CHAPTER - IV

MNF AND INSURGENCY IN MIZORAM: EMERGENCE OF THE STATE IN INDIAN UNION
The British who occupied the present India had left the Indian colony in 1947 as a result of the end of the Second World War. Before the fade of two decades after their vacation, ‘The Lushai Hills’ one of the districts of the Indian union had faced the worst insurgency that the district ever faced. It lasted for twenty years causing loss of life and uncountable valuable properties. When recalling the insurgency period, the victims are still trembling to see the burning villages and the death of their beloved ones. Peace returned to Mizoram only after many years. But the physical tortures and mental agony that the people had suffered cannot be soothed to heal completely. That insurgency was an important mile stone in the history of Mizoram now and ever.

The unspeakable sufferings of the Mizos during the insurgency period were an outcome of the culmination of many factors. It is important to note that the Mizo National Front which took the initiative in the practical insurgency were only ‘Words in deed’. The rising political consciousness, the will to secede from the oppressors and the feeling of negligence etc. all these factors directed the Mizos to opt an ‘armed rebellion’ as the only resort to free themselves. The causes of the outbreak of the insurgency initiated by the MNF were many and varied, and its culmination resulted in the outbreak of the insurgency.

**CAUSES OF INSURGENCY**

1) **Administrative cause:** The administrative development of the Lushai Hills in a historical setting is necessary to know when tracing the roots of that movement, as it embedded in the minds of the people due to the feeling of neglect and isolationism. Before the annexation of the area by the British the
‘Mizos’ comprised of many tribes and sub-tribes lived independently. They had no connection with the outside world. Being a close knit society, they formed a compact society and more or less closed to the outside world. But, due to their raids upon the Cacharis, they were no longer excluded to the British annexation policy and by the second half of the nineteenth century; it was annexed to the British colony. The Lushais didn’t give up the raid upon the Cacharis whom they thought as the intruders even after the annexation of the British. The British dispatched punitive expedition to punish the raiders. After the British occupied the area, the North Lushai Hills was placed under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and the South Lushai Hills under the administrative control of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. The Chin Lushai Hills Conference 1898 combined the two parts into one and placed it under the administrative control of the chief commissioner of Assam. The combined Hills were called The Lushai Hills District.

The Lushai Hills District was declared as a scheduled district under the Scheduled District Act, 1874. The justification for the declaration was that it was a hill area inhabited by the primitive tribes. The 1917 Montagu-Chelmsford Report recommended that typically backward areas should be excluded from the reformed council. The implication of this recommendation was that the territory should be excluded from the scope of the reformed scheme. The recommendation of the Joint report was referred to two senior officers of the provincial Government, Reid and Bannes for comment, who were strongly in favor of the exclusion of the Lushai Hills from the reforms scheme. Rao, Thansanga and Hazarika wrote “Sir Beatson Bell, the chief commissioner of Assam thought that the introduction of reforms in the Lushai

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1 Mizo is a collective noun, consisting of distinct tribes like Lusei, Ralte, Hmar, Paite, Pawih, Lakher (Mara) and many sub-tribes.
Hills was out of Question because the people of this area were not competent to work the reforms.”

The attitude of the administrative heads over the Lushai Hills District is clearly shown when the Government of India Bill, 1919 containing the recommendations of the Government of India was referred to the Joint selection Committee. Sir Archdale Earle, a former chief commissioner of Assam said that the Lushai Hills should be excluded from the reform scheme, and the Government of Assam should not be compelled to meet the deficit in the Hill areas budget if they are not excluded from the reforms scheme. They should be brought under the control of the Assam legislative council. Chandranath Sharma, a member of Assam Legislative Council said that The Lushai Hills was a frontier district and therefore it should be under the control of the Government of India and that the entire cost of its administration should be borne by the Government of India and administered by the Governor as the agent of the Governor General. If it is under the Government of Assam, Chandranath Sharma said “It would be a grievous wrong done to the people of Assam to saddle them with the cost of administration of the hill districts with which they were not very much concerned.”

To carry on the administration of the Lushai Hills district was a burden for the Assam Government who did not concern much for that area. The so called negligence by the Assam Government as the Mizos blamed for the cause of Insurgency was somehow justified because, the Assam Government in many circumstances neglected the area economically and politically, and to carry on the administration of the district was taken as an unnecessary burden.

The Government of India Act, 1919 said that the Governor-General-in-Council shall declare any territory in British India to be a backward area. On January 3, 1921 the Governor-General-in-council declared the Lushai Hills

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3 Ibid, p.10
District as a *Backward Area*. In 1930 the question of the inclusion of the hill areas under reforms was again discussed by the Government of Assam. It again was decided by a unanimous vote for the exclusion of the Lushai Hills. The Simon Commission recommended that the somewhat derogatory term backward areas should be discarded in the statute and use a colorless term Excluded Areas. The Lushai Hills was declared as an *Excluded Area* on March 3, 1936. This means that the area was the tract where any advanced form of Government was not a possibility because of the backwardness. The area would be administered by the Governor himself. The ministers would have no constitutional right to advise him in connection with their administration. Neither the central nor the provincial legislature shall have the power to make laws applicable to the tract but the Governor may direct that any act of the provincial legislature should be applied to the tract, subject to such exceptions or modification as he thought fit.

The status of backward area as well as Excluded Areas was clearly meant to guard against the application of unwise or unsuitable legislation opposed to the interest of the backward areas. But these provisions while protecting the interests of the tribes had a negative impact. The future world of the tribal was stagnated and no connection with the outside world has made the tribals standstill. Meanwhile, the policy had a negative impact “The effect of this policy was to encourage the feeling of isolation and independence.”\(^4\) As the time passes by, this feeling of isolation led the Mizos feel that the ‘Vais’ cannot be made real friends of the Mizos and they are much more selfish than the British.\(^5\) Till today some of the Mizos regard their ethnic identity i.e., Mizo identity overshadowed their identity as an Indian. Indians are still regarded as the Vais. There are some satires.\(^6\) These some satires condemned the first

\(^4\) Ibid, p. 34  
\(^5\) Vais is a mizo word to denote all the Indians taken together. It also refers to the foreigners.  
\(^6\) Satire is a way of criticizing something such as a group of people or a system, in which you deliberately seem funny so that people will see their faults. One of the satire songs often sang by children during election reads;  
‘Oh, Congress (I), Vai I lo ni,'
National Party that existed in Mizoram which clearly indicates the feeling of the Mizos in regards to the Vais.

In the words of Lalchungnunga “Being a close-knit, egalitarian and free society, they are apprehensive about the possible inroads of undesirable element into their society.” The protection policy followed by the British before the independence of India to a great extent incorporated the in tolerance of the other nationalities, resulting in the outbreak of the insurgency.

2) Political awareness of the Mizos: The political awareness of the Mizos prior to independence of India and the feeling of dissatisfaction in political field couldn’t be ignored to trace the origin of the insurgency. When the First World War broke out, the British recruited two thousand and One hundred Mizos for a Labour Corp. It was said that the First World War was the first intervention of the Mizos in the international affairs and gained a broader outlook after their participation in the First World War. During the First World War a Labour Corps consisting of 2,100 Mizo men was raised and sent to France under Lt. Col. Playfair. This 27th Labour Corpse under Col. Playfair and Rev. D.E. Jones of the Welsh Mission earned a good name for itself when on active service in France. They were back in Aijal in June 1918; they were welcomed to a ringing with joy and emotion. Out of 2,100 men who originally set out, 2,029 men had come back to Aijal. The Labour Corps was disbanded in June 1918, immediately after their return to Lushai Hills. There was some growth of political consciousness with the return to the Lushai Hills of a batch of Labour corps recruits sent to France during the First World War. Though there was no political forum as such to put their demands to the Simon commission created

\[\text{Delhi tlangah haw tawh rawh'}
\text{This in English means;}
\text{‘Oh, Congress (I), you are the Vai}
\text{Just go home, to Delhi’}

by the British Government, political consciousness was already there among the Mizos.

No nation is excluded in the world of politics. Many prominent citizens of Mizos were enlightened politically before the birth of political party in Mizoram. C. Chawngkunga clearly stated the birth of political consciousness among the Mizos even before the birth of a party; he stated that;

“The following businessmen in Aizawl town selected themselves to represent Mizo aspiration in politics and trying to join the Assam provincial Government. These leaders namely Pu V Z Biaka Kulikawn, Pu Saikunga Kulikawn, Pu Thuama clerk pension kulikawn, Pu Telela and Pu Laldala as their secretary tried to join Assam provincial Government without consulting the then Lushai Hills superintendent at Lushai Hills. N.E Parry arrested these leaders and sent them to jail.”

This attempt had shown the beginning of political awareness among the Mizos prior to the independence. As such, the first ever political party of the Mizos came into existence in Mizoram in April 9, 1946. With the initiative taken by the then educated youths. The political oppressions that they suffered by excluding them from representation in any legislative council or assembly under the provision of backward area (Government of India Act 1919) and Excluded Area (Government of India Act 1935) had accumulated political discontentment. The District Conference in 1948 demanded to the Bordoloi Committee that in case the Lushai Hills was attached to Assam, it should be represented in the Assam Legislative Assembly by three Mizos.

