In August 1947 when India won her independence, Lushai Hills hitherto an 'excluded area' was brought under a new scheme of administration based on the recommendations of the North-East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, known as the Bardoloi Committee. This was incorporated in the Part 'A' of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Accordingly in 1952 and 1955 the Mizo District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council for Pawi, Lakher and Chakma tribes has been set up. The District Council had twenty four members, of whom three-fourth to be elected. It had autonomous administration over the traditional ways and affairs of the tribes and might introduce such changes as they themselves like. With the establishment of the Council, the post of high powered Superintendent was substituted for a Deputy Commissioner with much curtailed powers. Thus the whole district was put under the Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Executive Members of the district and Regional Councils. Thus the dilemma of the Lushais during the Constitution making stage was overcome. Their keen desire to link up their political life with Assam on the one hand and the fear of being submerged on the other could be reconciled within the framework of autonomous existence under the above said schedule to the Constitution.
Mizo Union: Its workings.

From the beginning things started moving with promise and expectations for the Mizo Union. It received unstinted support of the people in the first General Elections to the three seats of the Assam Legislative Assembly and the Autonomous District Council in 1952. Holding the rein of the District Administration, the Mizo Union passed 'The Lushai Hills Chiefship Abolition Act 1952' which abolished the special privileges and powers of the chiefs and their Elders. Chieftainship in Lushai Hills was finally abolished in 1955 by an Act of the government of Assam. The administration in the village was placed in the hands of a Village Council which was subsequently introduced in the district. The bold action taken by the Mizo Union was certainly a democratic socialistic step towards the establishment of social and economic equality among the Mizos.

On the suggestion of the Union, an Act of Parliament in 1954 the name of the district was changed from Lushai Hills to Mizo District. There was a smooth association between Mizo Union and the Assam government. Meanwhile the district-level opposition party, the United Mizo Freedom Organisation merged into the Eastern Tribal Union, a political party born in the Khasi & Jaintia Hills. It demanded a separate Hill State, comprising of the Hill districts of Assam. From 1955 onwards, the situation began to change for the worse due to the breaking out of "Mautam" famine in the district.
Some disgruntled elements including dissidents from the Mizo Union, formed a Mizo National Famine Front genuinely for organising relief work but in fact to start a new party in 1959. Very soon sharp differences grew up between the Mizo Union and the Assam government over the question of famine relief and State Official Language issues in 1960. As a consequence, the Mizo Union with the Hill District Congress Committee, the Tribal Union and other local parties formed the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference in 1960 with the main object of creating an "Eastern Frontier State" comprising the hill areas of Assam, Manipur and Tripura within the Indian Union. In a few years time, the Mizo Union leadership changed their mind and come to the conclusion that a Mizoram State within the Indian Union was preferable to the composite "Eastern Frontier State".

Mizo National Front under Laldenga.

In the meantime, the Mizo National Famine Front transformed itself into the Mizo National Front on the 12 October 1962 with Mr. Laldenga and Mr. Lianzuala as its first President and General Secretary as well. The front raised the demand for "sovereign independence of Greater Mizoram" and then sent its leaders and activists to East Pakistan. In the early part of December, 1963, Mr. Laldenga with his Vice-President Mr. Lalnunmawia and friend
Sainghaka went to Pakistan. There they came in touch with the Pakistan agents and the Naga hostiles and drew up the plans for an insurrection. The Pakistan agents assured Laldenga of all help for training his volunteers to revolt against the established government of India. But Laldenga and Lalnunmawia were arrested in December 1963 on their way back to India. They were, however, released in February 1964 on their giving a written undertaking to the Chief Minister of Assam that they would continue their political activities within the Indian Constitutional jurisdictions. Inspite of this the Mizo National Front intensified its activities openly by collecting forced "donations" from towns and villages. They raised and trained army-type volunteers in hundreds, brought stock-piling and distributed firearms. They began to defy all government rules and regulations and waited for an opportunity. Laldenga then formed his own shadow government and styled it "MIZORAM SAWRKAR" (government of Mizoram) with its headquarters Aizawl.¹

