the economic development of the people , and mitigated their miseries that sprang from the illegal activities of the malcontent M.N.F.

Rebel activities of MNF on the Union Territory of Mizoram

After the liberation of Bangladesh, the Mizo hostiles had to leave their sanctuary in East Pakistan. Some took shelter in the jungles of Arakan and then infiltrated into the Mizo Hills district to murder the loyalists. ⁽²⁵⁾ This was facilitated because the Government removed some of the restrictions imposed on the free movement of citizens. This enabled the hardcore MNF to terrorize the people loyal to the Government and the administration.

In 1974, the hardcore of the MNF regrouped their forces to launch an attack on the Indian security forces from the hill tracts of Burma, Arakan and Chittagong. ⁽²⁶⁾ Some of the MNF infiltrated into Mizoram and collected funds forcibly, and recruited the volunteers of both the sexes and terrorized and intimidated the loyalists. To hoodwink the Government, the MNF proposed talks for the solution of the Mizo problem.

(25) Ibid

(26) Ibid-Pp.246.

The Government, in good faith, sent a military helicopter to fly the MNF representatives. Malsawma Colney came to Aizawl for talks. While the talks went on for about a month, preparations went on for an attack on the Indian security forces. Nothing came out of the talks. Colney returned to his hideout in the Arakan Hills in Burma.

The MNF ambushed the convoy of the Lt.Governor of Mizoram and injured him. The most daring act was done in broad daylight in the heart of Aizawl town. On 13th January, 1975, the MNF ultras, entered the police head quarters in the heart of the Aizawl town and shot dead the I.G.P, D.I.G, and the S.P., when they were in conference, and quickly drove away into the jungle. This act shocked the nation. It created the impression that the MNF was the *de facto* ruler in Mizoram.

The administrative revamp of the Union Territory of Mizoram

The Government of India was rudely shaken by the horrendous act of the MNF rebels. The Home Minister accompanied by the senior officers of the Home Department, arrived at Aizawl and reorganized the administrative machinery. A new group of persons were brought to fill up the vacancies created by the assassination. A tough and an unusual policy of appointing a police officer as the Chief Secretary to deal with the underground was undertaken. These measures were effective. The security forces and the police launched a vigorous campaign against the MNF. All but one assassins of the three police officers were shot dead and the lone absconder was also nabbed. Large quantities of arms and ammunition were seized and 266 MNF volunteers were captured.⁽²⁷⁾

(27) Ibid - Pp.247.

Insurgency to Accord in Mizo Hills

The administrative revamp and the swift action of the security forces in capturing the MNF volunteers, disabled the MNF and its leader Laldenga. In these circumstances, Laldenga offered peace talks. New Delhi readily agreed to the proposal.

Laldenga arrived in New Delhi on the 24th January 1976, and talks began on 11th February. On the 18th February, an understanding was arrived at.

The MNF delegation agreed to instruct the MNF to stop all hostile activities, to collect all underground personnel with their arms and ammunition in mutually agreed camps and hand over the arms and ammunition within one month. The Government of India agreed to give suitable subsidy for the maintenance of the camps and to suspend all operations by the security forces.⁽²⁸⁾

The MNF Emergency Convention was held from 24th March to 4th April at Calcutta. The Convention accepted the agreement of 18th February and authorized the President of the MNF to negotiate with the Government of India. Accordingly, negotiations were held and on 1st July 1976, an agreement was arrived at, which agreed to abjure violence and continue talks for an amicable settlement.⁽²⁹⁾

The agreement was widely welcomed by the people of Mizoram who were anxious for peace and tranquility in their fatherland. The Government of Mizoram celebrated the event by declaring 7th July 1976 as a Thanks Giving Day. Church bells pealed throughout Mizoram and prayers were offered.

(28) Ibid-Pp.248.

(29) Ibid

The Chief Minister of Mizoram Chhunga declared that all those coming back to the main stream of national life would be welcomed with open arms and rehabilitated as far as possible.