It was the time when India became independent and a sense of uncertainty and apprehension about their political future gripped the minds of the educated leaders of the Lushai Hills. The principal political organization in the Lushai Hills, the Mizo Union was thinking in terms of separation from

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8 C. Chawngkunga, *Important Documents of Mizoram* (Aizawl, Published by Art & Culture Deptt., 1998) p.298

9 Superintendent of the Lushai Hills Mac Donald brought into existence the District Council to advice the Superintendent on all matters connected with the administration of the district. It consisted of 20 members elected by the chiefs and 20 members elected by commoners.
India. They stated in their memorandum submitted to the then Prime minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, that in 1947 the Mizo people should have a right to secede from the union of India within 10 years or so. They visualized re-unification of Mizo people and independence from India in their memorandum. But the Mizo Union leaders did not speak about these in full conviction. Some others desired the union of the Lushai hills with the Chin Hills of Burma.\textsuperscript{10} Not only to the Lushai Hills district but for numerous independent kingdoms within the Indian union, the future was unclear. Meanwhile Prof. Coupland, a well known constitutional expert suggested the creation of “Crown colony of Eastern Agency” consisting of the hill areas of Assam and Burma which would be an independent state between India and Burma. “The idea was canvassed all over the district and won the hearts of several public leaders”.\textsuperscript{11} In the public meeting held at theatre Hall, Aizawl on February 21, 1947 a public debate was conducted by the members consisting of public leaders, church representatives and teachers under the chairmanship of Sainghinga, Asst. Superintendent. At the conclusion of the debate, the chairman proposed to take vote against or in favour of independent status for Mizoram and the majority voted for independence. Leaders of the Mizo Union strongly opposed it because that would necessarily imply that the chief’s right and powers would continue to exist. Since opinions were diametrically opposed between the leaders of the district conference, two political parties came into being after a short while. The Mizo Union party which had larger following was committed to joining the Union and was at a cross purpose with Macdonald who wanted that the chiefs should continue to be part of the District administration. On the other hand, the United Mizo Freedom Organisation had left behind the ambition for independent status and inclined to join Burma.


\textsuperscript{11} K.M. Zakhuma: \textit{Political Development of Mizoram With Reference to Political Parties in Mizoram} (Aizawl, Mizoram Publication Board, 2001) p.178
The political awareness which caused the demand for more political power among the Mizos led to the birth of independence-oriented parties like Mizo Union at the initial stage and United Mizo Freedom Organization. That very demand for political power was intensified by the insurgent leaders to convince the people to feel that they were neglected under Indian union. The birth of region-based political parties for the Mizos was a malignant growth of frustration among the people, such discontentment were a fertile ground for the germs of insurgency. When people feel that they are politically suppressed, they resort to every viable means to improve their conditions.

3) The MNF and its policy: The Mizo National Front which led the open revolt in 1966 traced its origin to the Mizo National Famine Front which was formed for the relief of the Mizo people who were in great distress because of the severe famine which has hit the District. The famine was known as Mautam Famine. Mautam is a Mizo word which means ‘flowering bamboo’. It was a botanical phenomenon that occurred every fifty years and lasted for one year only. The bamboos flowered and bear seeds which have fallen to the ground. The seeds were a nutritious food for the rats and the rat population increased swiftly. After they consumed the seeds of the bamboo, they shifted to the paddy field and ate up an acre of the paddy field in a night. The Mautam as usual occurred in Mizoram in 1959 which spreads distress along the hill. There was a rumour that people died of hunger in the western side. “The will to relieve the sufferings of the people urged some of the citizens to step out for the Mizo people.”12 The Mizo National Famine Front was formed in 1960 with R.Dengthuama and Laldenga as its chairman and secretary respectively. The Front worked hard with utmost effort to help the needy hungry people and entitled a high prestige. But, when the famine was over, it was not necessary to

12 Col. Lalrawnliana, Zoramı̇n Zalemma a Sual (Zoram’s Fight for Independence) Vol-1 (Aizawl, Published by Col. Lalrawnliana Tuikhuatlang, 1995) p.31
continue that welfare organization and the very famine front changed to a political party known as Mizo National Front on October 22, 1961.

Since its inception, the Mizo National Front aimed at an independent status for sovereign state. In the words of Col. Lalrawnliana “The newly born MNF party has ‘independence of Mizoram’ as their main policy”. The first Assembly on April 1, 1962 framed the points under as their policy

1. To make Mizoram an absolute sovereign and the integration of all the Mizo clans
2. To safeguard Christianity
3. To develop and uplift Mizo nation.

The volunteers of the party were known as ‘Central volunteer and takes oath before enrollment. Their oath taking reads “I… (Said their name) offered myself as a central volunteer of MNF. Everywhere whether on soil, sea or air wherever necessary I offered myself to work faithfully for God and my country till the last shed of my blood.”

The doors for volunteers were initially open for some selected men only. But latter it spread to the surrounding villages and the membership was opened widely for all who wished to be. The spreading of the national feeling through the newly-born party was spearheaded by the inspiring songs and speaking of the then statesmen

‘Mizo nationalism’ was inspired by the songs which strengthened the idea of independence. The beginning of MNF as a political party was endowed with the idea of independence which was strengthened slowly by the incidents and negligence of the Mizos by the Assam government. The MNF claimed that the Mizos had all along been independent with a distinct culture, distinct

\[13\] Ibid 
\[14\] Ibid, p. 71 
\[15\] Nationalism is a word which denotes patriotic feeling, principles or efforts. Advocacy of political independence for a particular country
language, distinct civilization, and living in a definite territory before their conquest by the British and semi-independent during the British period.

During the famine period, the attitude of the Government of Assam towards the Mizo Hills district was not sympathetic. The Mizo Hills had experienced the devastation of the jhum fields by the rats in the past, and the famine again threatened the Mizo hills. The District Council cautioned the Assam Government to prepare for the situation. On October 29, 1958 a resolution was passed and submitted to the Assam Government which reads as follows;

“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 (1959) the whole district would be affected. As a precaution against the imminence of famine following the flowerings of the bamboos, the District council feels that the Government be moved to sanction to the Mizo district council, a sum of Rs 15.00 lakhs to be expended on a test relief measure for the whole of the Mizo District including the Pawl-Lakher region”. 16

The appeal was dismissed by the Chaliha government. It was commonly believed that the Government of Assam was neither able to assess the intensity of impending famine nor could it rise to the occasion in dealing with it. There was animated discussion in the Mizo Hills District Council at the slow moving process of the Government of Assam while the rats were causing havoc. The members of the District Council were very angry with the Government of Assam. One of the members of the District council Vanlalbuka said “If we continue to be neglected….the peoples feeling will be secession from Assam.”17

Due to the accumulated discontentment, the Mizo Union had withdrawn their support for the Congress Party in Assam state on grounds that the Chaliha Government had not done enough to tackle the famine of 1959 and also the Assam Pradesh congress Committee had insisted that Assamese should be

16 V. Venkata Rao: *A Century of Tribal politics in North East India* Vol. III (Delhi, S. Chand & Co. 1991) p. 235
declared as the state language which would give undue benefits to the plain people of Assam and would be disadvantageous to the hill people.

The withdrawal of the Mizo Union from the supporters of the Congress Government had made the Assam Government more disfavors towards the Mizo Union. In order to humiliate the Mizo Union, B.P chaliha had shown favour towards Laldenga. Regarding this, Brig. C.G Verghese and R.L Thanzawna stated that;

“When the Mizo Union became anti- Chaliha and anti- Congress, it was stated in unofficial circles that the Chief Minister had been planning to win over Pu Laldenga by showing sympathy towards the grievances of the MNFF and treating them leniently. It was even rumoured that Laldenga had been given financial aid for organizing a political party to work against the Mizo union which Shri B.P Chaliha was considering as a thorn in his flesh. When Pu Laldenga was arrested, while returning from Pakistan in 1963, after arranging with the Pakistan army intelligence authorities for supply of arms and ammunition from East Pakistan for the MNFF, Chief Minister Chaliha was said to have intervened and allowed his release after getting a letter of apology signed by Pu Laldenga.” \(^{18}\)

The Assam government with full knowledge neglected the preparations of the MNF for armed rebellion. The Chief Minister Ch. Chhunga often reported to the Assam Government the imminent danger of the MNF activities. But the Assam Government did not take any measure to curb the activities which led the MNF leaders and volunteers move freely without any hindrance. The inhumane treatment provided by the Assam government upon the Mizo people which was carried on due to the political issue during the famine as remarked by N.C Asthana and Anjali Nirmal “Sowed the seeds of resentment which came to be directed against the Government of India.”\(^{19}\)

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\(^{19}\) N.C. Ashthana & Anjali Nirmal, *Terrorism, Insurgencies and Counter Insurgency Operations* (Jaipur ,Pointer publishers, 2001) p.151
4) **Foreign Aid:** An important cause for the outbreak of insurgency was the support received from the foreign countries, especially Pakistan. Pakistan was eager to sabotage Indian government and strain her economy. Apart from Pakistani help, The MNF tried to get aid from other countries like British and Americans. According to the information about the MNF given by Pu Damkhoseik to Fang Khui, the Commander of pausing army of China, on January 5, 1974;

“Before the revolution in Mizoram (March 1st 1966) our leaders had sought the help from western countries in 1961 and 1962 especially from the British and Americans, ambassadors of these countries were approached several times. Their words were so sweet but no action. After realizing their attitude towards us, our leaders made a decision not to make further contacts with them.”

Meanwhile Pakistan assured the MNF arms and ammunitions, training facilities in guerilla warfare, above all sanctuary in East Pakistan. In early December, 1963, Laldenga accompanied by Lalnummawia, MNF Vice-President and Sainghaka, MNF Defence Secretary, directly crossed over to East Pakistan. The three was received by top military functionaries of the Pakistani Government. The Pakistanis had already inaugurated sophisticated military bases for the Nagas. The Mizo objective too was obvious a base, guns and financial aid. Just to disrupt and strain India’s integrity and economy, the Pakistani Government agreed to provide financial aid and assistance, training facilities, financial assistance and safe refuge to the MNF rebels. When the MNF started combing operations, the MNF took shelter in the Chittagong Hills in East Pakistan. The MNF insurgents were for the first time provided training in Maimensing district of East Pakistan secretly. When the first 21 cadres underwent a training programme, no civilians knew that the training was going on. When the training was over, Pakistanis gave them two light machine guns, twenty one rifles,

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fifteen sten guns, three Tommy guns, two .45 pistols and two boxes of hand grenade, two boxes of ammunitions each containing thousands rounds of Bullets, 15 boxes of ammunitions each containing 250 bullets, and 1000 rounds of Tommy gun. All 21 cadres who underwent the training programme were given a sum of Rs 500/- for their pocket money. Help were provided to the MNF even after the outbreak of armed attack of the MNF on the Indian Government. Many volunteers and leaders sought asylum in Pakistan during insurgency. The interest generated by China and Pakistan to the happenings in the North-East is an open secret. There has been clandestine understanding between the Mizo undergrounds, Naga rebels and extremist Tripuris with the Chinese and Pakistanis for the supply of arms and ammunitions, financial aid, training facilities etc. Laldenga, in his intention to internationalize the Mizo cause tried to attract the wider attention. He sent letter to Sukarno the president of Indonesia, in his letter he wrote

“Historians claim that we the Mizo people are the Mongoloids originated times immemorial from the southern parts of china and migrated towards the present habitat between India and Burma, through the Shan states of Burma in about the 15th century A.D. Our chiefs ruled over separate hills and valleys with supreme authority and their administration was very much like that of the Greek city states of the past. India’s top leaders and spokesmen like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru released a press statement on 9 August, 1946 and said “The tribal areas are defined as being those along the frontiers of India which are neither part of India nor of Burma nor of an Indian state nor of any foreign power.”

