CHAPTER SEVEN
EMERGENCE OF THE ELITE AND Growing UNREST

The cross followed the British flag. In 1891, Rev. Williams, a young Presbyterian Missionary working in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, heard of the Lushai people and decided to go to the hills. In early 1891 he arrived at Aijal and stayed about a month amongst the Lushais and distributed pictures of Christ among them. Williams died of typhoid a few months after his visit to Aijal. J.H. Lorrain and F.W. Savidge, two English Baptist Missionaries sought to follow up the work of Williams. Unlike their predecessor they attempted to enter the hills from the south but did not succeed on account of opposition of the military authorities. They made a second attempt to enter through Silchar*. From the north, being permitted they arrived at Aijal in early 1894. Hardly had they mastered the language and started work of evangelisation, when they were to quit the field under orders from their higher authorities. This opened the door once again to the Welsh Presbyterians to establish a church in the hills. In September 1897 there had arrived a young Presbyterian Minister Mr. D. E. Jones at Aijal followed by Edwin Rowlands.

* In Silchar Lorrain and Savidge stayed with Miss Laura Evans, Welsh Missionary, who had been working among the Bengalees.

Evangelisation

While the local authorities aimed at maintaining law and order, the missionaries sought to convert the animist Lushais to the Christian faith. Jones began to preach haltingly to the people in their own tongue, but their response was poor; not a single Lushai was baptised in 1898. The pioneers found that the people in Aijal and in neighbourhood were indifference with them. But the means for spreading the Gospel was not completely lost sight of. Aijal had one great advantage as a mission centre; for it was a place where people from distant villages often come in a body for various business and stayed a in Zawlbuk. Taking advantage of this, missionaries often visited them and preach the gospel. At first it was hard to get a hearing but the singing of a hymn always captured attention. Zawlbuk had proved an admirable place for presenting the gospel to Lushai youth. After a great deal of intensive evangelisation the first two Lushai christians, Khuma and Khara were baptised on 25 June 1899. This was a landmark in the history of christianity in Lushai Hills.²

² Ibid., pp.42-3; 45-51.
South Lushai Hills was transferred to the London Baptist Missionary Society in 1903 and two separate churches grew up. The Welsh Mission authorities found before long that it would not be possible with their limited resources to evangelize both the north and south. Messrs. Lorrain and Savidge, at the invitation of the Baptist Missionary Society, returned to serve among the Lushais in 1903 and established their headquarters at Lungleh. There had been cordiality and understanding between the two missions and in fact the Baptist Church in the south adopted even the Presbyterian system of church government because of its suitability to Lushai conditions. ³

The church grew steadily and a Lushai Presbytery was formed in 1910. The Christian community rapidly grew from 15 in 1900 to 90 in 1905, 7168 in 1915 and 34393 in 1925. ⁴ In 1947 the Lushai Church had 90 per cent of the Lushais within its fold. This rapid growth was greatly due to full participation of young Lushais. It is said that hardly anywhere in the whole of the vast continent of Asia has the Gospel been spread more rapidly and more effectively.

³. Ibid., p.44; 52-3.
Spread of Education

The Kukies or Lushais had a language of their own but no letter or number. The Lushai youths get their early education in the Zawlbuk through their elders. No attempt was ever made by the Lushais to codify the rule of the language. This task was begun by the Welsh Mission in 1898 by compiling a Lushai Primer. Lorrain and Savidge started a school to impart primary education while they were in Aijal. The teaching was confined to the art of writing and reading. For sometime this school ran successfully, but it was closed as both the missionaries had to devote more time for translation of the Bible and compilation of a dictionary. The school was taken over by the Reverend Edwin Rowlands. At first the serious problems he found was irregular attendance as the younger children had to help their parents in the rice fields, help to prepare feast in a weeding, and turn out to look after a missing cow. In parents' eyes these tasks were more important than a day's absence from school. Despite unpromising beginning, a number of students in those early classes did remarkably well. Some of them were among the early leaders in Lushai Hills.

5. BPP., July 1889; File L, Nos.1-2.

On the ground prepared by the Missionaries, the local administration started schools in 1896-97 at Aijal, Lungleh and Demagiri; but the standard of teaching in these schools was always lower than the Mission schools. Gradually, the government schools became popular. The syllabus was enriched as the school progressed, and the students were taught Lushai in the English character. Beginning to realize the value of education, the chiefs sent their young children to those schools. The local authorities also encouraged education by exempting those who graduated Class IV standard of today from forced labour.

Nonetheless, contributions made by the missionaries surpassed that of the government. The missionaries not only provided the best teachers but spent considerable amount on that account. Education, in fact, was left to the charge of the Christian missionaries. This was the case not only in Lushai Hills but also in the other hill areas of North-Eastern India. In 1897-8, the administration spent a small amount of Rs.333 on education, and the amount was increased to Rs.902 and Rs.1,793.