But this happiness was short-lived. The agreement was not acceptable to a number of the underground. Laldenga was in a fix. To salvage the situation, he said it was not an agreement, but an understanding. At the same time, he sent tape recorded speeches to his followers in Mizoram, asking them not to surrender arms and ammunition and personnel to the authorities because the basic problem was yet to be settled. Meanwhile hostile activities continued. The Government launched vigorous military operations against them. Cornered Laldenga again pleaded with the Home Ministry for suspension of counter-insurgency operations agreeing to solve the problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Accordingly military operations were suspended in December 1976. But there was no progress in negotiations. Amidst there was change of the Government at the Centre in 1977. The new Home Ministry summoned Laldenga and asked him to clearly state the MNF demands for settlement. Laldenga evaded the issue by handing his charge to the Mizo National Council. Sensing his waning base and his cunning tactics, Laldenga was accused of anti-Indian activities and was directed to leave the country by 6th July 1977.⁽³⁰⁾ This made Laldenga to feel that he was losing his bargaining position. He met Prime Minister Morarji Desai and agreed that the implementation of July Agreement and peace talks should go on simultaneously.⁽³¹⁾

(30) Ibid.

(31) See Mizoram : The Laldenga Factor, Editorial, Economic & Political Weekly, 13th May, 1978.

Accordingly, Laldenga drafted a scheme for the implementation of the agreement and sent it to the MNF headquarters. The MNF head quarters modified the scheme, but the modifications were not acceptable to the Government of India. Talks collapsed again and Laldenga was asked again to leave the country by 21st November 1977. An anxious Laldenga who had learnt from the example of Phizo who lost his following during his exile at London had no intention of leaving. Since it was important for Laldenga to stay in the country , he wrote to the Home Ministry promising to solve the Mizo problem and to implement the July Agreement by 26th January, 1978.

But he demanded Statehood for Mizoram with himself as the Chief Minister of an interim Government. He also demanded that the elections to be held in 1977 to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly should be stopped. The Government of India rejected the demands and talks broke down. The Government of India found Laldenga undependable and directed him again to leave the country on 26th November, 1977. Laldenga was not prepared to leave the country. So he wrote to the Home Ministry on 14th November 1977, promising to lay down arms and ammunition unconditionally and that the surrender of the MNF personnel would be completed by 26th January , 1978. The Government of India allowed him to stay. Laldenga wrote to the MNF head quarters that it should lay down arms and ammunition unconditionally at suitable places.^{<(32)}

The MNF National Council refused to agree to these proposals.⁽³³⁾ Instead they asked Laldenga to visit the Headquarters for discussion.

(32) *Ibid.*

(33) *Ibid.*

The Government of India allowed him to go to the headquarters, but he refused to go. Instead he wrote to Tlangchhuaka on 25th February 1978, and sent the message through Zoramthanga. But Zoramthanga was arrested at Champai and brought back to Delhi, as he was suspected of carrying instructions contrary to the contents of the letter addressed to Tlangchhuaka. On 20th March 1978, the Home Minister announced in the Lok Sabha that he was breaking off his talks with Laldenga, as he could not be trusted.⁽³⁴⁾ He was arrested along with his son and was charged for waging war against the Government of India.

Subsequently, when the Janata Government at the Centre fell, and Congress party under the leadership of Indira Gandhi came back to power, charges against Laldenga were dropped and negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Mizo problem were renewed.

Although the MNF suspended the terrorist activities after the cease-fire, there was no surrender of the volunteers, arms, and ammunition. On the other hand, the MNF continued to recruit volunteers and collect taxes. It succeeded in infiltrating into the Students Association. Serious student's riot took place. Educational institutions were burnt down and State Transport buses were destroyed on 28th October, 1981.

