CHAPTER II

MIZO NATIONAL FRONT (MNF)

Before dealing with the Mizo National Front (MNF) it is necessary to deal first with the Mizo National Famine Front which gave birth to the former. During the Mautam famine, which was inevitable cycle of the nature occurring at the interval of round about fifty years, Mizo National Famine Front was organised to help the starving people. The flowering of bamboos, the clear sign of ensuing famine, started in 1957 and in 1968. The bamboos of the whole district flowered resulting in multiplication of rats in millions teeming with the whole district. When the bamboos started to flower the Mizo leaders sent a message and a delegation to the Government of Assam requesting the latter to take a timely precautionary measures against the ensuing famine. But the Government of Assam did not believe in the sign of famine. When the famine actually happened the Government of Assam had not yet taken any precautionary measures, and as a result the food situation in Mizoram became very critical, a number of people died of
The Government of Assam required the district authority to declare Mizo district a famine area so as to enable them to send in food supply. However, they demanded the number of starvation death to be furnished to the state authority. The District Council did not or could not declare Mizo District a famine area. According to Lalmawia the then Parliamentary Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department, there were many cases of starvation deaths which the district authority refused to report as starvation deaths. He said further that whenever the starvation death was reported, L.S. Ingty, the then Deputy Commissioner of Mizo District sent doctors to the spot for post-mortem and instructed the doctors to report that they found some food in their stomachs. The critical food situation caused public grievances against the District authorities. That critical period, complicated with public grievances against the leaders and rules of the district was quite favourable for a new political party to arise.

During the famine, on the request of Lalmawia the Parliamentary Secretary, came Williamson Sangma, the then Minister of Tribal Affairs and other Ministers of Assam, including some MLA's, over to Mizoram to study the situation of the famine on the spot. This delegation found that the

1. An interview with Mr. Lalmawia former leader of UMFO party.
district was really a famine stricken area. In the meantime some people organised a cultural club which was subsequently converted into the Mizo National Famine Front party to salvage the people from destruction by famine.

The front organised a public meeting at a cinema hall on 19th February 1960 which was participated by 300 representatives of 44 villages. That public meeting passed a resolution that a bigger public meeting be organised to be participated by the representatives from all parts of the District. Accordingly, another public meeting was organised on 10th March, 1960 at Aizawl with a much larger representation from various places of the District. The notification for the grand public meeting was issued as a partyless concern to comprise all the famine stricken people irrespective of the political parties to which they belonged. On the same day the session of the Mizo District Council was in progress. B.P.Chaliha, the Chief Minister of Assam was also present in Aizawl on his official tour to Mizoram to study the famine situation. The Famine Front took out a big procession in protest against the Government's negligence of the famine stricken people in Mizoram. They met the Chief Minister who gave them some amount of rice.

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2. An interview with Lalmawia Parliamentary Secretary of Assam and Leader of UMFO.
The Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) did a great deal to salvage the people from starvation and thus the leaders of the Front made themselves popular to the people. In that way they prepared the ground for the organisation of a new political party.

When the famine plague was over in 1961, seven of the MNFF leaders considered the feasibility of converting the MNFF into a political party. Those leaders were Laldenga, J.F. Manliana, R. Vanlawma, Vanlalhruaia (Mission Veng), Lalliana (Venghlui), Zama and Thangliana Sailo. They all agreed to convert the party into a political party and to name it "Mizo National Front." The next item of the agenda of the meeting was the policy of the new party. R. Vanlawma suggested 'Independence of Mizoram from India' for the policy of the party. But Thangliana Sailo was dead against it and suggested 'Mizo State', because full independence, according to him, was absolutely impossible and the price to be paid would be bloodshed, distress, military atrocity, etc. which would never be able to buy independence from a strong government like India. Mizo state, on the other hand would be more reasonable and the price to be paid for it would also be much cheaper.

Even then, R. Vanlawma persisted in his stand saying that independence of Mizoram from India must be, as of right, reasonable and possible. Thereupon, Laldenga, in a bid to bring about a concensus point, put forward a policy of
independence of Mizoram with a statehood as the real objective. However, R.Vanlawma disliked the false policy of independence with a statehood as the real aim while Thangliana Sailo could accept only the policy of 'Statehood' and not at all the false policy of independence to hoodwink the people. So, the meeting came to an end without arriving at any consensus point on the question of policy.  