Besides these, Laldenga also tried to make contact with the Burmese authorities, but without any tangible result. However, the help of some foreign countries in the form of finance, arms and ammunitions enable the MNF to rise in open revolt without which the poor organization like them could not launch a big campaign against India.

23 Laldenga’s letter to President Sukarno of Indonesia, Dt. 20.1.1966
5) **Charismatic leadership of Laldenga**: The charismatic leadership of Laldenga also contributed much to the outbreak of insurgency. He was an ex-Havildar of the army, and worked as a cashier in the Mizo District Council office at Aizawl. But when he saw the people die of starvation due to *mautam famine*, he was rudely shocked by the incidents and gave up his fruitful job and founded the MNFF. He became the Secretary of the front. Though they could not work sufficiently, he gained popularity among the Mizos. When the famine was over the famine front changed itself to a political party known as MNF. He was elected as the first president and was a fiery orator. While he was in Calcutta he used to talk with U.S Consul General who convinced him to fight for independence. His organizing skill and oratory skill enabled him to strengthen MNF at its darkest hour. He vacated his post in the Government and traveled in the length and breadth of Mizoram. While campaigning, his family at home lived a miserable life. He negotiated with the leaders of foreign countries who were at one time the back-bone of the MNF insurgency. When he was arrested in 1963, a pledge was signed by him not to re-activate independence policy. He signed it without hesitation and when got released, he continued a fierce campaign in favour of independence. His influencing behaviour convinced the youngsters of the Mizo district and his capacity to make B.P Chaliha a blind folded man had shown his innate quality. Like other insurgent leaders who were regarded as the father of their respective nations, the MNF volunteers regarded him as the saviour and when he died, many Mizos accepted him as ‘Father of Mizo nation’. His charismatic leadership encouraged the freedom fighters fight till their last breath.

6) **Ex-Servicemen**: Apart from the above causes, there were many reasons which directly or indirectly played an important role in the beginning of insurgency initiated by the MNF. The MNF got the sympathy and support of different types of people. Mizos were regarded as good soldiers when the Britishers were in India. They also regarded themselves as a gallant people.
Many Mizos were recruited in the army. The second Assam Regiment mutinied at Srinagar airfield on June 3, 1961. Havildar Biakvela and few others who were the ring leaders were court-martialed and punished in keeping with the gravity of their offences. Many of them were dismissed from service and others released from the army service. Unfortunately, the second battalion of the Assam Regiment having many Mizos at its strength was disbanded. No step to rehabilitate the discharged army personnel was taken by the government. Neither they could find gainful employment in the Hills nor had the access to opportunities elsewhere in the country. So they were dissatisfied, frustrated and disgusted completely. The disgruntled and dismissed personnel, who had come back to Mizo Hills District gladly, joined the new political party started by ex-Havildar clerk Laldenga. “Being their comrade in arms, the released and dismissed personnel of Assam regiment did not require any inducement or persuasion to join the MNF, a party which wanted independence from the Indian union.” Many of them became the hard-core guerrillas to fight for Mizo independence. While the prospect of independence appealed to them, they joined the movement and became the trainers of the volunteers in using arms and ammunitions.

7) Students: The students at the higher level were also influenced by the MNF independence policy, especially the educated unemployed youths. Laldenga had greatly influenced the young Mizo college students of Shillong with his long talks and promises, and converted many of them to the MNF way of thinking. Moreover, the educated unemployed youths who passed out from schools and colleges every year did not find suitable employment avenues in the district and the army of unemployed youths was swelling every year. So these angry and frustrated young men had joined the MNF party to use it as their opportunity to express their discontentment. The educated youths who joined

24 Ibid, p.17
the party became the backbone of the party in its fight for independence and the brain behind the MNF insurgency.

8) **Religious Factor**: Christianity had reached the Mizos in 1894 with the coming of the two Missionaries of Arthington mission viz. J.H. Lorraine and F.W. Savidge. Special revivals brought about phenomenal success of the gospel preaching in Mizoram and by the end of the Second World War in 1945, the whole land comprising Mizoram embraced Christianity and the percentage of Christian religion has come up to 95 percent: it became the major force of the social life of the Mizos. Their way of life and their way of thinking were directly controlled by the new religion. Meanwhile the majority population of India is constituted by the Hindus. The leaders of the MNF manipulated the religious fanaticism in the minds of the Mizos to become the factor for alienation. In the words of Brig. C.G Verghese and R.L. Thanzawna

> “The Mizo youth were inspired by the Mizo nationalism, and the faith that they have to fight for the survival of Christianity, like the Muslims have been fighting their Jihad. MNF had propagated that they are fighting a war of God. This thought kept the morale of the Mizo boys who had joined the MNF and its volunteer force high and made them willing to suffer and even die. They would be considered as heroes and martyrs by all the Mizos - they were told.”

The popular slogan of the MNF at that time till the present is ‘For God and country’.

9) **The discontentment of the old Chiefs**: There was a deep discontent among the Mizos due to the abolition of chieftainship. The formation of the “commoner” Mizo Union demanding the abolition of chieftainship alarmed the chiefs and traditional elites who banded together to form the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) in July 1947. The formation of this political party was initiated by Lalmawia with the support of the Mizo chiefs and blessings of the then superintendent On July 5, 1947. The Mizo chiefs supported

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25 Ibid, p.21
UMFO only because of their enmity towards the Mizo Union. But, the newly formed “United Mizo Freedom Organisation” (UMFO), which was opposing the Mizo Union and championing the cause of the chiefs, was not looked upon with much favour 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. With the bold initiative taken by the Mizo Union with the support of the Assam Congress Government 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 political status deprived the chiefs and their ministers of all their privileges and thereby abolished the chieftainship in Mizoram. The rights and interest of 259 Lushai and 50 Pawi - Lakher chiefs were taken over by elected village councils. However, all the chiefs were compensated in cash for the loss of their power and tribute. The old chiefs, from the beginning of campaign against their position sought the way to curb any kid of campaigns that endangered their position. But when the step was implemented for the abolition of chieftainship, the old chiefs being paupers accused the government of Assam for their plight. Meanwhile, the UMFO party which was looked upon by the chiefs as a party to champion their cause could not last long because it lacked any constructive programmes and economic policy, the main cause of its failure of poor financial backing. After few years UMFO had merged with the East India Tribal Union (EITU) under the chairmanship of Capt. Williamson Sangma. The disgruntled chiefs supported the MNF as the MNF were the strongest political party who stand against the policies of the Mizo Union.

During these days when the storm of independence has engulfed the people’s feeling, there was an incident to worsen the matter. The central government appointed a “Three member commission on the hill areas of Assam” in 1965 under the chairmanship of H.V Pataskar to look into the affairs
of the District councils and their future. The commission came to Aizawl in 1965 to look into the political situation. They submitted twenty six recommendations for the administration of the hill areas of Assam. The MNF were discontented with the report of the commission. As it recommend the continued control of the Mizo District Council by the Assam government. At a time when they might not be contented with the separate statehood for Mizos, the continued control of the Assam Government over the Mizos was an unacceptable term for the Mizos. In pursuance of the memorandum submitted by the MNF to the Prime minister of India in 1965, on January 19, 1966, a member of planning commission, Tarlok Singh came to Aizawl to study 'the political situation in Mizoram. Mizoram, the most neglected area in India became the headache of the Indian leadership and was, therefore, visited by Indian dignitaries one after another.26

In such a time when the peoples’ feeling were vehemently against the Indian Government whom the people felt as an alien, the move for an armed struggle was inevitable. The leaders of MNF understood that they would not be able to achieve independence without bloodshed. The MNF volunteers, who underwent military training in Pakistan, gave armed training to the volunteers in various places and some rifles were distributed for training. The possession of arms and military training conducted in villages were open secret. The volunteers were organized in three categories, such as active combatant force called the Mizo army, The Mizo National Volunteers (MNV) who underwent military training and were ready to join the army if and when they were called to do so, and women and children who were to render their services in any possible way to the cause of independence.

**Mizo National Army (MNA)**

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The fighting force of the MNF was known as the Mizo National Army (MNA). It comprised of the Army headquarters with staff officers and Dagger brigade and Lion brigade, prepared by Maj. General C. Thangkima, the Adjutant General, and this organization was approved by the president of “Mizoram Sawrkar” on February 1, 1967. The Army had a total strength of 2,230 officers and men. In order to join the Mizo National Army, a person had first to become a volunteer and pass training in the volunteer training centre. However persons with special qualifications or training were allowed to be recruited direct, subject to the approval of the authority concerned. The Army was under a strict rule of the MNF and was subjected not to behave wildly; some restrictions were laid down by the authorities of the MNF to be followed by the Army men. The MNA men were prohibited from doing the following:

(a) To surrender to enemy government
(b) To help enemy government.
(c) To rebel against “Mizoram Sawrkar”
(d) To secretly communicate the secrets of “Mizo Sawrkar” to enemy government.
(e) To betray Christian religion.
(f) To rape married women, unmarried women and minor girls.
(g) To disrespect religions and create troubles in religious gatherings and sermons.
(h) To steal and forcibly take away belongings of others (This did not include the belongings of the enemy)
(i) To destroy vegetation (crops) and property.
(j) To murder (enemy of Mizo Sawrkar not included)
(k) To conspire for the overthrow of leaders.
(l) To lose destroy or dispose of weapons or utilize them for purpose other than specified or change the shape etc. of the weapons.
(m) Not to disobey orders of superiors.
(n) Not to neglect their duties.
(o) Not to misbehave.
(p) Not to be insubordinate.
(q) To manhandle or attempt to manhandle superiors.
(r) To threaten superiors.
(s) To get drunk and create trouble thereby.
(t) To fight among themselves and gamble.
(u) To absent from parade and roll call, and.
(v) To run away from the battlefield, leaving the leader.