The talks meanwhile continued in New Delhi between G.Parthasarthy, Mrs.Gandhi's emissary, and Laldenga. The list of 23 demands put forward by Laldenga included full statehood for Mizoram, special constitutional position guaranteeing the State complete

(34) Ibid.

autonomy, dismissal of the Sailo Government, the dissolution of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the appointment of a council of advisers to the Lt. Governor headed by Laldenga himself, pending fresh elections, inclusion of all the areas inhabited by the Mizos but lying in other states of the Indian Union and independent countries like Burma and Bangladesh, a separate flag for Mizoram, membership for Mizoram in U.N, a separate university for Mizoram. The Government agreed to grant statehood to Mizoram, and a separate university for Mizoram, but rejected other demands. The Government of India also insisted that the Lt. Governor should have the power to control finance, law and order and also internal security.

Interestingly, the Mizoram unit of the Congress also supported some of the demands of the MNF, particularly the dismissal of the Sailo Ministry belonging to the People's Convention Party. ⁽³⁵⁾ The Government of India was intrigued by the different attitudes of Laldenga from time to time. Therefore on 12th January 1982, the Government terminated the talks, and declared the MNF and its military wing as unlawful. The official announcement accused MNF that

" it had openly declared as its objective, the formation of independent Mizoram, comprising the Union Territory of Mizoram and the adjacent Mizo and Kuki inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Tripura; has been continuing its activities to achieve the end and bring about secession of the said areas from the Union of India. It has been employing an armed force, the so called Mizo National Army and other bodies set up by it. In furtherance of this objective, it has been attacking the security forces, civil government, and civilian forces." ⁽³⁶⁾

(35) *ibid.*

(36) *Ibid.*

On 22nd January, 1982, the Home Minister said that Laldenga had used talks as a cover to undermine the lawfully constituted authority in Mizoram and that he was intransigent in his attitude and never wished to settle the matter. Laldenga was ordered to leave the country.⁽³⁷⁾

As expected , Laldenga offered peace talks from exile in London again in 1985 when a new popular Government was installed at the Centre under Rajiv Gandhi .⁽³⁸⁾ The Government of India agreed and invited him for talks . The talks went on and on 23rd December 1985, an agreement was signed on constitutional aspects.

On 25th June, 1986, a political agreement was signed in New Delhi by Arjun Singh, the then Vice-President of the A.I.C.C.(I) and Laldenga . According to the Agreement, the then existing Congress(I) Ministry was to be dissolved and an interim Coalition Ministry to be formed consisting of the MNF and the Congress, headed by Laldenga. The MNF would have four seats and the Congress(I) five. The then Chief Minister Lalthanhawla was to be the Deputy Chief Minister.⁽³⁹⁾

The main accord was signed on 20th June, 1986, by R.D.Pradhan, the Union Home Secretary on behalf of the Government of India, Laldenga on behalf of the MNF and Lalkhama, the Chief Secretary of the Mizoram Government, on behalf of the Mizoram Government resulting in the formation of the state of Mizoram.⁽⁴⁰⁾

(37) V.Venkata Rao, op.cit.

(38) Ibid.

(39) Ibid.

(40) Ibid.

The Mizo movement emerged in the context of several contradictions that arose within tribal society as also the historical development and ecological position of the region. The contradictions arose between traditional chiefs and the common educated people in terms of class interests and democratic rights of the people; between a backward economy and a modernized culture and the awareness of the Mizo elite; and between the various ethnic elements which was reflected in rivalries and conflicts between groups and within each stream of the political movement. There have been factions and splits within the Mizo Union, the Mizo Congress and even in the MNF leadership at critical points of time which coincided with the turning points in Mizo politics. The extraneous factors were the relative isolation of the area due to the policy of the British; subjugation of the Mizo people to forced labor and recruitment to the army, and a sense of identity with the interests of the white administrators that had developed through this and a mass scale conversion to Christianity; the geo-political situation of Mizoram which lies on the border of Pakistan; and the events of contemporary history which influenced the ethnic movement of the entire Northeast India. The acceptance of Assamese as the State language in Assam in 1960; the Government of India's proposal for the federated administration of Northeast India; the examples of the Naga insurgency and conscious attempts of the Naga leaders to involve the Mizos; and the formation of the hills states and the peace accord in Nagaland have also had their impact on the recent political history of the Mizo hills.