Sometime after the unsuccessful meeting another committee was convened at the dead of the night of October 28, 1961 at Laldenga's residence, Aizawl. This time, the party was successfully organised with its name 'Mizo National Front' (MNF) and the following ad hoc Office-bearers: -

- President Laldenga
- General Secretary R.Vanlawma
- Assistant Secretary A.Rohnuna

In that committee they had no problem any more as to the policy of the party, because Laldenga told R.Vanlawma that he had been convinced of the independence policy. Without much discussion they unanimously adopted, this time, the policy of independence of Mizoram with integration of all the areas inhabited by the Mizos, economic improvement of the people and the safeguard of their religion-Christanity as the components of the policy.

3. An interview with Mr.Thangliana Sailo on 16th February 1989.
It must be noted that there is controversy about the date on which the MNF party was founded. According to some MNF leaders it was on 22 October 1961, but R.Vanlawma maintains that it was on 28th October 1961 and his version would be more reliable, for he asserts that he was the first General Secretary who kept the records of the party right from the beginning while the records kept by others were lost or destroyed during the insurgency.

On the 2nd April, 1962 a convention organised by the MNF party was held at Aizawl which they did not like to call the MNF conference or General Assembly so as to attract everyone from every party. Since the main theme of the meeting was independence of Mizoram the owner of the cinema hall where the convention was held did not allow the hall for such meeting any longer. Therefore, the meeting had to shift on the third day to R.Vanlawma's residence which had a small lawn. In the convention the office-bearers were elected as follows:

- President: Laldenga
- Vice President: J.F.Manliana
- General Secretary: R.Vanlawma
- Assistant Secretary: Isaac Zoliana
- Financial Secretary: D.H.Thanga

Soon after that convention the MNF party launched an all out campaign and sent volunteers to all directions throughout Mizoram and even to Mizo occupied areas of Manipur and Burma
to preach the doctrine of the MNF to all Mizos wherever they were. The MNF party thus became extremely popular with young people and the common men, only because of its policy and programmes reinforced with the outstanding oratory of Laldenga, its President. Being flared up into chauvinism by the MNF doctrine and the sermons of its president, the Mizo young people daily enrolled themselves in thousands as MNF volunteers. The idea of re-unification of the areas inhabited by the Mizos was not a new one. It had already been advocated and preached by the Mizo Union party even long before it was adopted by the MNF as its policy. They said that the Mizos were one and the same people living within a compact area, subsequently divided by the British imperialistic regime for the convenience of administration or just to weaken the Mizo nation or community.

In 1947, Vanthuama, the General Secretary of Mizo Union party, told the Bardoloi committee, "As for the future position, my personal view is, that so long as we are backward, we should proceed under the guidance of Central Government of India, but we should have a right to secede from the union of India within ten years or so." Thus the idea of independence was conceived by the Mizo Union leaders long before MNF party came into being.

Profile of Laldenga:

Born on Sunday, the 12th June, 1927, Laldenga the fourth child of a cultivator Liantlira by Darchhungi, hailed from Pukpui village, three miles to the north of Lunglei town, became a
charismatic political leader with a host of devoted volunteers and a multitude of his party members rallying around him. An intelligent boy, though he was, his educational qualification was not high. After passing the Middle School Leaving Certificate examination from serkawn Middle English School, the then only middle school in south Mizoram, he joined class seventh in the Assam Training School (now "Adventist Training School") near Jowai, Meghalaya.

However, owing to the Japanese invasion on the eastern border of India, the School was closed for the time being before the end of the school session. As a result, Laldenga, with other students, had to go home without completing even his first year of Secondary School course. Unfortunately for him that was the end of his studies in formal school. When the school reopened, Laldenga had no longer been in a position to prosecute his studies. He then underwent a teachers' training course after teaching in a primary school at Bungmhun village for one year as a probationary teacher. During his training he could not get along well with his boss H.W. Carter, Director of the Teachers' Training Course and Honorary Inspector of Schools, and left his training course without completing it. He then joined again the Army at an early age of about seventeen years as a Havildar Clerk, and as such he acquired a good command of Hindi as well as English which stood him in good stead in his later life, especially in his political career.
After some years of service in the Army he was discharged from service for submitting a blank paper in the trade test and for being recorded as unmanageable. As a result he had to stay at home for sometime as an unemployed layman. However, he took up, before long, a service under the District Council in 1954 as a Cashier, and as such, to the close of his service, he took an active part in MNFF party, being one of its founders.

