CHAPTER II

The Dynamics of Mizo Movement

Historical Background

The Mizos belong to stock or a mixture of Huns, who migrated to upper Burma from the Chamdo region of Tibet through the eastern passes of Himalayas. Subsequently, these tribes kept moving southwards and over a period of time the Mizos occupied the Patkai Hills and Hukawng Valley. Mizos have the reputation of belonging to the race of freedom loving people, who fought for their freedom and survival right from their early days in Central Asia and China. Because of their constant moves and susceptibility to frequent raids by outsiders they could not accumulate much material wealth.67

The Mizos had historical experiences independent of the great civilizations and movements in India, and were, therefore historically isolated from the rest of the country. Mizo regionalism took roots in these independent historical experiences. The British administered the Mizo Hills on the principle of “protective discrimination” and protracted the Mizo isolation from the socio-political processes of other parts of the dominion. When Mizo hills were made a part of the Indian Union, the Mizos were not quite prepared to live within the same system with the Indians.

Ethnically the Mizos are more akin to the people of East and South East Asia. The Mizos are an ethnic group formed as a result of the assimilation of many tribes; sub-tribes and clans. The transformation of these tribes and clans into a common ethnic identity is said to be brought about by the deliberate move from broad basing of the ethnic identity so as to involve all the tribes living in an area in the struggle for certain basic interests rather

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than rely on a few hundred or few thousand people belonging to a single tribe, and this move is "facilitated by the adoption of common symbols like 'Christianity,' 'Roman script,' and western education."

It is difficult to say whether Mizos had any idea of being or having an independent state during the national freedom struggle. But during the transitional period of transfer of power to Indian people, the Congress Working Committee declared that, "it has been made clear that the constitution framed by the constituent assembly will apply only to those areas which accept it. It must be understood that any province or part of the province which accepts the Indian constitution and desires to join the Indian Union cannot be prevented from doing so. Thus there must be no compulsion either way and the people themselves must decide their future." Some of the Mizo leaders interpreted it as, "the door open for them either to join Burma or remain in India or be independent".

Since independence on part of Indian Union it became imperative to create autonomous region on North East because of its isolation with the mainstream. Here it would be worthwhile to understand the establishment and development of these autonomous district councils and regional councils before we discuss the genesis of the Mizo movement.

The Working of the Autonomous District Councils

A Historical Background of Autonomous District Council Administration

On the eve of the Indian independence, an Advisory Committee on minorities, tribes etc. under the Chairmanship of Vallabhbhai Patel was formed by the Constituent Assembly of India on January 25, 1947 which again appointed a sub-committee called the Bordoloi Sub-committee after the name of its Chairman Gopinath Bordoloi to aid and advise the advisory Committee on the affairs of the North Eastern Tribal Areas and the Excluded and

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69 Congress Working Committee Proceedings, March 8, 1947
70 Brigadier Verghese C.G. and Thanzawana R.L, Op cit, 147
Partially excluded Areas. Saprawnga and Khawtinkhuma, two stalwarts of the Mizo Union Party from the Lushai Hills District of Mizoram were inducted in this committee. The Bordoloi sub-committee suggested that the tribal areas of the North East including Mizoram should be left free from exploitation or domination of the plains people. It also suggested that the tribal of the region should enjoy uninterrupted freedom in the practice of their respective customs, inheritance, social organisation and ways of life.

The pattern of administration recommended by the Bordoloi sub-committee for the tribal areas of Assam and North East took shape from the Sixth schedule of the Constitution of India. Under the provisions contained in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Articles 244(2) and 275(1), six Districts inhabited by tribal of the then State of Assam became autonomous Districts, and the Lushai Hills District (Mizoram) was one of the six Districts. The sequential event that followed was that, two autonomous councils- the Lushai Hills District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were granted in the Lushai Hills District of Mizoram with immediate effect. Then in order to form the 24 member Lushai Hills District Council, the existing advisory Council headed by the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District formed for an interim period soon after Indian Independence in 1948. It was dissolved on November 12, 1951.

**Formation of the Lushai Hills District Council and Pawi Lakher Regional Councils**

After dissolving the Advisory Council, an election to the 24 member Lushai Hills District Council was announced, this was conducted on April 4, 1952. Two regional political parties- the Mizo Union and the United Mizo Freedom Organisation contested the election. Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, the 24 member Lushai Hills District Council was comprised of 18 elected members and 6 nominated members. Therefore, the election was held for 18 seats. Out of the total of 18 seats, the Mizo Union party won 17 seats leaving only one of the United Mizo Freedom Organization. From among the elected and nominated members, Council Legislature and Council Executive Committee

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were formed. The Legislature comprised of Chairman and a Deputy Chairman, akin to that of a Legislative Assembly’s Speaker and Deputy Speaker\textsuperscript{72}. The Executive Committee consisted of Chief Executive Member and a few Executive Members, similar to a Cabinet; the Chief Executive Members as Chief Minister and Executive Members as other Cabinet Ministers.\textsuperscript{73} The first body of the Legislature and the Executive from among the elected and nominated members of the Lushai Hills District Council was sworn in on June 25, 1952. The Deputy Commissioners District Administration now was with a much curtailed power.