The Mizo insurgency has obviously adversely affected the people of Mizoram, but it has also created conditions for the social transformation of the tribal society, both directly and indirectly, as is always the case after a calamity. The most apparent of these conditions

is a sense of unity and common identity among the different tribes of Mizoram at some level. Perhaps there has been a process of integration through conflict.

The massive development and reorganization programmes introduced in Mizoram by the Government have also been initiated during the period of unrest in Mizoram and have laid the foundations of the rapid economic development of the state. It may be concluded that the socio-economic and administrative developments in Mizoram after the peace have ushered in a tangible feeling of belonging to the Indian Union.

Side by side with this, the tribal society has experienced drastic changes in its village structure, a fast enlarging money economy and the emergence of agricultural labourers, dwindling of soil fertility; and increasing population pressure, the combined effects of which require systematic study for the socio-economic planning for the area.

CHAPTER 6

Chapter-VI

Conclusion

The Mizos were a conglomeration of tribes living in contiguous areas. The common feature uniting them is various stages of tribalism. Up to the middle of the 18th century, the Mizo people of present day Mizoram were fragmented in small groups fighting among themselves and with other tribes and also moving from one place to another in search of land and habitation. Warfare was a cause as well as consequence for the fission, and at occasions of fusion of tribes, migration, absorption and distribution of clans and lineages in the Mizo-Chin territory. At the micro level descent groups were not fixed to a place or an area. The shortage of land resulted in warfare for establishing and extending one's authority beyond one's village and hamlet. All the Mizo groups were forced to seek new territory when their land was occupied by victors. Population explosion in Chin Hills, and associated warfare, gave birth to new aspirations among the Sailo lineage of the Mizos, who rose to hold immense power. Subsequent fruition of hopes in the case of Sailo lineage led to the expansion of their fluid politico-juridical authority, enlarging supralocal territorial claims by either expelling or by absorbing in their cultural complex many non-Lushai ethnic groups. The self-appointed chief was accepted by all the Mizo groups. This further evolved into hereditary chieftainship through succession and nominations confined to their lineage. These are the important evolutionary political developments of the period from the 18th century till the British gained control over the territory in 1871-72.

From the point of view of transformation of political organization, it may be pointed out that the tribal segmentary stage took the form of petty chiefdoms. The petty chiefdoms, however, could not become real chiefdoms. For chiefs were not clear about their realms and never took steps to make their territory clearly defined for administration. Their desire to have more slaves, booty and heads was dominant. They, however, brought about differentiation among themselves by maintaining martial endogamy and political-martial alliance among the kin chiefs to consolidate their own position. The Sweden cultivation remained the main source of production, communal distribution of land prevailed, but chiefs never worked in their fields. This primitive primary means of production did not generate enough surplus to sustain a crystallized chiefdom, nor principality or state.

In Mizoram, complexities of status and role differentiation in the political sphere could not fully unravel though the tribes developed into petty chiefdom with control over realms whose boundaries were in a state of flux. Further endogenous evolutionary changes could not develop because of externally induced political reasons. The two connected factors - internal factors resulting in the evolution of tribes into chieftainships and the external factor putting a halt to this growth. The ecological settings in which migrations controlled the evolution of social organizational characteristics and prevailing warfare (raids), were the two important conditions that had put restraint on cultural evolutionary selection for the formation of early statehood.