Before he left the District Council he made a minor mistake in his financial account for which the then Chief Executive Member of the District Council Ch. Saprawnga demanded his resignation, or else he should be discharged disgracefully. Over and above this case, Laldenga and Ch. Saprawnga did not get along quite well with each other, and this might be one of the reasons why his mistake could not be forgiven. Thus Laldenga was compelled to enter upon politics. Anyway, he had made his name in Mizoram for his philanthropic works during the famine and also for his outstanding oratory. His undisputed leadership was upheld by a large troop of educated followers.

The canopy of his popularity overshadowed the reputation of his educated colleagues. That is, every credit of the party went to his personal glory, even when he did not deserve it,

4. Verbal information from H.K.Bawihchhuaka (late).
and for any fault of the party, his colleagues were to blame. Among his colleagues Sainghaka was more popular than any other member of his rank. But Laldenga was tactful enough to keep him from popularity so as to make his own position as a leader permanently unrivaled. However, it was Laldenga's weakness that he always felt that his leadership was shaky and took precautionary measures openly against any possible subversive element as he feared it to be, and that was his political blunder that led him to his retrogression. Had he not been so, he could have made much greater achievements and his position would have been much more secure.  

The MNF ideology across the international Border:

In April 1963, K.Manliana and other Mizos come from Burma to Mizoram to request Laldenga and R.Vanlawma to preach the MNF doctrine, re-unification in particular, to the Mizo community in Burma. But Laldenga's presence in Mizoram was considered by his party indispensable and his service could not, therefore, be spared. So, R.Vanlawma and Chawngkhuma set off in the month of August 1963 on a mission across the border. At Imphal Airport, on their way to Burma, they were received by Sena (self-styled Reverend) and at Imphal town they were received by Thuamkhanthang, the leader of Paihte National Council.

5. An interview with Lalhmingthanga ex-Foreign Minister of MNF.
who assisted them to cross the border through Mawreh and to
the Burmese territory.

The two emissaries met Thanhleia and K.Manliana the
leaders of the Mizo community in Burma, and stayed with them
for sometime. However, before they could complete their mission
the emissaries were called back to Mizoram by Laldenga saying
that re-unification should be preached first within India then
in Burma. On learning the President's message Chawngkhuma,
one of the emissaries burst with indignation for their perilous
mission, he deemed, was brought to naught.

In compliance with the call Chawngkhuma made his home-
ward journey with Thuamkhanthang and party who acted as his
guides and guards, while R.Vanlawma remained in Burma trying
to communicate with Gen.Newin, Chairman of the Revolutionary
Council of Burma through correspondence. Shortly after, he,
however, had to go underground, for fear of the government of
Burma which had launched a hunt for him, and in this connection
K.Manliana and Thanghleia, the Mizo politicians in Burma were
arrested.

A rift in the MNF leadership:

There was disagreement among the leaders of MNF on
the issue of participation in and contesting of the 1963 bye-
election to the Assam Legislative Assembly and any election
under the Government of India in general. Some of the leaders
strongly opposed participation in, and contesting of any Indian
political elections which Laldenga was bent upon for capturing power. He considered political power necessary for preparing underground movement or open rebellion whichever action might be expedient in the struggle for freedom. His colleagues, on the other hand, regarded participation in, or contesting of any elections prepared by the Government of India as a candid acceptance or admission of being Indians which would weaken the cause for independence.

In course of time, Sena (Rev.) and R.Vanlawma contacted an American paper company at Calcutta hoping that a paper mill might be installed in Mizoram with the help of American paper company after achieving independence of Mizoram. But Laldenga did not like this contact and sent a telegram to the company informing them that the two gentlemen were no representatives of any party. This incident added more fuel to the fire of disunity among the MNF leaders. As a result of disunity which became worse and worse in the process of time, some eminent leaders of MNF party under the leadership of R.Vanlawma broke away from it and founded a new political party called "Mizo National Council".