Breach of the above mentioned stipulation entailed penalty up to death depending upon the seriousness of the offence. If a Mizo soldier contacts venereal disease he has to bear the cost of medical treatment and surrender pay during his period of treatment besides imprisonment up to eight days. But after sometimes, due to shortage of food supplies, lack of military aid from Pakistan, indiscipline and inefficiency of the MNV units, the MNA was restructured and many volunteers were sent back, some posts were also abolished. The previous five commands of the MNV viz. Central, eastern, Northern, Western and southern were regrouped into two commands, as Western and Eastern commands. Each command was given a brigade with four battalions. The MNV became more united and efficient after the reorganization. The volunteers were the backbone of the MNF to fight for their goals and were inspired by the leaders to feel that they were superior to the fighting force of their contemporary in the North-East.

One may be surprised at the swift progress made by the MNF at this time. People, especially the villagers were not aware of the newly-born independent
oriented politics, but the tremendous progress of the MNF like a wildfire was a result of the accumulation of many factors which can be summed up as follows:

1) The origin of the MNF can be traced back to the Mizo cultural society which was organized on the basis of the tribe. This clan-based organization renovates the alien feeling of the Mizos against the mainstream Indians known as the “Vais” by the Mizos. The speech and deeds of the society attracted much attention of the Mizos. Soon after the society got changed as MNF the people put their trust in the new political party which was a clan-based party.

2) The Mizo National Famine Front followed the Cultural Society which was the mother of the MNF engrossed the attention of the people. The deep frustration upon the Assam and Indian government helped the Front to gain popularity, people were in touch with the Front when looking at the activities and help provided by the Front

3) When the MNF party started functioning as a full-fledged party, The Eastern India Tribal Union experienced its fade. Many party men of EITU sought for substitute and that golden chance was caught up by the dawn of the new party.

4) The All Party Hills leader Conference (APHLC) also met challenge from inside, the friction inside the party and a strange feeling of the Mizo leaders in the party paved the way for the strengthening of the MNF party.

5) The propaganda of nationality advocated by the leaders of the party easily convinced the peoples’ feeling. The MNF leaders propagated that the Mizos since its origin were not Indians, their antecedents were the Mongolians as and when the Indians were of the Dravidian and Aryan race. The cultural difference and difference in way of life as well as difference that lies in religion and worship was manipulated by the MNF leaders to claim that the
Mizo and Indian remain different. Their standpoint was confirmed by themselves by quoting the different customary laws that the Mizos have been practicing since time immemorial.

6) The memorandum submitted by the representatives of the chiefs and commoners to the Indian government that the Mizos shall be under India for ten years, after which they shall have the right to secede from the union if they wish was mobilized by the MNF and define that the Mizos has the legal rights to secede from the Indian union if they wish. Their advocacy was backed by written documents to be shown to those who want to see it. This resulted in the peoples trust in them.

7) Religious assimilation was another point used by the MNF to convince people. Majority of the Indian population was constituted by the Hindus which might be dangerous for religious minorities. Their hold was intensified by the visit paid by the officials of Indian Government on Sundays. The visit of the officials on Sunday was taken as religious underestimation by the people.

8) The People were driven to the point that to be a part of India means to dilute in the Hindu religious styles.

9) The oratory skill of the president Laldenga could not be set aside. The youths of the time were caught up in his oratory and organizing skill. In any of the public debate, his stand was clearly advocated and won the hearts of the youths who further were the holder of their own world. He traveled to different parts of the country and won the hearts of the youths to enroll as a member of the new party.

10) As already mentioned, the songs and symbols of the MNF party was an influencing weapon developed by the party on the minds of the Mizos. The rhythm and lyrics of the party song was an inspiration for the youths of the
time. The message was carried on by the song to different places which strengthens the birth and growth of the party.

**Submission of memorandum and the outbreak of Insurgency:** By the end of the year 1965, the Patasker Commission under the chairmanship of H.V. Patasker met Laldenga and other leaders who told the commission about the grievances of the Mizos as a whole. The MNF leaders showed him a copy of the memorandum submitted to the Prime minister of India on October 30, 1965. (See Appendix-I). After the visit of Patasker, Tarlok Singh, Member of Planning Commission visited Mizoram on January 9, 1966. The Mizo Union leaders boycotted him, whereas the MNF leaders met him and gave him their suggestions; simultaneously the MNF leaders were making hectic preparations for an armed revolt in Mizo Hills District. After Tarlok Singh’s visit, the Patasker Commission again visited Aizawl on February 7, 1966 which was again boycotted by the Mizo Union, the MNF leaders also boycotted. Patasker proposed the Scottish pattern to be practiced in Mizoram, but Laldenga suggested him to read the Scottish pattern as it was not convenient for the District to imitate. The Patasker Commission had failed to appease the MNF leaders. On February 2, 1966 the Governor of Assam Vishnu Sahay visited Aizawl, in connection with the ex-servicemen’s’ rally. Sainghaka and few MNF leaders met the Governor. The Governor did not want to discuss political affairs as he had come to inaugurate the ex-servicemen’s’ rally. He advised the young Mizo leaders to encourage the Mizo youth to join armed forces in larger numbers.

On account of the memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister, the MNF leaders were aware of the fact that time shall come to stand on their own. The skeleton of the new government was set up by imitating the formation of Presidential type of Government practiced by the United States of America. The proposed ministers were designated as secretaries. There were two houses viz.
House of Representatives and the Senate. The members of the Senate were selected from amongst the experienced and the educated, while the members of House of Representatives were from the party executive members and the Presidents of all the blocks. Sainghaka was appointed as the Home Secretary. R. Zamawia was appointed as the Defence Secretary, Lal khawliana as Finance Secretary. Lalhmingthanga was appointed as the Foreign Secretary, Ngurkunga as the Publicity Secretary and J.F Manliana as Chief Justice of the newly-born sovereign state, Mizoram was divided into four regions viz. Lurh region, Phawngpui region, Run region an Dampa region. It was planned that each of the regions should be administered by the chief commissioner. The volunteers were to be converted to the army and as such it was divided into three commands viz. Eastern command, Western command and southern command. The ex-Subedar of the Indian army Thangzuala was appointed as Army chief and was given the rank of Major General.27 But these proposals were not openly publicized.

The situation was ripe for a conflict. An important executive committee was said to have been held at Aizawl on February 27, 1966. The MNF Senate had 6 members and the House of Representatives had 24 members. Though Laldenga had the final say in all matters, no decision could be taken without the approval of the MNF Sawrkar. They decided February 28, 1966 as the D day and the midnight as the zero hour. Later it was pre-poned to 7 p.m. At about 8 O’ clock on February 27, Laldenga had final discussion with Sainghaka, Zamawia, Thankima and Ngurchhina and few others to decide the ‘D’ day and ‘zero hour’. In the meeting most of the attendants were against the declaration of independence. But the hardcore leaders of volunteers urged them to declare it as they were in the point of no return. So Laldenga on the recommendation of the hardcore leaders decided to start the revolt at midnight of February 28-March 1, 1966. Laldenga signed some letters and dispatched them through some volunteers to Lunglei and Champhai, giving his last minute instruction. Since

instruction to all MNVs for starting simultaneous attacks on all security posts in
the Mizo hills on the night of Feb 28-1 March, 1966 had already been
dispatched all had agreed to the date and time decided by the Executive
committee. The MNF planned to organize a surprise attack on all the police
force, including the Assam rifles Battalion deployed in the Mizo Hills District
and to capture the treasuries and petrol pumps. The MNF gave the code name
‘Operation Jericho’ for this operation.

On February 28, 1966 the MNF volunteers were preparing for the zero
hour. The two parties held a weapon preparation, accidentally, one of the parties
who cleaned their weapons at Lalnuntluanga’s house exploded a hand grenade
which caused the death of Rokima, and others were badly wounded. The Assam
Rifles in their pill boxes heard the blast and were warned by the blast for the
probable mischief. So, they all were alerted to keep a close watch on the
movements of the MNVs and their activities around their posts. The Defence
Secretary R.Zamawia had called off the attack of the Assam rifles post due to
the accident. But some of the volunteers looted the Aizawl treasury, a sum of
Rs. 20,000/- in cash was said to have been looted.

Apart from actions in Aizawl, the MNF militia assembled at different
points to make a surprise attack on the military posts at Champhai, Lunglei,
Vairengte, Chawngte, Chhimluang and Demagiri. The first action took place at
around 10:30 pm on the 28th February, 1966 when a gang of 500 to 1000
attacked camp of security forces an on Assam rifles post at Lunglei.28 This
offensive assault was beaten back with few casualties on both sides. Meanwhile
in Aizawl, great volunteer forces began to make their assault on Telephone
exchange at around 2:00 AM on the 1st March and at 3:00 AM on the same day
in which a group of 100 to 150 persons armed with Lathis surrounded the SDO,
PWD and threatened him to leave Mizoram. They snatched the key of

departmental stores from the chowkider and robbed the store and took away the jeep for use by the “Mizoram Sawrkar”

In Champhai, the attackers were on the same night able to take the Assam rifle camp by surprise and captured it without resistance. Two platoons of riflemen were taken prisoners with all the arms and ammunitions being looted. All the security posts in thee Mizo hills had been attacked by the MNF volunteers dawn on March 1, 1966. Soon after the first explosion of independence struggle took place, the MNF declared independence (See Appendix II, Declaration of Independence) and all the offices and educational institutions were ordered to remain closed for celebrating the Independence Day. It was the beginning of twenty years of sorrow for the common peoples of Mizoram. In the words of K.M Zakhuma “Since then, Mizoram entered into a violent phase of freedom struggle with normal life completely disrupted all over the district.”