In the following year, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was constituted. The procedure followed in the Constitution of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was same as for the Lushai Hills District Council. The inhabitants within the jurisdiction of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were mostly the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas. Under the provision of the Sixth Schedule, the Lushai Hills District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were vested with similar powers within the respective territorial jurisdictions with the exception that control over primary education in the Lushai Hills District, as a whole, was vested only with the Lushai Hills District Council\textsuperscript{74}.

**Formation of Village Councils in Mizoram**

The Lushai Hills District Council, soon after its formation, began to make laws on various subjects aimed at bringing about development of Mizoram. One such law was for the formation of Village Councils, i.e., approval for one Council for each village. The law in regard to the formation of Village Councils was called the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 was assented by the Governor of Assam on November 29, 1953.

**Functions Performed by the Lushai Hills District Council**

The Lushai Hills District Council along with other Autonomous District Councils of the then State of Assam, under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, was

\textsuperscript{72} The Lushai Hills District (Election to Village Council) Rules, 1953, Chapter V, Section 27

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
invested with the authority to perform three fold functions—legislative, executive and judicial functions. The functions within its jurisdiction would be performed with the help of officials deputed from the Government of Assam or appointed, namely, Secretaries to the Chief Executive Member and Executive Members, President of the District Council Court, Revenue Officers, Magistrates, Forest Officer, Education Officer, Development Officer, Rural Administration Officer—all at least in the rank of or equivalent to Class II Gazetted of the State of Assam and other officials.

Given below are some of the main Executive functions of the Autonomous Lushai Hills District Council and Village Councils:

**Legislative Functions:**

The newly created Lushai Hills District Council was primarily a law-making body. Under the provision of the Sixth schedule, its law-making power was absolute in certain subjects, but in certain other subjects, it required prior assent of the Governor of Assam. The procedure of passing a bill in the Council in session was similar to that of any other legislature.

**Executive Functions**

The Executive Committee of the Lushai Hills District Council comprised of Chief Executive Member as the head and a few other Executive members. It was the authorized body to administer the territorial jurisdiction of the District Council with the help of Laws, Rules and Regulations passed by the Legislative wing of the District Council, in matters mostly concerning the local affairs. Similar was the case with the Pawi Lakher Regional Council. Side by side, the Deputy Commissioner, Lushai Hills District (Mizoram) representing the Government of Assam administered the District with the laws framed by the Government of India and the State of Assam in all matters excluding the powers conferred on the District Council under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Thus, with the coming of the Autonomous District Council, there

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began dual administrative in Mizoram, as under both, Lushai Hills District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council, and under the Deputy Commissioner. Both the Councils and Commissioner had their respective jurisdiction of powers, uninterfered and unintervened on each other’s matter. Again, with the introduction of the Village Councils, some of the executive functions of the traditional Mizo Chiefs were curtailed and some of these began to be performed by the Village Councils. Therefore, the Chief’s administration ceased to exit with the coming of Village Councils in Mizoram.

**Judicial Functions**

Apart from Legislative and Executive functions, the Lushai Hills (Mizo) District Council acquired the right to discharge judicial functions within its jurisdiction under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. In the ladder of the judicial system, the Village Council Courts, comprised of the Village Council Members and were at the bottom. Above it was the subordinate District Council. The District Council Court consisting of three Judicial Officers was the apex body of the Judiciary of the Lushai Hills (Mizo) District Council. Cases were tried, heard and adjudicated by these courts of tribal and verdicts were given in accordance with the customary laws of the land. But under the provision of the Para 5 of the Sixth Schedule, the District Magistrates were also empowered to try criminal and other cases under Criminal Procedure Court (Cr P.C.) punishment inflicted on the person(s) found guilty was only fine and not imprisonment. When a village court was of the view that the sentence it could pass was not sufficient, it referred the case to the Subordinate District Council court for decision.

The Subordinate District Council courts tried cases referred to by the Village Council courts. But the functions of these courts were not simply to deal with the referred cases from the lower courts. The subordinate courts also tried cases, in original, in some cases. Therefore, the subordinate courts performed dual judicial functions: the functions of the settlement of referred cases as also the trial of fresh cases.