The leaders of the new party levelled the following charges against Laldenga:
(a) The expulsion of R.Vanlawma and Sena (Rev.) the champions for the economic programme, from the MNF party, was
tantamount to direct repudiation of the economic programme. For this reason, Laldenga could not be a true patriot but a self-seeking politician.

(b) Some of the MNF leaders and the leaders of APHLC asserted that the 'Chinese intrusion' in 1962 was a golden opportunity for the Mizos to move the Government of India to give them independence. But Laldenga did not like to make a move. This indicated that he did not play the independence politics.

(c) The MNF leaders severely criticised the Naga freedom movement only to win the favour of the Indian leadership. For this reason, the Naga underground emissaries who came to Mizoram were afraid of Laldenga and his cliques, and avoided them as far as possible. His criticism of the Nagaland underground movement prevented him from starting a similar movement, or he had no real intention to start the independence movement.

(d) Laldenga's determination to contest the Indian elections indicated that he accepted Indian citizenship.

(e) On the issue of 'Greater Mizoram' comprising all the areas occupied by the Mizos, be in Burma, Pakistan or wherever they lie, Laldenga meant all the areas inhabited by the Mizos within India only. This proved that he had no mind to unify all of the Mizos in the world.
The MNF Party contested the MLA bye-election:

The bye-election to the Assam Legislative Assembly was held on 23rd April, 1963. This bye-election was for the filling up of seats vacated by Ch. Saprawnga (Mizo Union) from Lunglei constituency, and by Ch. Chhunga (Mizo Union) from Aizawl west constituency. There were three Mizo seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly all of which had been captured by the Mizo Union Party in the 1962 election. But when their demand for Mizo state was rejected by the Government of Assam the Mizo Union Party put a pressure on their three MLA's to tender their resignation to the Speaker of the Assembly. Moreover, the Government of Assam declared Assamese as the state language which was strongly opposed by the APHLC. The APHLC, therefore, requested all its MLA's to resign from the Assembly. Being members of APHLC all the Mizo MLA's were asked to resign. That means they had to resign for two reasons, viz. (1) to put a pressure on their demand for Mizo state and (2) in protest against the imposition of Assamese as the state language of Assam.

Ch. Saprawnga and Ch. Chhunga resigned, but R. Thanhlira, one of the three Mizo MLA's refused to submit his resignation, and as a result only two seats were to be contested in the said bye-election. The result of the election was as follows:

J.F. Manliana (MNF) defeated H.K. Bawichhuaka (Mizo Union) by
1736 votes in the Aizawl West constituency, and L.H.Lalmawia (MNF) defeated Ch. Saprawnga (Mizo Union) by 1000 votes from Lunglei constituency.

This defeat gave the MNF a new spirit because it defeated veteran politicians of the Mizo Union while the MNF candidates were green horns in politics. This indicated the progress and popularity of the MNF.

**Competition between MNF and MNC for Foreign Link:**

The MNF and MNC became rivals for courting the relationship with Pakistan. The top leaders of MNF, Laldenga, Lalnunmawia and Sainghaka crossed the border of Pakistan in the first week of December, 1963 and were received by the top military functionaries of Pakistani government. They entered East Pakistan to obtain aid and support for their cause. Pakistan promised them to give military hardware and training to the MNF volunteers. When they came back to India Laldenga was arrested by the Government of Assam on 17th December 1963 and his lieutenant Lalnunmawia on 24th December 1963, on charge of conspiring with Pakistan against India. But Sainghaka managed

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to elude arrest. Laldenga and Lalnunmawia were kept in Silcha jail until they were released on personal bond. Laldenga told the Chief Minister Chaliha that he and his companion Lalnunmawia went to East Pakistan only to see their relatives in the Saza range along the Indian border.

Laldenga said to the Chief Minister of Assam, "Give us an opportunity of playing a constructive role in the development of our district and I hope I could impress you that I and my party are very much interested in the development programme of Mizo Hills District." Chaliha, in his desire to weaken the Mizo Union which he thought to be too strong and too difficult to handle, supported the MNF and accepted Laldenga's pledge of loyalty. Thus Laldenga was a machiavelli.