The distinct feature of the Mizo society was the existence of the *bawiship* which was markedly different from slavery. *Bawis* were those who surrendered themselves to the chief for any reason. The Majority of *bawis* belonged to the weaker sections of the people and poor widows who could no longer support themselves. The chief provided them

protection and in return they helped him in his household and other works. Every *bawi* became "*bawi*" with his or her own consent. A similar institution called *sal* (slavery) was mainly formed by persons who were captured in times of wars, raids, etc. Unlike *bawis* everyone could keep a *sal* at his own disposal. A chief captured in war was neither a *sal* nor a *bawi*, but was kept by the victorious chief as his friend. Generally speaking, these different groups of people could earn their freedom by paying traditional ransoms which varied from person to person and from time to time.

As regards to their economy, the people still depended very much on bare sustenance from their land. It is learnt that in normal time they managed themselves with the produce they made in *jhum* cultivation. But when famine occurred, their sufferings knew no bounds as they had no other means to fall back. This situation persisted, before the Mizos were under the British administration.

The *Zawlbuk* institution had played a significant role in moulding the Mizo society. It was the place where the young learned discipline through the older inmates of the *Zawlbuk*. It was the nerve-centre of the Mizo society.

The status of women were not equal to that of the men and they occupied an inferior position in every aspect of life. Notwithstanding this position, women contributed much to social work and there was no marked difference in their worth from that of the men, especially in matters concerning *jhuming*.

In a patrilineal society like that of the Mizos, marriage was solemnised as a bond of family tie. Parents were extremely careful in selecting partners for their children. They looked into the past history of the family and marriage would be solemnised only when no blemish was found. Bride's price existed and it was paid in kind, and the price was normally fixed in terms of *mithun* (wild bison).

The conquest of these tribes by the British signaled the demise of their sovereignty, but marked the advent of modernity in the hills. It brought about notable changes in the social and cultural life of the people within a short period of time. The range of changes differed in every aspect of the society. In some areas changes occurred rapidly, in some aspects they were gradual, and still in other fields, changes were very slow. In general, the changes which had taken place in the Mizo society as a result of the British administration, the Christian missionaries, education, etc. were favourably rapid. The Mizos had gone through different stages of change during the course of the British colonial rule where one peculiar character noticeable in the people was their adaptability. This trait enabled people to adjust themselves to the altered situation thus paving the way for rapid change in every sphere of life.

With the coming of the British there was a steady improvement in their economy and they had to rely on the British when there were severe famines. They exchanged their agricultural produce with goods sold in the trade marts set up within the Chiefs territories or elsewhere outside Mizoram.

The contributions of the British administration in introducing changes into the indigenous people were remarkable. During the colonial rule of over half a century, the Government undertook many developmental programmes in line with the administrative policies. From the beginning of the British colonial period, the **chiefs** powers were curtailed. Realm became territory under the overall control of the British administrator. The British administration also introduced impressed labor and appointed circle inspectors to report the working of chiefs, which minimized the latter's status. The Government made good use of the chiefs in carrying out their policies. In the post-colonial period, chieftainship was finally abolished.

The elimination of *bawiship* in the Mizo society was another landmark in the transformation of the Mizo society. For persons alien to the Mizo society *bawiship* appeared to be in the same class as social criminals or like an abhorrent institution having similarities in many respects. In the true sense of the term, however, *bawiship* was like a refuge where the poor and the needy people found shelter and protection with food and warmth. Its abolition was, therefore, not easy, mainly because people still favoured its existence. No attack on *bawiship* was heard from the local people until it was vehemently assaulted by the foreign missionaries.

Considering the aspect of the impact of Christianity on the Mizo society, one remarkable effect of conversion was that people soon began to give up their primitive pre-notion that bad spirit or demons known to Mizos as *huai* inhabited caves, trees and stones, etc. They soon abandoned such notions which often caused social retardations in the life of the people. This changed attitude had enabled them to take a right view of nature. Their ideas had shifted from conservatism to liberalistic ones. They now dare to judge things by

themselves using their own conscience. They were now free from the influences of haunted demons. Marriages still retained manifestations of traditional primitive forms, although it is solemnised in the church.