COUNTER-INSURGENCY MEASURES

On March 2, 1966, the Government of Assam declared the district as a disturbed area both under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1958 and also under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958. Troops were dispatched to Aizawl by air and road. The armed police forces were placed under the operational control of the army for dealing with disturbances. The army was placed in charge of the operation for as long as necessary in support of the civil administration. The army reached Aizawl on the evening of 6th March. They successfully covered the 112 miles journey clearing obstructions on the way and repairing the breaches caused by the hostiles. The security posts on the way which had been under the hostile attack were fully cleared and secured and a number of those involved were captured. The road between Aizawl and Silchar was opened for traffic. The security forces gained complete control of the

headquarters of the District. Life in Aizawl returned to normalcy. The functioning of the offices was resumed. The security forces were receiving cooperation of the loyal elements. What little resistance was put up by the armed Mizo forces was effectively countered by the troops.

On March 7 1966, Lalnunmawia, the Vice President of the MNF sent a letter to the D.C of the Mizo Hills offering peace talks with the Government. The D.C sternly rejected the suggestion and demanded the unconditional surrender of the MNF to the Government within 24 hours. One of the leaders replied that the top leaders were away and that a reply to the D.C letter would be sent later on. The army marched towards Lunglei but the town was completely under the control of the rebels. The army threatened to bomb it. The church leaders interfered and requested the army not to bomb the town and that they would secure its surrender. There was practically no resistance. The troops entered Lunglei on 13\textsuperscript{th} March, Champhai on the next day and Demagiri on the 17\textsuperscript{th} March. All the important towns and posts were cleared of the influence of the armed forces of the MNF. The MNF volunteers took to the jungles, Pakistan and Burma.

On March 6, 1966, the MNF was declared as an unlawful association under the Defence of India Rule. This was done as the central Government was satisfied that the MNF was an organization whose members and the persons in control whereof, were indulging in activities detrimental to the security of the Mizo Hills District in the state of Assam and of the adjoining parts of the territory of India. Under this order, any one who manages, promotes, or attends the meetings of the organization, publishes any notice or advertisement relating to such meetings, invites persons to support the organization or in any way assists its operation, becomes liable to prosecution and the maximum punishment of seven years imprisonment and fine. The order further empowers the central and state governments to notify and take possession of the place used
for the purpose of the MNF and the movable property found at such places and to seize the funds of the Front.

The state government dropped one lakh of leaflets in the Mizo Hills District to acquaint the people of the facts and to warn them not to take part in any unlawful activity. After a visit to Delhi, the Chief Minister of Assam announced on December 19, 1966 that Mizo rebels who surrender with their arms would be granted amnesty. Liberalised terms of amnesty for the MNF were notified by the Government of India on January 31, 1967 and to give wide publicity, the printed leaflets containing these terms were dropped from helicopters.

The moderates among the underground were persuaded to come over ground and lead a normal life. This policy produced rich dividends. Many insurgents surrendered themselves together with their arms and ammunitions and swore loyalty to the Indian Constitution John F. Manliana having heard the amnesty of the Government surrendered to the security forces on December 31, 1966 at Momcherra along with his three bodyguards and was granted amnesty. On August 21, 1967, a gang of 2 armed and 539 unarmed MNVs surrendered to the Security forces and obtained all the rehabilitation benefits from the government in 1968 a total of 1,929 Mizo volunteers had surrendered. The educated and sensible leaders of the MNF had already realized the futility of a violent struggle for freedom against a movement which was sympathetic towards their aspiration. These surrenders undermined the strength of the MNF and demoralized them. By November 1975, the M.N.F was in complete disarray and found it difficult to carry on its activities.

The economic backwardness of the district, which was used by the MNF to influence the people, was attended to by the Government. Schemes were prepared for the economic development of the area. The North Eastern Council also prepared some schemes for the purpose. Again, a separate University for
the Mizos was what the MNF claimed for. In partial fulfillment of this demand, the North Eastern Hill University has established a university centre and postgraduate classes in certain subjects in Aizawl, Mizoram. The full fledged Mizoram University however, was established by the Act of Parliament on 2000 A.D. This was part of the agreement signed during the Peace Accord.

**Grouping of Villages:** The most effective means of counter-insurgency measures taken by the military was grouping of Villages. A number of small villages were grouped together in nearby big villages for military convenience. The villagers were driven out of their shelter and grouped them into a nearby big village. Military camps were posted in such protective Village. The grouping of village scheme was known as Progressive and Protective Villages (PPVs). It was undertaken by invoking the Defence of India Rule (IR) 1957. The scheme was undertaken to reduce the defence problems, there were about one thousand villages in the district where the population was unevenly distributed, while some of the villages contained only hundred persons, some villages contained more than thousand population. Posting of military camp in every village was practically impossible. The military therefore, shifted the people from the small villages in the interior to the main road and constituted big villages. All the grouping centres were securely fenced with either bamboo or wooden spikes for the protection of rebel’s access. This made the security personnel to easily check the movements of the volunteers from one village to another.

Apart from the security, the grouping system was expected to provide economic improvement of the people. The Planning Commission recommended as early as 1965 that the tiny villages should be grouped together so that they may be provided with a greater number of social services and at the same time enables them to sell their produce profitably. As such these PPVs were to be established along the main roads and certain other selected areas. Selection of
sites for the grouping centres was determined on the basis of location, availability of means of transport and communications, climatic conditions, availability of land for Jhum cultivation and feasibility of economic development. To help the people in these PPVs, civil officials were posted, civil supply godowns were set up and schools, pharmacies and cooperatives were opened. Land for cultivation and seeds were provided by the Government. Initially free rations were distributed for about a week until people from isolated villages re-settled themselves in a new centre. Almost all parts of the district were affected by the scheme. The grouping of villages resulted in moving 80 percent of the rural population an 60 percent of the total population. Between 4th January and 23rd February 1967, 109 villages were grouped in 18 group centers on the main road of Vairengte – Aizawl - Lunglei, followed by grouping of other 185 villages to 41 group centers in 1968 and later 63 villages in 26 centres. Moveable and immoveable properties of the villages that could not be carried away by the time of their removal from their villages were burnt down by the security forces.

The grouping of villages for military and civil convenience was an imitation of the past policy of the western countries. In the words of C.Nunthara “The grouping of villages was modeled after the 1957 regrouping, launched by the British, chiefly against the Chinese squatters in Malaya after World War-II and against the Vietcong in South Vietnam by the U.S.A.” But certain areas like Aizawl to Thenzawl were not affected by the grouping because they were adequately protected. Similarly, the Central and South-Eastern part of the Pawi-Lakher region was also not affected. After the scheme was implemented, the MNF volunteers met a serious problem in approaching the centers as there were military camps in each of the centres. The strength of the MNF had been tremendously checked and also the morale went down.

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE INSURGENCY

The present Mizoram State which was struck by the shadow of insurgency starting from 1966 had experienced the darkness of the prolonged insurgency. The declaration of “Independence” of Mizoram by the MNF on 1st March of 1966 marked the beginning of the protracted political problem between the Indian Government and the Mizo people. The strength of the counter-insurgency measures and the failure of the MNF to work out with its own plan have made the insurgency fade away after within few years. The MNF led insurgency had many shortcomings. Some of the factors can be summarized as under.

1. Rift among the MNF leaders: No movement can attain a fruitful result unless the leaders of the movement were closely tied up. The MNF movement was one of a kind led by a charismatic effort. The influence of Laldenga in the party as well as the movement was unquestionable; this was the stark reality of the movement which has weakened the movement. The “MNF Sawrkar” (MNF Government) was like a nominal authority to approve the words of Laldenga. Brig C.G Verghese and R.L Thanzawna rightly pointed out “Pu Laldenga was not prepared to share his power with any one else.”31 The decision was mostly taken by Laldenga and it was put to the MNF Sawrkar for its approval.

The autocratic leadership of Laldenga within the party was unchallenged, whenever there appeared competent leaders, they themselves put into the edge within the party. The first able leader after Laldenga was Sainghaka who was popular among the volunteers. Being a volunteer leader at a time when the storm of MNF hit the length and breath of the Mizo dominated areas, he was the feasible Defence Secretary as thought by most of the volunteers, but was appointed as the Home Secretary of the MNF Sawrkar. The MNF volunteers were surprised at the appointment of Sainghaka as the Home secretary while he

was looked to be appointed as the Defence Secretary. Rumours were afloat that Laldenga couldn’t see the rise of Sainghaka (for Sainghaka was most popular at that time).

As the leadership of Laldenga did not satisfy the party men, the proposal for change of system of the Government was ruled out, with the excuse that “it involved a lot of changes and undoing what has already been done” The general body meeting held at Sialsir from 11 to 15 December, 1966 showed the attitudinal split within the party due to the autocratic rule of their President. Some of the leaders openly criticized him for not getting enough foreign aid. He and his foreign ministers were also criticized for living a comfortable life while the volunteers were living a miserable life of sufferings. Many decisions were taken including the appointment of Lalnunmawia to take over the duties of the president and the Defence Minister for an interim period up to February 1967 till Laldenga returns from East Pakistan. Having led the MNF gangs in the forests for over three years in Mizo Hills and in East Pakistan, Lalnunmawia had become a popular leader of the rank and file of the MNF, but there was no difference as was in the case of Sainghaka, Laldenga could not tolerate any other popular leader in the MNF. Recognizing a rival in Lalnunmawia, he created and encouraged his support group in the MNF as well as the MNA units. On learning about the secret efforts of the Vice President, to grab all powers, Laldenga asked him to come to Dacca, so as to brief him about the latest developments including the efforts of the peace committee to start peace talks. Laldenga intended to impeach the Vice President, in the joint session of the MNF parliament at Mahmuam.\textsuperscript{32} It was contended that Lalnunmawia had acted un-constitutionally in launching MNA operations in Chin Hills of Burma; in depriving the MNF senators and MPs of their privilege and in refusing to give Presidential assent to legislations passed by the Parliament. However, the attempt to impeach him failed due to lack of majority support. But this

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, p.101
impeachment and the accusation of Lalnunmawia in many so-called unconstitutional cases brought a tangible rift among the leaders and the weakening of the insurgent group within itself.