7. Zairema, Op.cit.,p.22. Instead of currency levy the British adopted a system of labour by impressment. Accordingly, each house should be liable to supply one coolie to work for ten days in a year. However, certain persons such as Village Khawchhia, man of the Lushai Labour Corps, men of the Army Bearer Corps etc., were exempted from impressed labour.
in 1898-9 and 1899-1900 respectively. The toil and dedication made by the missionaries for the cause of education was unique. This was acknowledged even by the government when it was remarked:

Thanks to the labour of Messrs. Savidge and Lorrain, education has made a good start among the Lushais, and its effect on the future administration of the hills is worth considering.8

Lushai Hills was the last territory to be brought under the administrative control of the British Indian government. Therefore, Christianity and education were introduced comparatively late. But so rapid was the progress of Christianity and education among these tribes within a few decades it has surpassed other hill areas in percentage of literacy. It had been stated that the progress made had been due chiefly to the activity of the Missions. The All India Census report for 1931 revealed the percentage of literacy as being so high as 12.9 per hundred, and this had increased to 19.3 in the 1941.

8. FPE(A), February 1898, Nos.118-9; Major J. Shakespear's, Officiating Political Officer, North Lushai Hills, to Chief Commissioner of Assam, 13 July 1897.
Nature of Education

In fact throughout hill areas of Assam, the different Christian missions had been the chief agents through which education was imparted among the tribes until 1947. The missionaries produced all the text books prescribed for universities. Tribal languages were reduced to the Roman script. From the beginning of the twentieth century the provincial government decided to take direct share in the matter of education of the tribes not only by establishing state schools but by defining the conditions of grants to the missionary schools and by appointing Deputy or Sub-Inspector of Schools under the District Officer and Educational Department. However, the failure of the government and the missionaries in opening High Schools, except in Shillong, in the hills led to stagnation in the field of higher education. To those who could not move out of their hills higher education was practically closed. The students who had completed the courses offered by the Middle English Schools were either employed in the petty jobs under the government or Mission in the hills.

Evidently, till 1947 the British government confined itself by and large to the spread of elementary education. Therefore the hill tribes of the North-East India had little knowledge or national consciousness which had led to the Independence of India. The British policy of keeping the hills isolated systematically for years, the underdeveloped state of education, lack of socio-cultural integration and economic backwardness were the legacies of foreign rule which had been at the root of the tension between the hills and plains.

On the other hand, no attempt was made by the missionaries to open schools beyond the Middle English standard. The primary object of the missionaries was not the spread of education of a secular character but spreading of the Gospel. Moreover, the missionaries had to act under the direction of home authorities. Yet, from the very beginning the government had entrusted the educational needs of the tribes to such a machinery, and rendered assistance by grants-in-aid of rather small amounts. As a result the education of the Lushai people had to be financed by and large by the missions and school teachers had been selected with due regard to their standing with the Lushai church; teachers and pupils have been seeking theological, rather than educational developments. 10 Not only the

Lushais but the average tribal student had been trained in literacy, and verbal articulation and moral discipline. He did not receive a strong ground in the mental discipline which comes from mathematics. Thus he had been lacking the inspiration for science, which had been the hallmarks of modern outlook. This appeared to have been a basic problem of education not only in Lushai Hills but also in the southern hill area of North-East India.

New Awakening

Evangelisation and education had profound influence on the life and thought of the Lushai people. Christianity breeds individualism, while western education sows the seed of western ideas of freedom, liberalism and democracy among the educated elite. Thus it was the Lushai intelligentsia, yet few in numbers, who had first inspired bitter antagonism between the commons and the exploiting ruling clan (Sailo). Their intention was to do away with the very institution of chiefship. To achieve this, the people were stirred, and they became agitated with the idea that, the abolition of chiefship would bring to an end all privileges hitherto enjoyed by the most envied Rambuals and Zalens*. In fact the

* The Rambuals and the Zalens were men of possession and had the first choice of 'jhuming' site. The former were expert 'jhum' cultivators while the latter were exempted from paying Fathang to the chief in consideration of their specific obligation to help the chief if he ran short of paddy.
newly educated as well as the public were really fed up of the society where birthright was the dominant factors instead of individual ability, aptitude and enterprise.