When Laldenga and Lalnunmawia were released from Silchar jail they were accorded a hero's welcome by the people of Mizoram at every village along the road between Silchar and Aizawl. At Aizawl town they were received by a great multitude of people. By that time many people did not know that Laldenga and Lalnunmawia pledged loyalty to the Government of India and flatly denied before the Chief Minister that they met with Pakistani representatives. They also apologised for violating the passport Rules and Travel Restrictions between Mizoram and Pakistan.

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the countries. They further said to the Chief Minister Chaliha, "We can, however, assure you and reiterate that we have not discussed matters with Pakistani military personnel or other officials nor will we ever do so in future. As our motives may, in the circumstances, have been liable to be misunderstood and considered as activity against the interest of the Indian Union, we wish to state that the programmes and policies of the Mizo National Front are not anti-state and we would not take any course of action which is against the constitution of India." 8

B.P. Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam published the photostat copies of the full text of their pledge of loyalty and publicised for public notification, after the declaration of independence of Mizoram by MNF.

Within weeks of Laldenga's release from prison, a group of 21 sturdy Mizo young men surreptitiously crossed the border to undergo an intensive military training in East Pakistan and also to lift arms and ammunition. R. Zamawia, the commander of the contingent and Kapzama went ahead of others to make necessary arrangement for the training. Three of them viz.

8. Mizo National Front Strategy - An Act of Gross Betrayal-
Shri B.P. Chaliha, Chief Minister of Assam. Issued by the Directorate of Information & Public Relations, Govt. of Assam.
Liandawla Paihte, who acted as the second in Command, Sangkawia and Muankima went from Shillong via Sylhet and the rest of them from Mizoram through Tlabung (Demagiri). The duration of the training was from November 1964 to March 1965.

When the training was over, the volunteers came back to Mizoram through Dohazari railhead in Chittagong area with heavy load of arms and ammunition which were: -

- 21 rifles with 35960 bullets,
- 2 LMG's with 73500 bullets,
- Sten guns 15, Hand grenades 336, Tommy guns 3 with 27300 bullets,
- 3 pistols with 27300 bullets, etc.

That means they lifted arms and ammunition as much as they could carry.  

In the meantime, in order to beguile Chief Minister Chaliha and to win his favour Laldenga laid the blame for starvation deaths during the last famine on the Mizo Union and the District Council while the Mizo Union leaders blamed the Chief Minister for the same.

R.Zamawia and party brought the stuff up a certain river by a country boat to Ruma Bazar from where the cargo was carried headload to Hmunnuam and then to Diltlang which is within Indian territory. When the information reached Aizawl that arms supply was safely hidden in an impenetrable forest near Diltlang Village, the first-ever outfit of fighters the Mizo National Volunteers (MNV) had already been inaugurated and

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called 'V' Battalion. 'V' stood for a hero of yore Vana Pa.\textsuperscript{10}  
In 1965 Laldenga and his inner circle of friends kept themselves busy drafting a memorandum to be submitted to the Government of India while Sainghaka and R.Zamawia were busy organising volunteer forces.

Meanwhile, the Mizo National Council (MNC) party sent different emissaries to East Pakistan to establish foreign relations with Pakistan. In January 1964 they sent H. Lalthlamuana and Lalrova. On 7th January 1964, Dangliana another emissary of MNC was arrested at Karimganj on his way to Pakistan. Vanlalngaia and Rosiama hurried to Karimganj and secured his release on bail. Soon after his release Dangliana was sent again on the same mission through Ruma Bazar and Coxes Bazar. On 26th September 1964 Dangliana, Lalzuiliana and Saikhuma were sent to East Pakistan once again. At last Biakenga was sent on 23rd December 1964. All of them were arrested by the Government of Assam on their return. In their latter missions they were always advised by the Pakistani Intelligence officers to merge with the MNF party. They, therefore, left the whole foreign affairs to the MNF party at last.