Soon after the beginning of the insurgency, the inner circle of the MNF was divided into two ideological groups- One group wanted to continue their fight for independence while the other, consisting of the educated lot, wanted to have peace negotiations with Government of India and accept statehood within the Indian union. Vice President Lalnunmawia, Lalkhawliana, Lahlminthanga, Thangkima and Zamawia belonged to the second group. Lalkhawliana was the leader of this group. Laldenga, as Supreme commander of the MNF and having the support of the ex-servicemen who were commanding the MNA units, managed to win the day. The intellectual group of Lalkhawliana was referred by the other groups as Dumpawl or “Blue Party.”

The rift among the MNF party leaders due to the supreme command of Laldenga and his personal attitudes as well as the difference of attitudes among the MNF party was one of the main weaknesses of the insurgency. The goal of the party was “Independence,” but the practical implementation was impossible for a disintegrated insurgent group within the union of India.

2. Mizo Union and their policy of statehood The first political party formed on April 9, 1946 by R.Vanlawma was christened as the Mizo Common People Union, but was later called the Mizo Commoners’ Union. In order to absorb the chiefs section, the name ‘Commoners’ made a hindrance and then was changed to Mizo Union. A very important landmark in the political history of Mizo Union was the nomination of Saprawnga as member of Rajya Sabha in 1950. In 1952, the first general election in the country was held. In this election Mizo District was allotted three seats in the Assam Legislative assembly. All the three seats for the Assam assembly were captured by the Mizo Union. Since

33 Ibid, p.78
then, they were the major political party of the Mizos and their influence was much as they won the confidence of the people.

The Mizo Union had the policy of a ‘separate hill state’ for the Mizos. When the MNF reared their head demanding ‘Independence’ for the Mizos, the Mizo Union and its leaders launched a staunch campaign against the independence policy. They submitted more than once to the then chief minister of Assam P.B Chaliha that the MNF were an imminent threat to the integration of India. But, the chief minister wanted to use the newly born party to check the strength of Mizo Union. The Mizo Union leaders were aware of the fact that the Chief Minster neglected their reports for his attitude against them and the activities of the MNF were un-constitutional. Then, they submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi on June 22, 1966, alleging that, in his bid to overthrow the Mizo Union Party, B.P Chaliha had gone to the extent of lending active and material support to MNF, an organization which stood for the disintegration of the union of India. To him, the disintegration of the state of Assam as a state was more serious than the amputation of Mizo Hills District from India. The Mizo Union leaders were active in countering the idea of independence imbibed to the minds of the people by the MNF. The result of their activities was that many of the Mizos were aware of the difficulty of independence and as a result, gave up the idea of independence. One of the leaders of the union A.Thanglura often said that Independence is like that of diving into a sloping stone. In their meeting with the MNF leaders before the action starts, Ch. Chhunga, the president of Mizo Union told Laldenga that “Violence results only poverty, The Mizo Union shall in no way be a helping hand for the Movement…”

Prior to the actual starting of the insurgency, Ch.Chhunga wrote a pamphlet known as “Definition of MNF false propaganda” and was released

34 Dr. James Dokhuma, _Mizoram Chief Minister Hmasa Ber CH.Chhunga Chanchin_ (Biography of Ch. Chhunga, The first Chief Minister of Mizoram) (Aizawl, Gilzom offset press, 1999) p. 85.
for public on August 12, 1963. On 3rd Paragraph Of the pamphlet he wrote that “Can the Mizos attain Independence? The inevitable answer is NO...”35 In this definition he briefly defines the false propagandas of the MNF which were used to mobilize the peoples’ attitudes. Ch. Chhunga clearly clarifies the impossibility of independence by indicating the cases of Katanga, Naga and the Dravidians; he clarifies his stand and invited the MNF to give up fighting by adding “They could not attain independence. So, instead of striving for the impossible, it is more fruitful to pay the utmost effort for statehood.”36 Ch. Chhunga himself told Malsawma Colney, the MNF Emergency Commission Chairman, saying “I don’t want independence, for our nation doesn’t afford. I feel that to be a state under the Government of India is the best possible way for a poor country like us.”37 The efforts of the Mizo Union was tangible when the MNF started the action, many Mizos were convinced that to fight for independence was worthless. Even after the insurgency was started, the Mizo Union propounded their demand for statehood and their leaders were busy in eliminating the insurgency through peaceful means. The MNF insurgency was countered by the Mizos themselves through Mizo Union which was very effective measure against the bloody revolution of the MNF.

3. Scarcity of foodstuffs: Any of the insurgent groups are like leeches sucking the blood of the bigger ones, which come and run away after blowing a hit. The MNF rebels depended on the foodstuffs supplied by the villagers all through their movements, especially before the grouping of village scheme was introduced. The underground volunteers came out from their hideout and drew their food supply from the villagers. Whenever the security forces were approaching the village near their camp, the volunteers easily shifted to another place and drew their foods from the nearby village. But from

35 “Definition of MNF false propaganda” A pamphlet printed and published by the Mizo Union General Headquarters at the Aizawl Press, Aijal. 12.8.’63
36 Dr. James Dokhuma, Op. cit, p.5
37 Ibid, p.151
January 1967 most of the villages were grouped together for checking the insurgency. In all, 357 villages were grouped together in 85 grouping centres. All the grouping centres were securely fenced with either bamboo or wooden spikes for the protection of rebel’s access. These works were done by the civilians under the supervision of the security forces without being remunerated. Initially free rations were also given for about a week or so until people were re-established in their new homes in the PPVs (Progressive and Protected Villages). The MNF insurgents showed a very hostile attitude towards the Grouping scheme. They asked the villagers not to shift into the “Concentration camps” set up by the Indian army. The MNF propaganda department also spread rumours about the free issue of rice in grouping centres as “Contaminated rice” and tried their best to prevent the shifting but with no response. The economic condition of the people in the grouping centres was greatly reduced and the hungry living was a stark reality of the people’s condition. No cultivable lands were wide enough to satisfy the people’s needs; as such scarcity of foodstuffs was inevitably happen. The villagers were not capable of supplying foods to the insurgents. The insurgents found it difficult to approach the villages, and their access was carefully watched by the security forces. The insurgents met a problem of scarcity of foodstuffs. “No hungry man is a brave man” as said by Brig. T. Sailo was justified by the insurgents, and this problem of scarcity of foodstuffs had weakened the insurgent movement as well as the peoples’ living in the grouping centres.

4. **Amnesty from the Government:** India had an experience that amnesty is the feasible policy to eliminate the hostile activities. The MNF insurgency has its roots in the economic deprivation; many volunteers also stepped out to challenge the sovereignty of India due to their poverty. On December 19, 1966, the Chief Minister of Assam announced that Mizo rebels

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38 Between 4th January and 23rd February 1967, 109 villages were grouped in 18 group centers on the main road of Vairengte – Aizawl- Lunglei, followed by grouping of other 185 villages to 41 group centres in 1968 and later 63 villages in 26 centres.
who surrender with their arms should be granted amnesty, liberalised terms of amnesty for the MNF were notified by the Government of India on January 31, 1967 and to give wide publicity, the printed leaflets containing these terms were dropped from helicopters. On August 24, 1968, the Assam government once again declared general amnesty for those MNF rebels. It was laid down in the circular that the rebels who committed serious offences against the state since uprising would be pardoned provided they could surrender their serviceable arms to the nearest police station, army or Assam Rifles post. A cash reward was offered by the Government at the following rates for arms surrendered:

1. Light Machine gun – Rs. 4,000/-
2. Mortar 2” / Rocket launcher – Rs. 600/-
3. 762 Self loading rifles – Rs. 500/-
4. 303 rifles/ Sten corbine / Boretta – Rs. 300/-
5. Revolver/ Pistol – Rs. 250/-

This offer was met with partial success. More than 1200 MNF responded to the call for amnesty and surrendered willingly to the Government. More than 60 of them surrendered with various types of arms and ammunition for which they were given cash rewards. The amnesty declared by the government was an influential weapon in the hands of the government over the insurgents who were in distress economically. Though the top leaders were not convinced by the amnesty, some important leaders like the ex- Vice President Lalnunmawia and MNA Chief Zamawia were among the surrendered ones. The surrender of many volunteers let down the morale of those who keep on indulging in insurgent activities and therefore weakened the insurgency to a great extent.

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5. **Birth of Bangladesh:** MNF insurgency was based on foreign aid, especially of Pakistan. Pakistan wanted to strain India’s peace and solidarity due to their problems with India and as such many insurgent groups were provided financial aids and training was provided to the insurgents. Many volunteers and leaders sought asylum in Pakistan during insurgency. According to J.V Hluna “The support rendered to the MNF by the Pakistan Government proved to be a great morale boost to the Mizo guerrillas, who felt honestly proud to have had managed to secure the support of a prominent power like Pakistan.”