Formerly Lushais seldom asked themselves where they had come from, where they would go and what would be their destiny. After they had discarded animism and embraced Christianity, the word destiny had been assuming much deeper meaning. Destiny was the word that was what Lushai and the mountain people all over South-East Asia were groping for in the tumult of the rush. As days went by it has been getting clearer in the Lushai subconscious that though the British had won their little battles and skirmishes, the war would be finally theirs. Nirmal Nibedon has rightly observed:

Christanity they would embrace and education they would pursue. Yet deep in the Mizo payche there persisted a sense of unfulfilment, a silent and sincere search for their identity and an effort to bring the tremendous talent energy or their people back to a level of dignity and equality they had known before the invaders had come. The Mizo spirit was irrespressible; it was like a volcano waiting to erupt. 11

As a result of ethnic movement on the Indian side, the feeling of being ethnically and racially different from the rest of the subcontinent has been growing among the hill people more rapidly after World War II. In fact this has been the decisive factor for one major group to launch a defensive quarrilla war. There is no doubt that the strong feeling of being "different" would be further galvanised on the Lushais and other hill people by Westernised Christianity and education, but it was ethnicity that has been the prime mover, the fundamental cause for the bitter battles of the future. The claim put forward by many plainsmen that religion has been the principal cause of the whole troubles in North-Eastern India was not true. Religion has been playing, at best, only a secondary role.12

Mizo Union : Its emergence

Under Government of India Act. 1935 Lushai Hills was excluded from the purview of the new constitution. Accordingly the district was treated as "Excluded Area" and was placed under special responsibility of the Governor-General.

in Council in his capacity as the crown representa-
tives. The provincial ministry had no juris-
diction over it and the money coming into the
hills was not voted by the provincial legislature
because there was no representatives of the
tribesmen. The legislature of the British India
also had no influence whatsoever. The British
government banned any kind of political organi-
sation within Lushai Hills which was declared a
political area. Political domination of the
Lushai people in the hands of the English Supe-
rintendents and the chiefs roused political
consciousness and a consequent awakening in
the hills. The products of the new age, the
Lushai intelligentia, wanted to wrest power from
the chiefs. On the eve of their departure from
India, the British lifted the ban on political
activities. The Lushais, however, ignorant
they might be, had to organise a political
party immediately. Initially it had to confront
the difficult task of deciding the future of the
Lushais. Unlike the Nagas under Phizo, the
Lushais were not sure which way they wanted to go.
Some wanted to join Burma, others with India,
but the fundamental fact that started me in the
face was the age-old unimosity between the hill
people and the plainsmen of India, between the
Mongoloid and non-Mongoloid world. Under these
circumstances the first political party, the
Mizo Union was organised in the early part of
April 1946. R. Vanlawma, its founder leader, categorically declared that the sole aim and object of the party was Freedom and Independence for the entire Mizo people scattered in India, Burma and Pakistan.

Mizo Union Council:
United Mizo Freedom Organisation.

In the dark corner of the party some of its leaders conspired with the leaders of the Indian National Congress against the policy of Vanlawma, and hatched up a plot to unite the hills with the Indian Union. Accordingly, Vanlawma's leadership was toppled down in the first General Assembly of the party held in September 1946. The defunct party leaders soon organised another political party namely "The Mizo Union Council" with the object of self determination for the entire Mizo people. Under the leadership of Mr. Lalmawia, the third party "United Mizo Freedom Organisation" soon sprang up with an object of joining the Union of Burma. The political parties, mentioned above, felt the paramount importance of the unification of the Lushais (Mizos) inhabiting a part of Manipur, Tripura, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Burma and Cachar. However, the people were at a loss as to how reunification could be accomplished in so short a span of time. While the United Mizo Freedom

Organisation advocated joining the Union of Burma, the Mizo Union advocated reunification under India Union, and the Mizo Union Council demanded reunification for sovereignty. Lalmawia followed by some members of the Mizo Freedom Organisation, proceeded to Burma to meet leading politicians and to work out the integration programme of Mizoram with the Union of Burma. The delegation met U Nu and U Bah Shwe, leaders of Burma. Although the report of the delegation had not been published, it was circulated in the political circle that the integration of all Mizos in the said areas with the Union of Burma would be taken up at a later stage.

**Macdonald Scheme**

The time has come when every well-wisher of the Lushais to contribute his area for the future destiny of the Lushais. In this respect neither the Superintendent of the time nor Christian Missionaries remained silent spectators of the scene. A.R.H. Macdonald, the then Superintendent of Lushai Hills, wrote pamphlets after pamphlets to educate the people in their right to self-determination. He even went to the extent of drafting a proposed constitution for the territorial integrity and solidarity of the Lushais which came

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to be known as 'Macdonald Scheme'. The draft constitution received support from the Mizo Union Councils' Party, the Lushai Chiefs Council and also from the Ex-Servicemen Association. However, the Congress leaders through their puppets, some leaders of the Mizo Union, spread propaganda that the draft constitution of Macdonald was harmful to the interest of the common people, and that the people shall have to remain under the rule of their tyrant chiefs. In this way some ignorant leaders of the Mizo Union Party were hoodwinked. The ignorance of the people including some leaders can best be explained by their own slogans - "Do we want Independence?". These were the slogans of Mizo Union Party which took out a procession at the headquarters of the district.