It was the British rule on the Mizos, that led to the advent of modernity was in the form of western administration, western education, the religion of Christianity, western medicine and new food habits and dressing customs. The system of education as introduced by the Missionaries in Mizoram was that of the English pattern, primarily with a view to making the people read the Bible. In the beginning, the method was very simple. Science subject was not introduced. In spite of all the drawbacks or demerits, the contributions of the Christian Missionaries to education were significant. As a matter of fact, due to their small beginning, the Mizos now claim a comparatively high literacy percentage in the country, Mizoram being the highest in Northeast India. The onset of modernity created quite a confusion among the Mizos- a dilemma between the tradition and modernity. They were used to their old ways of life and were apprehensive of these new ways. But the efficacy of the advent of modernity in alleviating their problems proved decisive and made the Mizos choose modernity over tradition.

The choice of modernity fuelled the emergence of a western- educated middle class with enlightened ideas necessitating a thorough transformation of the Mizo society in the Mizo Hills. The idea of a modern Mizoram could not co-exist with primitive ideas and institutions. The major institutions that required modernization was the institution of Chieftainship, restructuring the economic set up, so that the Mizos were able to counter natural calamity like the periodic famine and the reorganization of the polity.

The first opportunity of attempting such a modernization came when the British decided to withdraw from India. That left the Mizos to question their political future, since the Indian National Congress announced that it would not force any of the areas to join India against its will, the Mizos were free to decide their future outside India too. The Mizos needed a platform to decide. With this aim in view, was formed the Mizo Union. While forming the Union, the Mizos took care to exclude the chiefs from it, as they were apprehensive that the chiefs would protect the interest of the commoners. This led to the polarization between the two groups and it became organized when the chiefs formed the United Mizo Freedom organization. The Mizo Union, after thorough debate, decided that it would be in their interest if they merge with India. The declaration of the Congress that it would abolish medieval institutions like Zamindari and Chieftainship in free India, was incentive enough. If Mizos were to opt for Independent states, the oppressive chiefs would continue to exploit the Mizo commoners and the tyranny of their institution would continue. Therefore the Mizo Union led a huge mobilization process becoming a social movement demanding the merger of the Mizo hills with India.

But the eventual merger of **Mizoram** in 1947 with India did not bring immediate relief to the Mizos. The abolition of Chieftainship required a parliamentary legislation which the Government of India could not do immediately as it was busy fighting communal riots, partition related displacement and rehabilitation, negotiating secessionist threats and most important, securing the integration of all lying out areas of British India. The Mizos could not wait indefinitely as the independence did not bring any change in the administrative system yet. The District Superintendent was still the autocratic administrative head. In case of Mizos, the British officials like Peters continued to remain as Superintendent even after

Independence. He was ruling in conjunction with the Chiefs , to perpetuate the Chiefly tyranny. Every effort was being made to suppress the Mizo Union leaders, who represented the commoners. There was a pressure from the people to the Mizo Union leaders to secure the abolition of chieftainship and secure the fulfillment of its promise to the people. On the other hand, due to the support of the local administration, the part of the Chiefs UMFO, was gradually gaining strength. Under these circumstances, the Mizo Union had no option but to take extreme measures. It threatened to launch a non-cooperation movement against the administration and had actually done so when there was no positive response from the state. A long non-cooperation movements against the Chiefs and its patron- the local administration virtually paralyzed Mizo hills. This prompted the state to take immediate action. It interfered in the local affairs and on promise of addressing the issues, the Mizo Union suspended the non-cooperation movement. The movement saw the departure of the last colonial administrator - L.L.Peters and the centre acted to introduce legislation for the abolition of Chieftainship. The Mizo hills were brought under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, granted autonomy under the District Council and the institution of Chieftainship was eventually abolished in 1952. This brought an end to an old medieval institution which was the symbol of tyranny and oppression.

The advent of the District Council marked the beginning of modern politics in Mizoram. Until then, the policies centered around the issue of chiefs versus the commoners, but now the advent of District Council provided the newly emerged Mizo middle class a platform to interact, debate and give shape to their ideas of a modern Mizoram.