The apex body of the Lushai Hills District Council Judiciary system was the District Council Judiciary system. It was an appellate body where, subject to the provisions of the

76 Ibid
Para 4 of the Sixth Schedule, all appeals against the decisions of the Subordinate District Council Courts on suits and cases were entertained and heard\textsuperscript{77}.

The District Council's Judiciary in the Mizo territory was run in accordance with the Mizo Customary Laws. Customary laws are usually unwritten and are established usages handed down from generation to generation but undergo changes according to the changes in the practices of the society. The Mizo customary laws were no exception to this\textsuperscript{78}. These were unwritten in the past. It was N.E. Perry, I.C.S the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District who first put these laws in black and white in 1927 in the form of a booklet named Mizo Dan. Then, after Indian Independence, the Lushai Hills District became an Autonomous District. With the coming of Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council, the Mizo customary laws automatically became imperative as the District Council Judiciary ran in accordance with these laws. To keep pace with the changes in the practices of the Mizo society, the original Mizo customary laws (Mizo Dan) framed by N.E. Perry were revised many times by the District Council, the first being done in 1957 when the original Mizo Dan was renamed as Mizo Hnam Dan. A conspectus of some of the Mizo customary laws laid down in the Mizo Hnam Dan, based on which the Lushai Hills District Council Judiciary took decisions or passed orders on suits or cases within its jurisdiction.

**Establishment of the Autonomous District Council**

As referred earlier in this Chapter, under the provisions contained in Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, the Lushai Hills (Mizo) District Council with the headquarters at Aizawl was formed on April 25, 1952. It covered an area of approximately 6743 square miles out of the total jurisdiction of 8143 square miles. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was formed on April 23, 1953 with Saiha as its headquarters with the remaining 1400 square miles in the extreme south. Both the District and Regional Councils had Village Councils. This autonomous structure of the Lushai Hills (Mizo) District continued until the implementation of the North Eastern Area (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 (Act No. 81 of

\textsuperscript{77} The Lushai Hills (Chiefship/Abolition) Act, 1952, Chapter II, Sections 5 and 6

\textsuperscript{78} Purandare A P; Op.cit. Pp 239-40
1971) along with the elevation of the District into the status of Union Territory on January 21, 1972. Three new District councils were created for improving the conditions and safeguarding the interests of minority tribes viz., Pawi Autonomous District Council, Lakher Autonomous District Council, and Chakma Autonomous District Council with the headquarters at Lawngtlai, Saiha, and Chawngte, respectively. The original Lushai Hills (Mizo) District Council and the Pawi Lakher Regional Council came to be nonexistent on and from the day of creation of these three District Councils in the Chimptuiupui District in South Mizoram. And with the upgradation of the Union Territory of Mizoram into a full-fledged State of Mizoram as the 23rd State of the Indian Union in February, 1987 all the three District councils in the Chimtuiupui District were invoked with 301 Village Councils in the whole of Mizoram.

**Genesis of the Mizo Movement**

To Nirmal Nibedan, the various uprisings in the Northeast India constitute an ethnic explosion. He states, “the feeling of ethnically and radically different from the rest of the sub-continent was the decisive factor for one major group to launch a different guerrilla warfare. The strong feeling of being different was be further galvanized on the mountains by the westernized... But, strangely, it was Mizo ethnicity that was the prime mover of the fundamental cause for the battles of the future. At best, religion played a secondary role in Mizo movement”.

The above is a very precise observation of the ethnic base of tribal movements of the northeast in-general and the Mizos in particular. The search for an identity based on ethno-cultural bricks is still on for a solid foundation. They have learned their lessons well from the Manipuris, Tripuris and Cacharis, who have been rendered strangers (numbering in minority too) in their own home land. The story of the Tripuris and Cacharis are a sad one, who often losing their ethno-cultural identity by an immigrant invasion of Bangladeshis and the other outsiders, have become least assertive and

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79 The Lushai Hills (Chiefship/Abolition) Act, 1952, Chapter I, Section 3.
protected. The Mizos realized it early and asserted their ethnic identity during the colonial rule itself.

In the pre-independence era, only the seeds of the movement were planted. Being a freedom loving tribe and a closed one too, the "vais" or the outsiders were not welcomed. But then there were very little scope of resistance in the colonial system. Hmartawnphunga, father of the Chief Minister Lalthanwala wrote a pamphlet in 1947, wherein he expressed his opinion as how he thought the Mizos would not be able to live with "vais" (outsider). According to him, the danger of joining India lies in the fact that the vais cannot be made real friends of the Mizos and they are much more selfish than the British. It is also known to the Mizos that the plain people are too conscious of the economic gains and they are afraid that, given the equal opportunity, they would not be able to compete with them. This fear gives rise to a "defensive nationalism" and it was the same defensive posture and a bit of skepticism which appear to characterize the budding political attitudes of the Mizo people.