In the meantime the Mizo Union also raised unarmed volunteers for launching movement for achieving Mizoram State. When they announced a programme for non-violent direct action, the danger of a direct confrontation between the

Mizo Union and the Mizo National Front became real. The imminent danger was, however, averted after a conference of all Mizo and Non-Mizo parties and groups of Assam, Manipur and Tripura held at Charachandpur (Manipur) in January 1965. There the Mizo Union agreed to postpone its proposed direct movement for Mizoram State. The Churachandpur Charter of the Mizo Political Parties reiterated the Mizo aspiration for a Greater Mizoram State comprising all the Mizo-inhabited areas. In October 1965 the Mizo Union pressed Central government for early constitution of a Mizoram State. Subsequently the Pataskar Commission for the Hill Areas examined the Mizo Union demands while going into the administrative arrangement proposed under the Nehru Plan of autonomy. But the attitude of the Pataskar Commission made the Mizo Union unhappy and they boycotted the Commission. The Commission was, however, met by the secessionist Mizo National Front and submitted a memorandum demanding "sovereign independence for Mizoram". Within three weeks of the Pataskar Commission's visit to the Mizo District, the Mizo National Front volunteers attacked the Aizawl and the Lungleh Treasuries simultaneously on the night of 28 February 1966. Thus the Front started an armed uprising by declaring "independence" and overrunning most areas of the 3,134 square mile area.

Mizoram. Immediately the district has been declared a 'disturbed area' under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955. This Act of 1955 along with the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Power Act, 1958 has also been enforced in the area. Under Article 352 of the Constitution, the government of India also made the same declaration. The government entrusted the responsibility of law and order in the district to the Army. They, however, issued strict instructions that the Army was not to function as in war time but strictly in aid of the civil power. When the troops moved in the district the Mizo National Front volunteers became underground, and Laldenga along with his family and friends escaped to Pakistan. Inspite of the tightened security measures, the rebels from underground continued laying ambuses. 3

Reign of Terror

The district had been passing through an ordeal or a very dark period of its history for several years as it had been the case with Nagaland and Bangladesh, the neighbouring states. Meanwhile, the Mizo Union met the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira in New Delhi on 22 June 1966 and re-affirmed their demand for a Mizoram State within India. 4

Indian Army began a merciless active operations clearing the town of hostiles and relieved the beleaguered posts. The Army resorted to killing, arresting and torturing of those who have been suspected and found to have connections with the Mizo National Front volunteers in one way or the other. Besides this, raping, destructing jhuming crops and burning of many villages have been the common features. The Mizo National Front countered the Army movements and activities in whatever limited possible way. They, too, kidnapped and brutally murdered many persons who have been acting as informers and anti-Mizo National Front. Famine and pestilence had been prevailing in many areas; educational institutions could not function properly, and mass evacuation of the district had taken place. In short there had been a reign of terror and the people had to please two masters who have been bitterly jealous of each other. Indeed the situation was extremely dark and as worse as it could be especially in the interior. All this had seriously been affecting the morals of the people in general. The number of informers rapidly increased; robbers and ruffians, taking advantage of the troubled situation, committed robberies and made false demands on the people. A deep sense of frustration and hatred had been developing in the minds of themany people in the district. Many years will be required to heal this fatal wounds of the Mizos
and nothing seems to be too big or too great if it is a right medicine which will completely cure all these severe wounds.

**Rift in Laldenga's Camp.**

In 1967 the government launched the first phase of "Operation Security" and the Mizo National Front has been declared illegal. Along the Silchar-Aizawl-Lunglei road a population of fifty thousand from hundred villages was resettled in eighteen group centres styled Progressive Protected Village. In 1969 more than half the population was shifted to regrouped villages. In April 1970 there was a serious rift among the rebel leaders; the liberal or intelligent groups headed by Lalnunmawia and R. Zamawia, and the radical groups headed by Laldenga and Lianzuala, who stood for independent state outside India. After the creation of Bangladesh, the hideouts of the Mizo rebels have been rooted out by the joint troops of Bangladesh and India, and their hope of getting help either from Pakistan or China was very bleak. In fact they were in a desperate position. As a result most of the rebel leaders like John F. Manliana, Lalnnummawia, Sainghaka, Thangkima, Lahlmingthanga and Bualhranga except a few belonging to hard-core started surrendering to the government after December 1971. A liberal group had also emerged
among the Mizos who did not subscribe to Mr. Laldenga's cult of violence. They repudiated the programme chalked out by him and worked for the restoration of peace, normalcy and a satisfactory political settlement within the Indian Union.  