The Indo-Pak War of 1971 gave birth to an independent state known as Bangladesh from the Pakistan union. There lies no more sanctuary for the insurgents in Bangladesh as Bangladesh was a Pro-India country at that point of time. Some leaders and volunteers instead of returning to Mizo Hills District wanted to escape to Burma. The fall of Dacca had very badly affected the MNF. According to Col. Demkhawsiek,

> “It put us in a position of great difficulty. The parliament could not function; civil administration (If there was any) could not be run properly. We could not but change our government organization. Then president Laldenga, just before going out to West Pakistan via Arakan, formed the National Emergency Council (NEC). All the presidential and parliamentary powers were vested in this council, except the foreign affairs, which president Laldenga himself dealt with.”

The fall of Dacca and the birth of a pro-India country was a severe setback for the MNF fighters, who took shelter in the very land. The weaknesses of the movement was added by this incident and deserved to be said as one of the major weaknesses of the MNF insurgency.

6. **Role of regional party.**

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The birth of a regional party in Mizoram especially The Peoples’ Conference (PC) seriously affected the insurgent movement of the MNF. The physical and mental tortures of the Mizo people were intensified day by day. There were many cases of brutal murdering and rape. The Mizo people were treated like as if it were without any right. There were clashes of the MNF rebels with the army, and the law was taken up by the army itself. The army was the law itself. Noticing the miserable life that they lived, Brig.T.Sailo, AVSM (R) formed a ‘Human Rights Committee’ to solace the sufferings of the people.\textsuperscript{42} He, being a retired Indian Army senior officer, was an elite leader and attracted many people. He propagated what should be done and what should not be done by the Army in an insurgent hit area. The aggressive behaviors of the Indian army were somehow lessened with his effort.\textsuperscript{43} Brig. T. Sailo became the spokesman for civil liberty against the atrocities committed by the army. He traveled through the length and breadth of Mizoram to proclaim to the people that the army personnel were also liable to punishment for wrongful exercise of power. He also collected evidences of the heinous crimes against the army.

The aims and objectives of the Human Rights Committee were to protect and sustain the freedom guaranteed in the constitution of India; to seek judicial protection in the case of transfer of people from place to place; to bring about mutual understanding and cooperation between the security forces, and the people; to focus the attention of the authorities to the physical and mental sufferings of the people who were compelled to evacuate their ancestral homes and occupy the newly formed villages.\textsuperscript{44} The Human Rights Committee soon gained popularity among the insurgent-affected people. When the situation was ripe for harvest, the committee was changed to a political party and was named ‘People’s Conference’.

\textsuperscript{42} Dr.James Dokhuma, \textit{Op. cit}, p.164  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p. 164  
\textsuperscript{44} V. Venkata Rao, \textit{Op. cit}, p.150
As a political party, the People’s Conference spelled out four political objectives, of which the first one being to pay utmost effort to encourage and assist the MNF for the peaceful settlement of the Mizo problem. The people looked them with a high hope to bring long lasting peace and in 1976 Lok Sabha poll, their official candidate Dr. Rothuama won the lone seat of the House and in May 1978, the Assembly poll of Mizoram took place and the party had a landslide victory by capturing 23 seats out of the 30 seats polled for the U.T. Many supporters of the MNF movement were influenced by the effort of the party in infrastructural development. Brig.T. Sailo was accused of fomenting anti-Laldenga policy and of attempting to suppress insurgency by using force. MNF reacted with fierce violence by killing some of the staunch supporters of the P.C leader. A political chaos reigned over the most parts of T. Sailo’s ministry owing to the interference of the opposition parties which took advantage of the rift between militant MNF undergrounds and the P.C Party. However, the independence policy of the MNF was countered by the P.C policy of development within the framework of the Indian constitution. The people who felt sick of the insurgent movements were numerosly at the side of the peace programmed undertaken by the P.C and was one of the main factors which had weakened the insurgency.

RESTORATION OF PEACE AND NORMALCY

By the end of April, 1966 the MNA personnel dispersed and blended into the rural population. From there they launched guerilla attacks on the Indian forces and the darkest hours in the history of Mizoram had begun. The Indian army had entered Mizoram and started combing operations against the MNA and vice versa. The citizens who did not indulge in any of the rebel activities were the major victims. Peace was what the people desired for though normalcy was far from reaching. Prominent citizens, politicians and statesmen stepped out

for settlement of misunderstandings between the two camps. The church leaders couldn’t escape from striving restoration of peace and normalcy. The biggest denomination of Mizoram, Presbyterian Church had formed Church Standing Committee on March 12, 1966. The Committee included members from various religious denominations in Mizoram. The committee comprised of about 20 members under the chairmanship of Rev. L.N Ralte and Paul Zakhuma Hauhnar as its secretary. Initially, the committee focused itself on relief and rehabilitation of the victims of the violent disturbance in Mizoram.46

In its attempt to pacify the turbulent conditions of the day, the citizens committee also opened a complaint cell for the redress of grievances against both the Indian army and the underground excesses. Amnesty to the MNF undergrounds who wish to come over ground was also suggested by the chairman of the committee to B.P Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam on May 1966, when the latter was on a visit to Aizawl. However, the Chief Minister refused the proposal. But, the efforts of the Citizen’s Committee could not penetrate the rural areas though it brought normalcy in Aizawl to a large extent. Their efforts led to the birth of a stronger committee known as The Christian Peace Committee and with its formation the predecessor Citizen’s Committee ceased to exist.

**Role of the church**

The two biggest church organizations in Mizoram, Presbyterian and Baptist, together formed the Christian Peace Committee on September 8, 1966. The committee tried to maintain a non-partisan and impartial stance underpinned by the Christian ethos it espoused. It aimed at restoring peace and harmony by bringing mutual understanding and goodwill between the Indian Government and the MNF. The Christian Peace Committee issued pamphlets condemning violence

that has disrupted lives in Mizoram. It condemned violence for political of any other reason. In its pamphlet the committee stated that violence in any form was to be discarded and killing of human being was to be rejected.

The Christian Peace Committee appointed ‘Peace delegation’ that comprised of 5 members. The committee met the leaders of both the Indian military and the MNF and asked them to give up actions. They asked them to have a peaceful dialogue. The committee severely blamed the rude and inhuman activities of the MNF, meanwhile they expressed that there were some valid reasons behind the demands of the MNF. That expression of idea made the committee suspicious in the eyes of both sides. It was labeled as “the over ground voice of the underground.”

The Indian security forces alleging them to be as an agent of the MNF twice seized the committee minutes of the Peace Committee. J.V Hluna rightly remarked the situation of the time by saying that “Their mission became ultimately stale to the eyes of both MNF and the Indian security forces of India and it was no longer effective as it ought to be.” Moreover the MNF leaders regarded the committee members as traitors and held them responsible for the imprisonment of top leaders of the MNF.

The initiative taken by the church for the restoration of peace and normalcy could be said as ‘Failed’, because, it did not arrive at any concrete solution of the turbulent situation. But the significance lies in the fact that the open criticism of the movement and the counter measures adopted by Indian military resulted in the strengthening of the peoples hope for peace, it also formed blueprints for the future efforts of the Church to work for peace and normalcy.

The utmost effort had been paid by the church for peaceful settlement of the insurgency through the Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee

(Mizoram churches Leaders Committee) which was formed on August 15, 1982. Before the actual formation of the committee, the need for cooperation between denominations was admitted by the church leaders amidst struggle for hegemony. Leaders from various Christian denominations viz. Presbyterian, Baptist, United Pentecostal Church, Roman Catholic, Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventist held a meeting on June 15, 1982 to find way for peaceful solution of Mizoram’s political problem. Following the resolutions of the meeting, prayer meetings were held in almost all the churches in Mizoram on June 20, 1982 and July 13, 1982 for peace in Mizoram. As was felt in the meeting, leaders from 9 different denominations in Mizoram held a meeting on August 15, 1982 and the Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee was formed by this meeting. The committee made a certain strategy targeting three groups in general: the Mizo Public, the Indian Government and the MNF while it wanted to assure the people that ‘Peace is possible if we really need it’ on the other hand, wanted to extend its hand towards the government and the MNF in creating conducive atmosphere and trust that had been absent as a result of the derailed peace process. It held several activities and meetings not only in Aizawl but also in towns and villages of Mizoram.

Some of the church leaders, who went on tour to London, take the opportunity to meet Laldenga on June 25, 1984 and tell him about the government’s opinion. After 30 days, Laldenga made a representation to the government of India. He himself came over to New Delhi for the resumption of peace talks with the Indian government. However the murder of Indira Gandhi greatly hampered the recommencement of negotiations that was slated to be held on October 30, 1984. For almost six months, no tangible step could be taken. The

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49 MKHC was formed by- Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Baptist Church of Mizoram, Pawiram Baptist, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, Assembly of God, United Pentecostal Church, Church of Jesus Christ, Roman Catholic and Independent Church of Maraland.
MKHC, with a hope that Rajiv Gandhi would show the same concern and interest as his mother, sent a 6 member delegation to meet the new Prime Minister on April 12, 1985. Rajiv Gandhi, in his meeting with the Church leaders, held a stern position that the MNF should unconditionally surrendered themselves to the Government. The Mizoram Church leaders spelled out that if any preparation for rehabilitation was not made, then the churches in Mizoram would lose hope in the prospect to arrive at an amicable solution. Thus the Mizoram Churches Leaders’ efforts to arrive at peaceful solution to Mizoram insurgency problem contributed immensely into the signing of Mizoram Peace Accord on 30th June, 1986. The MNF cadres did not have to surrender themselves before the signing of the accord, instead they were promised reasonable rehabilitations by the government.

**Role of Secular organizations:** In the restoration of peace and normalcy in Mizoram the churches played a vital role and they were a pivot to escape from the turbulent situation. Apart from the churches the secular organizations were not negligible to bring peace. Springing from the growing intellectual and political elites, who began to establish themselves, organizations like the *Human Rights Committee and Mizoram Peace Advisory Board* were formed. Theses organizations, not necessarily driven by the Christian agendas, set to mobilize consensus of public opinion and action in much the same way as the church was doing in pursuit of its agenda.