To counter the Vais and mobilize the Mizo tribes, the Mizo Common People’s Union Party (MPUP) was founded on April 9, 1946, which was later renamed as Mizo Union Party (MUP). Pu Saprawnga and Pu Dengthuama were founder members. Soon, A. Z. Phizo, the Naga leader visited Lushai Hills in April 1947, and invited the Mizos to join the fight against the Indian government for political independence. However, the Mizo’s politely rejected this. At that point of time the Mizos wanted to form their own state and not align with any group.

Post Independence Development

Since the days of India’s independence, a turbulent political situation started brewing up in Mizoram and Pawi-Lakher region of Assam, much to the disliking of Assam and its Chief Minister Gopinath Bordolai. A sub-committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of Bordolai to make suitable recommendations. During the constitution
making stage, on the recommendation of the Bordolai sub-committee report, the dilemma of the Lushai’s, as they were popularly called, was resolved with the provision for an autonomous existence under Part A of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The keen desire of the Mizo’s to link up their political life with Assam on the one hand and fear of being submerged on the other, was reconciled by providing a fair degree of self government through the autonomous District councils named Mizo District Council and Pawi- Lakher Regional Council. Of the above two councils, the later was conceived for the Pawi, Lakher and the Chakma tribes. The two councils were constituted in order to have an autonomous administration over the traditional ways and affairs of the tribes and make such changes as they themselves might like to introduce. It consisted of 24 members of whom three fourth would be elected. The Mizo District Council was inaugurated on April 25th, 1952, and the Pawi- Lakher Regional Council was inaugurated on April 23, 1952.

In 1954, two important legislations were enacted after a civil disobedience movement by the Mizo Union Party, which protested, sometimes even violently against the land and taxation rights of the traditional tribal Chiefs. The two legislations were made possible because of the hospitable atmosphere created by the Mizo Union Party and the Congress Party of Assam. The first legislation was the acquisition of the Chief’s rights, which came into force on April 1; 1954. The second was that Lushai Hills District’s name was changed to Mizo District.

The ten-year period of experimentation of association with the Indian union through the state of Assam was well over and the conditions brought about by the ‘future trends of events’ were too fertile for the rise and growth of secessionist feelings among the Mizos. The Centre’s expectations that Mizos would greatly benefit from the Lusia hills as an autonomous District under Assam, was belied by the general attitude of both the state government and centre particularly during the famine of 1959-60. The general feeling of the people was against the District council for its incapability of handling real situations and against the government of Assam for its ‘step motherly’ treatment and against the

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whole India because they had the general opinion that India could not be different from Assam. Though the Mizos did not have any direct relations with the central government, they were apprehensive with their union with India. Some politically conscious Mizos had formed social organizations as an implicit-separatist sentiment. The Mizo Cultural Society (1959) and the Mizo National Famine Front (1960) were such organizations. The MNF was the manifestation of the sentiment in an organized form with political overtures.

In 1959, Mizo District was inflicted with a severe famine and Pu Laldenga with the help of Assam government provided help in the remotest village and won considerable support of the Mizos. But during the same time, due to insistence of Assam Government that Assamese language should be declared as state language enhanced the growing irk of the Mizos as it would have been disadvantageous to all the hill tribes. In such circumstances the Mizo National Famine Front was converted into a full-fledged regional political party called Mizo National Front, injected with the high personal ambitions of Pu Laldenga. He organized it on military lines and imbued it with secessionist tendencies. First the neglect during the famine and subsequently the language issue helped the cause of the Mizo movement taking and giving it an ethnic insurgency design.

MNF became very active during 1962-64 with the passage of Assam Language Act of 1960, which made Assamese as the state language of Assam. Pu Laldenga said that the act will endanger the Mizo culture and language. During the same period, the Nagas led the violent movement against Assam and Government of India. The Government of India entered into a ceasefire with the Nagas. This prompted the Mizos to think of such drastic step of violent movements/insurgencies so that Government of India would accord greater autonomy and statehood. It created an impression that insurgency pays dividend especially with the Congress leaders who always talk about peace, satyagraha and non-violence. The feeling that the Mizos being more educated than the average Nagas may be able to achieve even more than what the Nagas did by adopting the violent methods. The insurgency in Nagaland and its leader Phizo in particular, indeed, inspired Pu Laldenga to

86 Ibid. P. 40.
demand complete independence and to start an armed revolt. The MNF intensified its activities and started collecting the so-called voluntary donations, often forcibly, recruited youths and prepared for a violent rebellion. The initial objective of MNF was to:

a) To capture the District Council and the seats in Lok Sabha and Village Sabha in next general elections;
b) As a long-term strategy, it was to prepare itself for a violent movement of secession and;
c) To acquire a dependable and regular source of support from foreign powers.