**Birth of Mizoram: an Union Territory**

In the later part of 1971 the Mizo Union succeeded in persuading the government of India to separate Mizoram from Assam and constitute a Union Territory. Accordingly Mizo District was upgraded to the status of Union Territory on 21 January 1972. Since then Mizo District has been called Union Territory of Mizoram. In the following elections to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram held on 12 April, 1972, the Mizo Union won twenty-one out of twenty-five seats it contested and polled 37 per cent of the valid votes cast. The District Council was dissolved immediately on the formation of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. In the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council area three separate District Councils for the Pawi, the Maras (Lakhars) and the Chakmas have been set up. Although the Mizo Union aspirations for full statehood has not yet been realised the people of Mizoram have now an opportunity to develop themselves as a distinct entity within the great family of the Indian Union. The people were, however, aware of the fact that their eventual march to statehood will depend on their ability to make full use of the opportunities then offered.

Achievements under Five Year Plan

Mizoram economic developments had been neglected all these long years. The Five Year Plan had no much meaning to the people. It was only with the formation of a popularly elected government with Union Territory status that energetic measures have been taken for developmental activities. Indeed, remarkable progress have been achieved within a few years. The major breakthrough has been in the field of agriculture. Since an overwhelming majority of the population is dependent on agriculture the Union Territory government concentrated its first attention on this field. Terracing of the hill sides is going on in a big way and the Mizo cultivator has been the wisdom of giving up shifting cultivation and more and more of them settle down on the permanent cultivation. The government have been providing them with the required inputs like fertilizers, pesticides e.c. A network of roads is a prerequisite in a remote and backward area. Within a short span of about nine years the government of India new project has been able to establish a framework of good all weather motorable roads. These roads have been extending from Aizawl the capital to all corners of the state, from Silchar in the North to Tuipang in the South, from Champhai in the East to Demagiri in the West. A basic necessity for any developmental progress power generation
has been more than trebled in these few years. A major effort has been mounted in the field of Animal Husbandry by starting more than thirty-four Veterinary Hospitals, Dispensaries, Cattle and Pig Breeding Farms etc. Employment opportunities have more than doubled. In the field of education great progress has been achieved by setting up the long awaited Directorate of Education. The Directorate is now looking after not only General Education but also Social Education, Technical Education, (I.T.I) Research and Training, Science Promotion Programme and Youth Welfare including Scouts and Guides. These are indeed impressive achievements but a tremendous lot remains to be done.  

During the First, Second and Third Five Year Plan financial outlay for Mizoram were Rs. 63.03 lakhs, Rs. 210.83 lakhs and Rs. 685.27 lakhs only. Mizoram under Union Territory now have been getting Rs. 45 crores and Rs. 130 crores for the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plan period alone. The Home Minister Shri Brahmananda Reddy in his speech on 21 January, 1975 at Aizawl stated "if a comparison were to be made between per capita expenditure on development and on building the infra-structure necessary for making further strides in the field of development the expenditure in Mizoram may easily be one of the highest in the country".

Outrages continued

Inspite of all these developments permanent peace has yet to come in the territory. The insurgency continued with occasional breaks. To restore peace and normalcy Mizoram Peace Advisory Body was formed in the last part of 1974. It represented church denominations, student and youth and other organisations. Before anything concrete could be achieved, the rebels issued a warning to all "Wais" or non-Mizos to quit the Union Territory by a certain deadline on 1 January 1975. Public sentiment was roused in Aizawl and for the first time Mizo leaders, including churchmen, students and youngmen condemned the anti-Wai Campaign. Veng (Mizo term for a locality) Defence Committee have been formed to protect non-Mizos from intimidation or harrassment by Mizo National Front regulars or those posing as Mizo National Front personnel. Even the Minister of State for Home and Parliamentary Affairs assured of all possible protection to those threatened. Despite precautionary measures Aizawl, Mizoram's capital, witnessed the most daring and sensational murders by the rebel Mizo National Front since the insurrection. G.S.Arya, the Inspector-General of Police, B.Sews, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, and K.Panchapakasen, the Superintendent of Police (Special Branch) were murdered while holding a Conference in the office of the Inspector-General of Police at 4:15 P.M on 13 January 1975.
Repressive recourse