The Congress leaders instigated their puppets to boycott the committee summoned by Macdonald. The Congress followers among the leaders of Mizo Union boycotted the Committee on the pretext that the draft constitution provided special provisions for the chiefs and was, therefore, against the interest of the people. There was a sharp difference of political opinion in trying to decide the future

15. A.R.H. Macdonald's Draft Constitution for Mizoram (The Lushai Hills District) as amended and approved by the Conference of Chiefs and Commoners elected by the whole district on a basis of household suffrage April 1947.
of the country, and it almost led the people to resort to violence. The Commandant of the First Battalion of the Assam Rifles supported the Lushais who wanted freedom and was said to be ready to supply arms and ammunition. Large number of volunteers were enrolled who were fully armed. But the impending bloodshed and catastrophe was averted when the procession was called off in time. The ordinary member of the Mizo Union did not know that some of their leaders were out for their self-aggrandisement with India, and that they have been sold to the Indian National Congress. 18

Growing unrest in the hills

No wonder, therefore, on the eve of independence of India, a sense of uncertainty and apprehension about their political future gripped the minds of the educated Lushais. They expressed grave concern over the problem how to preserve their own ways of life and system of administration. They feared that unless suitable provisions were made for preventing the plains people from acquiring lands in the hills, and if the same pattern of administration was to be followed in the hills, an increasing number of land-hungry people of the plains would not only occupy their lands but also put up an unequal competition in all respects and put the former into a whirlpool of unsettling situation. Their differences from those of the

18. Ibid.
plain areas as a result of the century old seclusion of the hill district under the British protection made the hill leaders anxious to maintain a system of self-governing institutions at the district level in free India. In this context and also in the wake of ever-growing demands from different public forums of the hill areas for autonomous administration, a Sub-Committee under the chairmanship of late Gopinath Bordolei was appointed to study the problems of Assam Hills and thereby to recommend a suitable system of administration to the framers of the Indian Constitution. Mr. K.T. Khuma, the then President of the Hizo Union and Mr. Oh. Saprawiga, Vice-President of the same party were co-opted as members to the aforesaid Sub-Committee.19

On 14 August 1947, a meeting of Lushai leaders attended by fifty persons was held at Aijal under the chairmanship of M.L.L. Peters, the last British district Officer of Lushai Hills. The meeting resolved that if the Lushais were to enter the Indian Union their main demands were

(1) that the existing safeguards of their customary laws and land tenures etc., should be maintained.

(2) that the Chin Hills Regulation 1896 and Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873 should be retained until such time as the Lushais themselves through their District Council or other parallel district authority, declare that this can be abrogated.

(3) that the Lushais will be allowed to opt out of the Indian Union when they wish to do so, subject to a maximum period of ten years. 20

**Autonomous Status Granted**

On the recommendation of the Sub-Committee certain measures of autonomy were granted by the government of India to the hill areas. Provisions were made in the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution for protecting the people of the hills from domination of the plains. A regional autonomy has thus emerged to enable the hills people to safeguard their ways of life, to participate in the political life of the country and the administration of their own areas, and to develop themselves according to their own genius and tradition. In respect of Lushai Hills the Chin Hills Regulation

1896 and Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873 has been retained and no outsiders are allowed to enter the District without the prior permission of the Deputy Commissioner or his Assistants of the area. Their land, forests, social organisation and system of justice became the subject of their autonomous administration (except where otherwise provided in the Constitution) along with other respects of economic development. On 26 January, 1950 the Constitution of India came into force; the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council was set up in 1952. This was followed in 1954 by the establishment of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council consisting of twelve members including two nominated seats.

These measures fulfilled the aspirations of the Lushais to a certain extent. Reference has been made that with the creation of District Council the institution of chieftainship had been abolished and this ended an era of exploitation of the masses in Lushai Hills. However the abolition of the institution had created certain problems partly caused by a sense of frustration on the part of the chiefs who would definitely try to find certain outlets to channel their unutilised energy. Moreover, the much-desired development was tardy; the District Council could hardly provide the much-needed roads and electricity in the hills. As late as 1972, the total electric generating capacity was only 1220 Kw. It was
insurgency (1966) which infused a new sense of urgency into the road-building programme. Above all the artificial bamboo curtain was making its presence felt in the district; it caused severe restrictions on the border trade between the tribesmen living on either side of the Indo-Burma border.* As a result, rice for which they depended on the Chin Hills, was coming less and less; this created a deep scar in the Lushai psyche.

* In the early days, there were free and open trade between the Lushai Hills of India and the Chin Hills of Burma.