Pu Laldenga had a meeting with the then Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri on October 30, 1965 in which Laldenga expressed grievances of the Mizo people. He apparently told the Prime Minister “during 15 years of close contact and association with the Government of India, the Mizo people have not been able to feel at home with India and with Indians, nor have they been able to feel that their joys and sorrows have really ever been shared by Indians. They do not therefore, feel as Indians”\(^87\). He further said that “whether the Mizo nation should shed her tears of joys, to establish firm and lasting friendship with India in war (reference to 1965 war with Pakistan) or in peace, or in sorrows and in anger, is up to the Government of India to decide.”\(^88\) But Shri.L. B. Shashtri did not commit himself one or the other way.

The Mizos went full steam with violent tactics. After a bloody revolt in the capital Aizawl and capture of few towns, ambushes on para-military and military forces, the MNF organized a Mizoram Sawrkar or Government of Mizoram, which ostensibly ran for few days. But soon the Mizo National Volunteers (or Mizo National Army) realized that they cannot resist the might of Indian Army for long and the state and its people will perish. Pu Laldenga’s public statements to the Government of India and Assam and his meetings in the villages aired conflicting views. This led to suspicion among the Mizo masses. These suspicions gradually widened into a big schism with one side, which

consisted of the educated and the young group, longing for peace and negotiation with the Government of India and accepted statehood within Union of India.\textsuperscript{89}

**Internal Conflict within Mizo Movement**

The clear division between the Mizo people became overt when the leaders of the Mizo Union submitted a Memorandum to the Prime Minister alleging that “Mr. B. P. Chaliha (Chief Minister of Assam) in his bid to over throw the Mizo Union Party, had gone to the extent of lending active and material support to MNF, an organisation which stood for the disintegration of the Indian Union. To him the disintegration of Assam as a state was more serious than the amputation of Mizo Hill Districts from India”, hence clearly showing their loyalty to Indian Union.\textsuperscript{90} When the bitter conflict for separation and independence continued, the State Reorganization Act came. The North-Eastern Reorganisation Act of 1971 upgraded the Mizo Hill Districts into a Union Territory. For a temporary period, the Mizo Union, the District Congress and other liberal groups among the Mizos accepted the proposal willingly. With some improvement in the situation the Mizo Hill was elevated to a full-fledged status of a Union Territory on January 21, 1972, with a 33 member Legislative Assembly, 30 elected and 3 nominated members and one Lok Sabha seat, administered by a council of ministers and Lieutenant Governor as the administrative head. In order to safeguard the interest of the minority tribes like, Pawi, Lakhers and Chakmas, three District councils were also created. In Aizawl, the then Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi expressed the hope that, “there would be peace in Mizoram and the people will cooperate and help one another to achieve better standards of living.”\textsuperscript{91}

**The Struggle for an Independent Mizoram**

In spite of granting Mizoram “a Union Territory status”, the MNF continued its subversive activities and Mizoram once again in February, 1972, just a year after, was

\textsuperscript{89} Nag Sajal; Roots of Ethnic Conflict: nationality Question in North East India, Manohar Pub, New Delhi 1990  
\textsuperscript{90} Kumar B B; Reorganisation of North East India, P. 27 Omsons Publication, New Delhi, 1996  
\textsuperscript{91} Verghese V G; Op. Cit, P. 148
declared disturbed area. Many a young Mizos joined the MNF in anticipation of getting rehabilitation benefits and employment as MNF returnees".92 Whenever a surrender ceremony took place, some of the new recruits used to line up as Mizo National Army (MNA) veterans and managed to get all the benefits dished out by the government.93 The frequent surrender ceremonies made it clear that a majority of surrenders joined MNF for the thrill of possessing a gun and for financial benefits and not for patriotic or political reasons.94 Exploiting benefits of amnesty, many over ground MNF workers got jobs into government departments or joined political parties. They freely mixed with civilians and exercised control by selective use of terror.

The first election of the union territory took place on April 18, 1972. The election was peaceful with a high turnout of voters i.e. 71.44%. The Mizo Union secured a majority of 21 seats and its candidate for Lok Sabha also returned for another term. This showed the desire of the Mizo people to remain with India and look for peace and development. The MNF which initially thought of not contesting realized the futility of their insurgent activities and decided to fight elections, probably to gauge their support base. In spite of all sorts of canvassing and threats of violence, they were not successful in the elections. The Government of India extended the amnesty date and as a result large number of MNF insurgents decided to surrender and enjoy the benefits dished out to them by the Government.