Every dark cloud has a silver lining. Brahmananda Reddy, the Union Home Minister, accompanied by top brass of the Ministry of Home Affairs air-dashed to Mizoram, and an effective strategy to deal with the situation was evolved. The first step was in the direction of overhauling the administration. An able Indian Police Service with rich experience of handling such complicated situations was brought in as the Chief Secretary making a departure from the normal practice. A tough policy was initiated in dealing with the underground. Within six months the Security Forces and the Police stepped up their operations against the rebels and dealt crippling blows. All assassins of the three Police Officers lost their lives in encounters with the Police; others involved in the conspiracy were arrested. As a result of the operations large quantities of arms and ammunition were recovered and about 266 "Mizo National Army" were captured. As many as 287 Mizo National Front and Mizo National Army personnel were persuaded to resume life as normal citizens. By November 1975, the leaders of Mizo National Front in disarray and were finding it extremely difficult to operate in towns and villages. Publicity materials were put out in large quantity to explain to people the hollowness of the claims
and arguments put forth by the Mizo National Front. Simultaneously, a campaign was mounted up to win over the people and put an end to the stories of so-called excesses and atrocities committed by the Security Forces. This was quite a success and this issue was no longer capable of being exploited. Above all, concentrated attention had been paid to developmental activities so as to create in the minds of the people a stake in peaceful conditions. 7

Agreement, 1 July 1976

For the first time, the multi-pronged strategy provided an imaginative and well-calculated approach to the problem of insurgency. The Mizo National Front leaders approached the Government of India for talks towards the end of 1975. Operations by the Security Forces as well as the Police were suspended by an informal understanding. The conversations between the representatives of the Union Government and the Mizo National Front leaders in New Delhi culminated in the historic peace agreement of 1 July 1976. Laldenga, under this agreement, acknowledged Mizoram to be an integral part of India, agreed to find a solution of all problems within the framework of Indian Constitution, undertook to abjure violence and

suspend all activities and finally to bring into camps all his followers and deposit their weapons. Before long an attempt had been made by certain Mizo National Front leaders to interpret the terms of the agreement in a twisted manner. To them nothing fundamental important had been agreed upon and the basic issues are still open to further discussions. They also said that until a "final settlement of the problems, they have no intention of coming into camps and depositing their weapons". Despite the much heralded peace agreement in New Delhi on 1 July 1976, the solution of the tangled Mizoram insurgency problems and restoration of an abiding peace have been remaining as tantalising as ever. The basic problem have been stamming from non-implementation of clause 3 of the Accord. The Mizo National Front agreed to "abjure violence and suspend all activities to ensure a climate of understanding, peace and tranquility". They also agreed "to collect all underground personnel with their arms and ammunition to the Government of India". This has not happened. Operations were suspended and periodically extended to give the Mizo National Front time to unbend and conform.

Unfortunately for Laldenga unexpected had happened, Indira Gandhi's government was defeated in the General Elections of 1977 and Morarji Desai's government had come to stay. The Janata rule broke

8. Ibid.
off the talks on the ground of "bad faith" on the part of Laldenga who, while talking peace in New Delhi, was reportedly inciting his followers in Mizoram to keep up their armed offensive, violence and murder that continued in Mizoram. Laldenga complained that the Janata Ministry went back on assurances and violated the safe conduct promise which alone persuaded him to return to India and seek a negotiated settlement. In fact Laldenga was accused by the Janata Government of sedition, conspiracy and waging war against the Union and filed a number of cases against him and his son. The Janata was in power hardly for a year; the Congress (I) had come back to power after January election in 1980. This had brought hopes of peaceful solution; Laldenga immediately announced his intention to discuss terms with the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who alone seems to enjoy his confidence. Although the Congress(I) was anxious to resume talks, Charan Singh, the Home Minister, announced on 21 March 1978 that the government had come to the conclusion that no useful purpose would be served by continuing talks with Laldenga; that he was only interested in delaying, "for his own reasons", implemenation.