During the first half of the insurgency period, there were many cases of violation of human rights. The issue of human rights was ignored in the country as a whole during this time. The inhuman treatment of the Mizos by the army was always heard. A group of few eminent individuals including Brig. T. Sailo, Lalsawia, Zairemthanga etc. constituted a committee known as the *Human Rights Committee*, Mizoram on June 1, 1974. It was a non-political body whose main purpose was to seek judicial intervention in the matter of forcible evacuation of villagers from their village to other areas. They also aimed at the
restoration of goodwill, mutual understanding and co-operation between the security forces and the Mizo people. The committee felt that grouping of villages through large scale evacuation contributed to the law and order problem instead of bringing about the solution. Excess of the Indian Security forces in grouping centres have been compiled and sent to the Prime Minister, along with a memorandum by the committee. Memoranda were also submitted to the Indian Army Chief and the Lt. Governor of Mizoram. These memoranda and reports were taken in good faith by the concerned parties, which resulted in creating a conducive atmosphere in Mizoram. The leaders of the committee gained much popularity through the Committee and at last transformed itself into a political party known as People’s Conference on April 17, 1975. The efforts of the Human Rights Committee were a reflection of the people’s sufferings and desire for peace and were a significant contribution for paving way of peace.

There was another secular and non-political organization, Mizoram Peace Advisory Body which was a result of a series of meetings convened by Christian Peace Committee. Leaders of different churches, Social organizations, political parties and youth organizations like Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP – Mizo Students Union), Young Mizo Association (YMA) and the Human Rights Committee jointly held a meeting at Aijal Club under the chairmanship of Pu Ch. Chhunga, on November 12, 1974, the then Chief Minister and formed “Mizoram Peace Advisory Body” The constitution of Mizoram Peace Advisory Body was immensely crucial due to its favourable timing. The Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee that took initiative in the formation of the body was ruling the Union Territory of Mizoram while the Congress Party was also in power at the center. The peace body had emerged when a big gap had to be filled in the advisory body. The Advisory Body formed a working committee known as Mizoram Peace Advisory Committee, chaired by Rev. Zairema while Lalthanhawla served as its secretary. The committee attempted to facilitate peaceful dialogue between the MNF and the Indian Government. Apparently
encouraged by the peace committee’s proposal, the Government of India gave safe passage to the MNF top leaders in November, 1975 to meet Laldenga in Germany. Another arrangement was made by the Government for Laldenga’s meeting with the MNF National Convention members between 24th March and 1st April, 1976. MNF National Convention was held in Calcutta. This convention is popularly known as the “The Calcutta convention”. The outcome of this convention was signing of an agreement between the MNF and the Indian Government on 1st July, 1976 However; the agreed continuation of peace talks was hampered by the National emergency declared by Indira Gandhi. With this Mizoram Peace Advisory Body also died.

The initiative taken by these organizations and the church had borne a fruitful result in restoring peace and normalcy. But, It was the MNF themselves who were the pivot of the long lasting peace. The peace talks between the two camps could not show much progress due to the MNF standing firm on their demand i.e. the demand for independence but the hardships within the party and the low morale of the party men urged the leaders to look for a probable way of solution. But, the leaders of the party were in fact interested only in peace talks without an intention to settle their problems. This situation as remarked by Brig. C.G Verghese and R.L Thanzawna reads “Although the MNF had considerable setbacks during 1982-83 and was facing financial hardships and low morale, their leadership appeared to be interested in peace talks, more for gaining time for refurbishing and strengthening the underground movement, than by a genuine desire for peace.”

Statehood: On the support of the moral assurance extended by the Mizo leaders, Laldenga requested the government of India for a “Cease fire” on Gandhi Jayanti Day. As a consequence the Army also stopped the counter insurgency operations for paving the way for a peaceful settlement with

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Laldenga and MNF. The peace talks were to start in mid November 1984. But the process got prolonged for months and the MNF continued their tax collection. Innumerable cases of violation of “Ceasefire” were, however, reported by the police and the security forces. Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister was shot dead by her own bodyguards on October 31, 1984. His son Rajiv Gandhi had acquired the reputation for finding solutions to problems his mother had left unsettled. Laldenga had parleys with several representatives of Government of India including Vice-President of the Congress, Arjun Singh, political decisions were made for substantive issues such as Statehood for Mizoram, setting up of an interim coalition Government under Laldenga and rehabilitation of the MNF insurgents. On June 25, 1986, a political agreement was signed between AICC (I) Vice president Arjun Singh and Laldenga, details of which were kept secret for some days. (See Appendix III)

During the 1984 Assembly election, Lalthanhawla and the Congress Party in Mizoram had made a solemn pledge to work for peace. Lalthanhawla felt happy that the solemn pledge to the people had now been fulfilled and said that he would soon vacate his seat as Chief Minister “to bring about lasting peace and reconciliation in Mizoram, and also for national unity and emotional integrity”. After three spells of political dialogues, an Accord was at last signed between the Government of India and MNF on June 30, 1986. After a few days of signing of the Peace Accord, Laldenga and his men were busy amending the MNF constitution, deleting all references to the full sovereignty of Mizoram and withdrawing the famous “Declaration of Independence” and the notorious “Quit Mizoram Notice” in order to qualify as a legitimate political party. Fulfilling one of the conditions of the “Peace Accord,” the democratically elected Congress (I) ministry headed by Lalthanhawla was dissolved and Laldenga was made the Chief Minister, leading a coalition of ministry of MNF-Congress legislators, they were to rule Mizoram until fresh elections were held. Consequent upon the passage of the constitution
53rd Amendment Bill, namely the State of Mizoram Bill (1986) which was introduced in the Parliament on August 7, 1986, the Union Territory of Mizoram became twenty-third State of the Indian Union on February 20, 1987. The Bill also provided for a 40 member single Chamber Legislative Assembly, three districts, nine sub-divisions, three autonomous Hill District Councils, and 301 Village Councils. After six months of the interim Government the first Assembly election was held in Mizoram. The MNF won a landslide victory by securing 24 seats out of 40. That was a milestone in the history of Mizoram Politics under the Constitution of India. The MNF cadres returned home and were given rehabilitation. It was the agreement which closed the bitter chapter of insurgency in Mizoram and now the 23rd state of Mizoram is often describe as the most peaceful state of India.

**Conclusion**

The bitter chapter of insurgency led by the MNF ended with statehood under the constitution of India. The MNF had stepped down from their demand of ‘Independence’ to ‘statehood’. It was obvious view that the MNF surrendered and joined hands with the Indian Government because of their inability to subdue the security forces. Moreover, the strong counter-insurgency measures taken by the security forces through various viable means led the MNF inevitably to surrender and quit their rebellious activities.

On the part of the Government, it is their duty to counter any movement against the integrity and sovereignty of their country. They should, by hook or by crook strive to settle the problem. It is an indication of the strength of any country in subduing any anti-national elements within its territory. As such the Indian Government applied many tactics to melt down the anti-national feelings of the MNF, sometimes it used military forces imposing a forceful attack on the rebels, sometimes it used propagandas and amnesty to win over the minds of the rebels. It is apt to say that the various tactics and policies of the government led
to the end of insurgency. Meanwhile, the personal interest of the MNF charismatic leader Laldenga was to a large extent responsible for the end of insurgency. Laldenga’s personal will was clearly written by Brig.C.G Verghese and R.L Thanzawna

“The real reason which goaded Laldenga to approach the intelligence agency concerned for opening dialogue for peace settlement is hidden to the outside world. It appears that he became aware of his illness and being fully aware of the fate of the Naga rebel leader Phizo who died in exile in London, he did not want the fruits of his efforts for getting special status for Mizos to be reaped by someone else. Throughout his life, he had been credit conscious and was reluctant to share the success for the insurgency and subsequent peace in Mizoram to be snatched away from him……..He was naturally concerned about the welfare of his family and relatives and wanted them to have a comfortable life after he was gone...”

Laldenga spearheaded the insurgency and also spearheaded the peace process for his personal dreams and welfare of his kin. He realized that independence was possible only in theory but with no practical possibility, and he was aware of the fact that the difference of opinion within the party itself initiated by the intellectual group, who were inclined towards statehood could someday overwhelm his old policy of ‘independence. In such circumstances, there was no more option other than statehood.

Apart from the leader’s deliberate intention, the MNF cadres themselves were morally down and hopeless in their demand. The 20 years of fighting for independence did not pull the door of independence to a nearby chance. They were convincingly informed the fruitful results of the statehood under the constitution of India which earnestly promised peace, development and progress. The bait was too tempting for them to resist. The bait of statehood, together with the pressure from the Church and the common people for settlement of the problem has made the cadres to opt for any possible means for the end of the insurgency. It was made aware to the cadres that the Mizo

52 Ibid, p. 276
nationality need not necessarily be diluted to the ‘Indian’ nationality; instead it could be intact within it. However, the signing of the accord and the closing of insurgency period does not mean complete elimination of extreme nationalism among the Mizos, especially to the MNF and its leaders. In his public address to a massive crowd at 1st AR ground at Aizawl, on July 5, Laldenga exhibited a less regard for the constitution. Repeatedly invoking the phrase “Mizo Nation” he roared,

“We do not need a member of another nation to lead our nation. God has now given us a Mizo to lead the Mizo nation. Let the leader of this nation always be a Mizo. It is because of men who tried to build the Mizo nation that the Mizo nation is known to the world today. It is not due to the men who struggled for the creation of the Chinese nation, nor due to those who fought to build the Mizo nation that we have became known. Do not forget for a moment that God created us as Mizos, so that this nation could stand out and command respect.”

Although, the MNF gave up fighting for independence, ‘Mizo nationalism’ is still alive in the innate feeling in their minds. The intensity of its appearance differs from time to time. No one is sure to predict that ‘there shall never be a fight for independence against the Indian union’. It is noteworthy to remember that the feeling of economic deprivation which is the main cause of the MNF insurgency and the extreme nationalism for a particular nation can cause resentment which is always dangerous for a nation. It is important for the Government to find ways to let the ‘Indian nationalism’ getting precedence over ‘Mizo nationalism’ among the Mizo people now and then.

53 Ibid, p. 272