But the MNF simply would not have been a mere eye witness to such surrenders and losing the respect which was created through sympathy and violence. On December 2, 1974 cyclostyle copies of ‘Quit Mizoram’ was distributed and posters hanged all around Aizawl and other towns in Lushai Hills in Hindi and English. The posters stated “all Indian nationals now in Mizoram are hereby ordered to leave Mizoram by January 1, 1975. Responsibility of violation of this order lie upon the defaulter”.95 It created lot of panic and thousands of non Mizos left the area. But it was retaliated in a more vehement way by non Mizo Association expressing their anger in terms of “all Mizos staying in

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92 Ibid.
93 Ibid, p. 141
94 Ibid, p.141
95 Nag Sajal Op cit P. 165
other states will be thrown out mercilessly and threatened to kill, 10 Mizos for every non-Mizo killed by MNF in Mizoram. They also threatened to stop all transport vehicles coming to Mizoram and starve the people of Mizoram if “Quit Mizoram” notice and warning was enforced.

**Negotiating with the Indian Government:**

A series of talks took place between Pu Laldenga and Government of India officials which also included Mrs. Gandhi and Morarji Desai, both, during their Premiership. Many demands were made by Pu Laldenga and promises were made to Laldenga to sympathetically consider all his demands but with in the framework of the Constitution of India. Pu Laldenga realizing the toughness of the battle with Indian forces and the defeat of the Pakistani forces in 1971 at the Indian hands made him to realize that his own population won’t survive the challenge for long. He took the oath of being a true citizen of India under the Constitution of India and abjures all kinds of violence for political purposes. But Laldenga soon realized that though hundreds of workers have surrendered, the hardliners among the MNA are still ready to fight. Fearing loss of support base, he hoodwink the Government and once again started sending the volunteers to China to collect arms and ammunitions and for training. In fact, the peace talks were used by shrewd Laldenga as smokescreen for vigorous preparations to revitalize the MNA; to collect taxes and force donations for those MNA workers who appeared to mellow down.

Once the peace talks started, there appeared to be ambiguous division between rank and file of MNF and MNA. Pu Zoramthanga, who was very critical of some of the MNA commanders, described the MNF in three categories—

a) The doves, who wanted an honorable settlement immediately, so that they could lead a normal life.

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b) The moderates, who wanted an honorable settlement within the framework of the Constitution of India with special provisions to safeguard the interests of the Mizos.

c) The extremists, who did not want any kind of peace talks with Government of India.

According to him, if the Government of India or any other group tries to utilize the doves against the MNF, the moderates would also become extremists. In the mean time, the Government of India decided to hold elections in May 1978 and end the Presidential Rule. There were five political parties in the fray for power including the Mizo Congress, who had its own regional identity after a split in the Congress. People’s Conference Party of Brigadier Sailo got a land sliding victory winning 23 of 30 seats and securing 30% votes with the promise of ‘peace first and foremost’. The polling were said to be free, fair and peaceful. The Mizo Union ironically did not win any seats. The candidates backed by MNF and MNA did not win any seat and this expressed a strong desire for people to bring peace in the state.

The peace talks continued even after the elections but due to ever widening factions within the Mizo Political Parties and Insurgent Groups, no solutions, even temporary, could be arrived at. Laldenga, Zoramthanga, Brigadier Sailo, all had different stance and each wanted to sideline other to capture power. Fighting within the Mizo rank and file showed that the leaders are more interested in enjoying a luxurious life and holding onto power without any opposition then their interest in the peace and development of the poor common Mizo masses. Pu Laldenga’s double stance, one before the Government of India and other before the Mizo masses created more confusion for the peace talks as the the Mizo masses and volunteers who wielded arms to serve their people, never knew what was really going behind the curtains. They were confused between the allegations, refutations and interpretations of their so-called leaders.