Like the rest of India, the Mizo middle class too were a product of the transition to modernity. They were essentially a by-product of the modern western education introduced by the colonial administration, but run by the Christian Missionaries. Although through this education the Mizo middle class acquainted themselves with modern western ideas, the influence of Christian Missionaries was a limiting factor as far as radical ideologies were concerned. But the missionary ideas of humanitarianism and anti-slavery, anti-chiefs activities had tremendous impact on them. This was reflected on their anti-chief movement during the merger-movement in 1947 as well as after independence. Their ideas of autonomy in political affairs and the preservation of their distinct identity and culture found expression during their interaction with the Bordoloi Commission. When these ideas were approved through the sanction of District Council as a part of the Sixth Schedule provisions of the Indian Constitution, the Mizo middle class found an appropriate forum to politically activate themselves. To satisfy the ethnic aspiration of different tribes not only the Mizos but also the Pawi-Lakher and Chakmas were granted local autonomy. The district council proved to be the perfect preparatory platform for the political elite of these areas. By functioning within the parameters of District Council, these elite realized that the powers granted to them through these platform was more theoretical. The District Council functioned merely as a debating body with hardly any financial or executive powers and was dependent on Assam Government for everything. Hence autonomy was a mockery. The realization dawned that without a full fledged state hood, the tribals like Mizos would never experience complete autonomy and hence could not expect to develop or economically modernize themselves. Hence they launched another political movement which aimed at complete statehood. In this journey they found other tribal groups of north

east like the Khasis, Garos, Tripuris, etc with them. Dissatisfied with Assamese hegemony, all these tribes desired separation from Assam and a separate statehood for each of them. Although the Pataskar Commission was a boon to their aspiration, the sympathetic concern of the then Prime Minister of India, Smt.Indira Gandhi helped them to achieve a Union Territory status for the Mizos in 1972. But the persistent problem that remained was insurgency.

Considering the economy of the Mizos, upto 1972, the increase in a variety of trade in Mizoram was somewhat slow. This was partly due to insurgency and partly due to paucity of budget allocation for overall development plans of Mizoram. Hindu shopkeepers became less in number while Mizo shopkeepers increased. Nevertheless, from the latter part of 1972, when Mizoram was upgraded to the status of Union Territory, there has been a rapid multiplication in the volume and variety of trade and commerce. The budget for Mizoram development was to the tune of crores of rupees during the Fifth Five Year Plan, and which was further raised to 140 and 465 crores during the Sixth and Seventh Five Year Plans respectively. The restoration of normalcy in Mizoram resulted in the sudden increase of population, and of Hindu, Muslim, and Mizo shopkeepers. The living standard improved, and Mizoram, along with the rest of the country entered the modern age.

By the time the issue over the abolition of Chieftainship was resolved, Mizoram was faced with another crisis- the famine called Mautam. Mizoram is covered with a thick vegetation of two local varieties of bamboo plants. Both these varieties flower periodically - the "*thing*" variety in every 18 years, while the "*Mau*" variety in every 50 years. When these bamboo flowers and consequently leads to bamboo fruit, it is accompanied by a huge increase in rat population. The rats find the bamboo fruit immensely delicious and protein

rich, which increase the reproductive cycle. Therefore they give birth to a large number of off-springs. Bamboo fruit containing the seed provide a massive food supply to the rats, but when these get exhausted, they invade the standing crops and stored food grains of the Mizo villagers. Since the tribals hardly produce more than subsistence, the supply is devoured by the rats in no time. This shortage of food stuff causes famine leading to the starvation death and migration. The Mizos were accustomed to this frequent occurrence but had not developed a mechanism to counter it. They were solely dependent on the administration for providing succor in times of such hardship. Since they knew the periodicity of the occurrence, they could also predict the famine correctly. According to their prediction, the next 'Mautam' - the most severe famine was to take place in 1959. As for the apprehensions, the bamboo plants started to flower from 1950 onwards causing fear among the Mizos. Various non-governmental organizations came forward to tackle the event. In 1951, the anti-famine campaign organization was formed to generate awareness among people about the famine. It encouraged others to form groups for countering the forth-coming menace. The District Council debated the impending danger. The representative of the people in the Council passed a resolution demanding state attention to the phenomenon and demanded a sanction of Rupees. 15 lakhs from the Government of Assam, to the council to tackle the famine.