of the agreement he had reached with the government. Instead of fulfilling the assurances he sought to confuse his colleagues on the question of implementing the accord and at the same time suggested that he be allowed to head an interim Ministry.\(^\text{10}\)

On 21 March 1980, Yogendra Makwana, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, also told the Rajya Sabha that it was not possible to have talks with Mizo insurgents because their leaders, including Laldenga, had not honoured the agreement between them and the government.\(^\text{11}\)

**Renewal of Outrages**

Since January 1980 the Mizo National Front had been making a radical change of tactics by attacking and killing civilians. On 4 January, the Administrative Officer of Zote was murdered at Champhai.\(^\text{12}\) This was followed by several murders, both Mizos and non-Mizos. On 17 February the guerrillas ambushed an Assam Rifles truck in which five personnel proceeding on leave and a child were killed. One major reason given for change of tactics was that most of the seasoned underground commanders have left the Mizo National Front's armed wing. The China-returned Vanlalnghaka

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came overground after the July agreement. Most of the returnees from the armed wing have revolted against the leadership of the Mizo National Front chief Laldenga who lived in a south Delhi flat given to him by the government. Besides return of top commanders several close colleagues of Laldenga had also came overground. They include Malsawma Colney, one time Chief of the National Emergency Council, and Tlangchhuan, who held high post in the Mizo National Front.13

In the meantime Laldenga had been talking peace so convincingly that Mrs. Gandhi's government has relented and withdrawn the cases initiated against him by the Janata regime. He was then willing to seek a solution of the Mizo problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution. He sent his own son and two other emissaries in June 1980 to confer with the Mizo National Front hardcore underground leadership in the Arakan Hill tract across the international border along Mizoram. They had returned armed with a mandate authorising Laldenga to go ahead with his efforts to find a political solution. Laldenga's contention was that for a cease-fire to be effective, both sides much reach an understanding to begin with and, therefore, there was no question of a unilateral declaration from his side. Finally the two meetings

13. Ibid.
which Laldenga had with the Prime Minister led to an agreement under which from the midnight of 31 July to 1 August 1980 the Mizo National Front would stop all underground activities and that the government would suspend operations by the Security Forces. This was announced in the Lok Sabha on 30 July by the Home Minister, Zail Singh.¹⁴

Cease-fire and its aftermath

As a result of the 'cease-fire' declared by the Mizo National Front calm prevails in the Union Territory of Mizoram. Laldenga was doing his best in New Delhi to convince his erstwhile colleagues that Mizoram's future lies with India. He claimed to be sincere about finding a solution to the vexed problem within the framework of the constitution, but he had directed his lieutenants in the jungle to keep the power dry. Accordingly, the Commanders of the Mizo National Army, the armed wing of the Mizo National Front, were taking full advantage of the suspension of military operations to regroup their forces, restore their communication links, re-establish their ideological cells in remote hamlets, raise funds, collect rations, build up stocks of medicines, enlist fresh recruits, establish fresh arms and ammunition dumps, overhaul their intelligence.

machinery, and undertake refresher courses in guerrilla warfare for its men. Simultaneously, the Mizo National Front had launched a vigorous propaganda offensive designed to determine the people's faith in the lawfully constituted government of Brigadier Thanphunga Sailo. A sustained campaign was on to paint Sailo as the villain of the peace. The Mizos were told that the Chief Minister was the main hurdle in the way of negotiated settlement of the Mizo problem. Unless his government was dismissed there can be no hope of permanent peace returning to the Union Territory. The power-crazy territorial unit of the Congress (I), besides some disgruntled politicians in opposition, have joined hands with the Mizo National Front to work for the ouster of the Brigadier. Another important development had been the mobilisation of militant students and youth in support of the demand for the dismissal of the Sailo ministry.¹⁵