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Negotiations/Agreement for Ceasefire

An agreement was reached on July 29, 1980, between the Government of India and MNF for ceasefire. The suspension of operation by the security forces also underlined the fact that the Government is ready for negotiations without any precondition, for peace and prosperity. However, Laldenga set out some patently unacceptable demands which ran counter to the agreement, like dissolution of the Sailo Ministry which was popularly elected in a free and fair election. The MNF insurgents covertly kept collecting forced donations, recruitment of volunteers and propaganda, which were not considered part of their underground activities or military operations (according to Laldenga’s interpretation). 98

The Government in right earnest had ordered the suspension of all military operation except against clandestine crossing of international borders for procuring arms and training. But the MNF perception was entirely different. An order transmitted by Laldenga made it clear to all that the MNF was only negotiating a settlement which would keep Mizoram as an integral part of India and nothing else. The ceasefire did not mean that the MNF had agreed to stop all-unlawful activities. Laldenga also maintained that they will lay down arms only after a final political agreement is reached, and that ‘ceasefire’ did not mean ‘peace’. He vigorously insisted that as long as the Sailo ministry is in power ‘peace would be elusive’ 99. According to him, there has to be an ‘interim Presidential Rule’ or ‘an interim Chief Ministership’, the position he wanted to acquire at any cost.

The Church leaders, the Academicians, the intellectuals and the prominent businessmen, all were craving for peace in the state as it had already hampered the business. The church leaders, who had considerable influence among masses along with political parties of Mizoram, signed a joint appeal on May 31, 1983 requesting both Central Government and MNF to abjure violence and resume peace talks. Due to enhanced combing operation by the security forces, the MNF had considerable setbacks and was also facing financial

98 Ibid P. 243
99 Nag Sajal; Op.cit, P. 163
hardship and low morale, but their leadership was interested in peace talks, more for buying time for refurbishing and strengthening the underground movement than by the desire of genuine peace. In fact, it appeared that MNF made it a tactical strategy to resume or start fresh peace talks when it found itself in low morale, shortage of funds or losing support base among masses and other quandaries.

**Genesis of the Mizo Accord**

On June 25, 1986, a political agreement was reached between All India Congress Committee (AICC), Vice President Arjun Singh and Pu Laldenga, though details of these were kept secret for some days. Laldenga made the following statement on the peace Accord, which was done at the initiative of Rajiv Gandhi—

"the Mizo people are proud of their heritage. The disturbed conditions of the preceding two decades have caused serious setbacks to peace, progress and prosperity for the people of the Mizoram. My party the Mizo National Front, has resolved now all the problems within the framework of Constitution of India.\(^{100}\) The MNF has irrevocably committed itself to join the mainstream of the Indian polity in total adherence to the Constitution of India and a strong and united India. Our hopes and aspirations will be fulfilled within this entity\(^{101}\)."

**The Mizo Accord**

After many spells of overt and covert dialogue between Government of India and MNF, an accord was signed between the Center and Pu Laldenga’s MNF on June 30, 1986. The Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi along with the Chief Minister went on a four day long tour of the every nook and corner of the mountainous region, with Prime Minister himself driving the car. In those four days, he created goodwill and gratitude in the minds of the people, which others were not able to achieve even after staying for several years in Mizoram. The Prime Minister also announced that in the seventh five year plan, the

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\(^{100}\) The Telegraph June 26, 1986

\(^{101}\) Ibid.
Centre has we have doubled the plan expenditure for Mizoram and for 1986-87, the per capita investment would be Rs. 950 as against an all India average of Rs. 200.\textsuperscript{102}

The agreement among other things, provided for conferment of 'statehood' on Mizoram. The Accord safeguarded the time honored religious and social practices of the Mizos. These included the customary laws or procedures involving the administration of civil and criminal justice and ownership and transfer of land. No Act of Parliament would apply in respect of these matters to Mizoram without the consent of the State Assembly. The Accord provided for border trade in locally produced agricultural goods under another scheme. The Accord was specific that the rights and privileges of the minorities in Mizoram, as envisaged in the Constitution, would continue to be preserved and protected and their social and political advancement would be ensured\textsuperscript{103}.

Consequently upon passage of the Constitution 53\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Bill and the State of Mizoram Bill (August, 1986) the Union Territory of Mizoram became the 23\textsuperscript{rd} state of Indian Union on February 27, 1987. The State of Mizoram Bill also provided for a forty (40) member single chamber Legislative Assembly, three District councils, nine sub-divisions, three autonomous hill Districts councils and 301 village councils (instead of Gram Panchayats).

Discord in Mizo Accord

A move, however, for creation of another autonomous council for the Hmar community of the Mizos dwelling in north eastern part of Mizoram has been going on since the time Mizoram became a full-fledged State. The movement was started by the Hmar people forming an organization called 'Hmar Peoples Convention'. It even started an armed revolt on April, 1989 causing loss of lives. To put an end to the Hmar People Conventions armed revolt Peace Accord was signed, after several talks, between the Government and the Hmar People's Convention. In the Memorandum of Settlement signed by Himngchunghung, President of Hmar People's Convention on behalf of the Convention and Lalfakzuala, Chief Secretary, Government of Aizawl on July 27, 1994.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid. P. 241
the formation of an autonomous council in the name ‘Sinlung Hills Development Council’ for the Hmar people inhabiting north eastern part of Mizoram was agreed upon\textsuperscript{104}.