The Government of Assam exhibited apathy and scant regard for the appeals of the Mizos, resulting in the delay in the sanction. By 1958, the famine had stalked the hills and devastated the region. About 15,000 people were reported to have died due to starvation. Even when the Government sent the relief material, it could not reach the needy, as there were no proper roads connecting the Mizo hills, through which the food stuff could be

sent . The relief reached the hills but belatedly on account of which the intensity of the tragedy could not be mitigated. Although the famine subsided by 1960, and people recovered from the tragedy, the apathy and neglect of the Assam Government was all too evident. People developed anti-Assam sentiment. But since Assam was seen as representative of the Government of India, and also of the representative of the non-Mizo (Vai) people, there was a growing anti-Indian feeling sweeping the Mizo hills.

During the famine situation in Mizo hills, a number of non-governmental organizations came up to co-ordinate the relief works. One was the Mizo National Famine Front. A clerk in the District Council office Laldenga, was the main architect of it. During the hardship of famine, the MNFF did immense service to the people by pooling relief materials and distributing them among the affected people. Its volunteers traveled in far flung areas which were inaccessible and thereby earned the gratitude of the people. Laldenga had always been a politically inclined man and was ambitious. The persistent struggle of the Nagas against the Indian state for freedom had greatly influenced him. He had always appreciated the Naga desire for separation from India. The anti-Indian attitude that loomed strong in the aftermath of the famine and the neglect of the Government of Assam to the Mizos had hardened his attitude. Taking advantage of the popularity of the MNF, for its role in the famine relief, he converted it into a political party called Mizo National Front, with himself being the President. A number of Mizos who were members of the UMFO and the opponents to the Mizo Union joined him. With its anti - Indian slogan and exaggeration of the antipathy of the Indian Government for the Mizos , the party became instantly popular.

The MNF first participated in the political process- contesting elections and joining the legislature. But there it failed to achieve any significant success. Soon Laldenga conspired an armed revolt and capture of the administration, which he implemented on 1st March, 1966. In a sudden attack, it declared independence and attempted to capture the administration. Although the Government retaliated the attack, it developed into a movement. MNF was declared unlawful, but it continued its guerilla attack on the representative of Indian states. The movement soon weakened because of the creation of Bangladesh and the elevation of the status of Mizo Hills into a Union Territory. This further alienated the MNF. As the movement weakened, and its support base divided, Laldenga sought to negotiate with the Government of India. After a number of failures, eventually an accord was signed between the Government of India and the MNF by which Mizoram, which was a Union Territory, was granted statehood with a high court and a University of its own. The MNF came over ground and transformed itself into a political party. This ended a long drawn movement and ushered in an era of peace and development.

Within few years of statehood, Mizoram has been able to chalk out its infrastructural requirement. With new roads and connectivity, Aizawl, Lunglei, Vairangte, Kolasib, developed into prosperous townships. Champai developed into an international trade centre for commercial exchange between India and Myanmar. A huge airport came up at Lengpui at people's initiative, which connects Kolkata, Imphal, Silchar and Gauhati to Mizoram on a daily basis.

There is a railhead at Bairabi near Assam-Mizoram border. There is an initiative to open a alternative road link through Tripura and Manipur. There is a High **Court and a Central** University already functioning. Mizoram has a second highest literacy rate in the country and the highest among all the tribal states. All these are indeed indicators of Mizoram's transition to modernity. But all these came as a result of massive struggle through social movements and political mobilization.

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