In the last part of February 1981, New Delhi allowed Laldenga to visit the front's underground headquarters to bring about an overall settlement of the Mizo problem. Laldenga visited the headquarters in the middle of March 1981. It is not unlikely that he will forfeit such credibility if

his journey to the Arakan hills does not succeed in persuading the Mizo National Front to lay down arms and accept Mizoram's constitutional position as an integral part of India. The initial signs seem to be suspicious for a reconciliation. Laldenga's supporters in New Delhi have also made much of the absence of overt hostilities since 1 August cease-fire came into force. But this should not distract the fact that rebel took advantage of the agreement to consolidate their position, repeating everything that had been done in violation of the 1976 agreement. True, Laldenga may not have been responsible for this duplicity since leadership of the extreme faction had already passed to Mr. Zoramthanga. If the president had in fact been repudiated, he might not be able to avail of his third opportunity generously allowed by the centre. 16

Be that as it may, Laldenga returned to Delhi on 28 March 1981. He said that the rank and file of the Mizo National Front had agreed to lay down arms once a solution was found to the Mizo problems within the framework of the Constitution. Laldenga had submitted to the Prime Minister the political demands formulated by the Front's national executive for an overall settlement of the Mizo problem on 17 April 1971. He reiterated therein his demand for a greater

Mizoram which he felt would unify the Mizo people living in the contiguous areas of the Union Territory, Manipur, Tripura and Assam.

About the need for a lasting political settlement in Mizoram there can be no dispute. Peace in the Union Territory has always been tenuous with periods of calm and turbulence marked by murders of innocents with the primary objective of striking terror amongst the outsiders and creating a sense of awe in the populace. The vital question, however, is whether Laldenga and his men have really changed their spots and can now be relied upon to honour in letter and spirit any agreement that might be reached. The Sailo government in Mizoram, which Laldenga is out to destabilise, is not too happy about it. In a note submitted to the Union Home Minister and circulated to members of Parliament, Chief Minister Sailo has virtually opposed the Centre's move to re-open talks with Laldenga. The note reportedly suggested three ways to tackle the problem - to mobilise public opinion against the Mizo National Front insurgency, security forces and police action against the rebels and negotiations with the Mizo National Front leadership at the Central level. The success of the present initiative will depend to a large extent, however, on the degree of influence that Laldenga still commands. The rebel movement is no longer a cohesive force; it is likely that a splinter group of Mizo guerrillas might not abide by the formal
agreement that is hoped for. New Delhi needs to be aware of that peace in Mizoram might have a salutary effect on Tripura and Manipur. But even this argument can be carried too far. Movements in Tripura and Mizoram may initially have been influenced by the Mizo rebellion; but they have since acquired a momentum of their own and may respond best to local treatment. In Mizoram, too, the centre will have to evolve a formula which meets public expectations and eliminates fighting without, however, endangering the country's territorial integrity. Laldenga has said that "considering the racial and geographical sensitivity of the Mizo people, they would like to have some safeguards such as more autonomy in administration and financial matters". Within rational limits, both these demands are legitimate. The Mizos, by and large, suffer from an acute sense of isolation in their mountain fastness and there is no reason why more funds cannot be earmarked to develop communication within Mizoram as also between it and the rest of the country. Likewise, they have a good case for asking that the Union Territory's status be raised to that of a full-fledged state like neighbouring Nagaland and Assam.

It is high time that the policy makers in New Delhi should give serious thought over what is at the root of the nation's failure to bring into mainstream people living in the sensitive
border areas. Mizoram's problem is neither merely military in character nor that of a simple maintenance of law and order. Inhibitions and general bewilderment flowing from cultural, economic and political factors are largely responsible for the slow pace of emotional integration of the Mizos with the rest of the countrymen. The problem basically is of bridging the wide communication gap and instilling a sense of belonging in the minds of Mizos by persuading them into becoming full and active partners in the everyday life and concerns of the nation. This calls for sincere and concerned action programmes to pull its economy up and out of its isolation and neglect.