Concluding Remarks

While fanatic communal and secessionist movements may have to be dealt firmly, the genuine demands of the moderate people of various regions may be responded in a more accommodative. The policy decision in relation to regional problems can be of any approach; demographic development (in economic sense), militaristic or political or a mixed one.\textsuperscript{105} Of the above mentioned approaches "the political and constitutional method" has been found to be the most effective, satisfying and successful.

Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga has seen it all. He has taken the gun to wage a bush war against the Indian Government under the leadership of the late Laldenga when the secessionist movement was at its peak in Mizoram to ultimately come over ground and lead the once trouble torn State as its Chief Minister after the Mizo Accord between the MNF leadership and the Indian Government under Rajiv Gandhi was signed. From the jungle, waging a war against the Indian armed forces, to the Chief Minister's post and at one time advocate and as a major broker in the peace process between the Indian Government and the NSCN (IM), Zoramthanga did realise the usefulness of Mizo Accord for bringing peace in the state. The Mizo Accord is one of the outstanding successes initiated by the government of India.

It was the success of the Mizo Accord that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani asked the redoubtable Chief Minister of Mizoram to try and talk to the militants of the North East region and is a pointer to the success of the Mizo Accord. Being a former rebel, Zoramthanga knew how it is to fight the Indian Government and having gone through a successful negotiation, he knows it well that given a constitutional guarantee and a constant financial support the peace Accords can

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. P. 155
\textsuperscript{105} Burman D.C ; Regionalism in Bangladesh in Ramakant ed. Regionalism in South Asia, Pp.127-131, Alekh Publication, Jaipur, 1986
achieve much more than militant tactics which in the long run only retards economic growth. The mere fact that Zoramthanga was asked by the Indian political leadership to thrash out a solution, for Nagaland speaks volume of the success of Mizo Acoord and its constitutional accommodation.

More than a decade later after the 1986 Peace Accord, an Indian Express Reporter asked Mr. Zoramthanga, “would you say the reconciliation is complete?” Prompt came the reply from the Chief Ministar that insurgency in Mizoram is over, but a new situation can arise. Our economic condition is very bad. There are a lot of unemployed, educated young people. There can again be disgruntlement among them. But politically I don't think it (insurgency) will happen”. He also elaborated that over the years, the people got so fed up with the troubles in Mizoram, and as early as 1976, Laldenga signed a paper with Indira Gandhi accepting that Mizoram was a part of India. The troubles never stopped, but the people desired normalcy. He also stated that “I would say Mizoram is in the mainstream now; I cannot speak for Nagaland or Assam. A large number of people now join the army, and Mizoram is very peaceful”. He accepted the fact that the Mizo Accord brought the much desired peace for the people.

Shri Bocoy Handique, Member of Parliament in 2002 summed of the Mizo Accord, “I was Governor for five years in Mizoram and I know the problem of peace and violence there. There is a way out. Mizoram did show the way out. On the one side, I agree that the military option is not the answer. But it is the human factor that is the answer. Responding to the Centre's initiative in Nagaland he said, “I welcome the move to have an emissary to meet the NSCN. But, at the same time, I would like to request Shri L.K. Advani to see that the emissary takes into confidence the people of Nagaland through their elected representatives. As I know today, the Government of Nagaland has to be taken into confidence. There are also certain organisations which play a very important role in the furtherance of peace. This also has to be taken into consideration and they should also be taken into confidence”. He said that “the most important point that I would

106 Indian Express, Oct. 7, 2002
107 Ibid.
like to bring to the attention of the House is that there is the need to instill a sense of confidence. Let us not allow a sense of diffidence to control us"\(^\text{108}\).

The success of the Mizo Accord can also be gauged by the fact that the state celebrated the 15th anniversary of peace accord. The Mizo peace accord is said to be by far the most successful peace agreement signed between the Centre and any insurgent group. While the MNF kept its part of the bargain, the Centre initiated efforts to raise the status of Mizoram to a full-fledged state. A Constitution Amendment Bill and another to confer statehood on Mizoram was passed in the Lok Sabha on August 5, 1986. The formalisation of Mizoram state took place on February 20, 1987 with Mr. Rajiv Gandhi flying in to inaugurate the new state. The present discussion has once again proved the remarkable resilience of the Indian constitution in offering a political environment for different ethnic groups of the Indian society to fulfill their legitimate aspirations.

\(^{108}\) Fronties Weekend Vol 1, No 6, 2002