As the result of Sainghaka and R.Zamawia's efforts new units were added to the MNF party every day with a new spirit

\textsuperscript{10} Mizoram. The Dagger Brigade - Nirmal Nibedon p 49.
of nationalism. The political atmosphere in Mizoram then, was so saturated with chauvinism that the whole district became a keg of gun powder ready to be ignited. To make the matter worse an untoward incident took place at Zemabawk, Aizawl, on the 7th of January 1964. The trouble broke out between the Mizos and non-Mizos especially whom the Mizos called 'vai', only because one Anil, a labourer of Border Road Task Force (BRTF) reported to their commander Maj.Dyebol that his money was lost. Thereupon, taking some body-gaurds with him the commander reportedly set out at the dead of night and broke into the nearest Mizo house and pulled out of bed the owner of the house, Hrangzika, by name, and manhandled him in the presence of his wife and children. It was reported also that the daughter of Hrangzika was maltreated. Then, hurriedly some people of the nearby houses ran around the town calling out the people to run Hrangzika and his family's rescue. People came running from every quarter and corner of the town, and within no time the whole township gathered themselves around the camp of the BRTF. The BRTF then opened fire on the crowd killing one person named Sawma whose body was carried in a big procession up and down the streets of the town. After that the body was accorded a hero's funeral and buried as a martyr for the cause of the nation. This incident flared up the indignation of the Mizo people against the plain people of India (vai) and roused their nationalism.
Preparation for armed revolution:

The leaders and members of the MNF party expected right from the beginning bloodshed and hardship because they knew that independence could not be achieved without violence. They understood also that Pakistan's assistance would be limited, but they hoped that assistance from other countries could be funnelled to Mizoram through Pakistan. They believed also that Mizo emissaries would be sent to various countries especially U.S.A. and China through Pakistan. Lalthangliana, who had been working as a teacher in Lunglei Government High School was sent in July 1965 to East Pakistan to discuss with Pakistan representatives the feasibility of funneling the U.S. assistance to Mizoram through Pakistan. The Pakistani representatives promised that they would allow free passage for U.S. assistance if the Mizos could get any.

Since the Government of Pakistan gave military training to the MNF volunteers arms training was imparted to all MNF volunteers of the district one unit after another. The possession of arms and the military training conducted all over Mizoram were open secret. The members of the contingent who underwent training in Pakistan and the members of the disbanded Second Battalion of the Assam Regiment played a key role in giving arms training to the volunteers. Volunteers were loitering in the streets or huddled in tea stalls or beer houses. But only the members of the same battalion were aware of each
other's identity. Some of them were secretly armed with hammers or daggers.

The first battalion of the National Volunteers ever raised was the 'V' Battalion the Headquarters of which was Aizawl. It was full of young boys of Aizawl town. The youngest of them was about 14 years of age. From this battalion 50 tough ones were selected to form a special force for special duties. The Special Force (SF) was put under the direct command of Laldenga. The Special Force's duty was solely to look after the MNF Chief's personal security. Members of SF were never far behind Laldenga wherever he went. They always kept a discreet distance whether their boss went on a tour of interior or on his contact mission in the town. To the people these youngsters always appeared to be innocent by-standers. The guard allotment for Laldenga was never fewer then six.

One day, the Headquarters received a report that the stuff dumped at Diltlang leaked out and needed immediate shifting to a more secure place. Since the transshipment of the stuff should not be known by the villagers, the boys of 'V' Battalion, in the garb of olive green, disguised themselves as Assam Rifles personnel bluffed the people of the nearby villages who happened to meet them. The stuff dumped at Pharhva was shifted by 120 volunteers and the other dumped at Diltlang was shifted by 80. The CID sensed that something was afoot.

When the shifting of the arms was done the two groups
of the volunteers met together in a forest where they were instructed not to enter Lunglei town in groups, so that the CID personnel might not suspect the transhipment of arms on seeing many new youths in the town at a time.

At the beginning of monsoon in 1965 all the SF boys in Aizawl were armed with different calibres of weapons which they carried for 24 hours a day, the bigger calibres being carried under overcoats. They were also supplied with explosives. These armed volunteers were strictly instructed that should any attempt were made to arrest the MNF chief they should open fire on the arresting party.

When Laldenga and his colleagues were busy preparing a memorandum to be submitted to the Prime Minister of India the SF and 'V' Battalion should always be on guard and the security measures should be tightened as strictly as possible so that Laldenga may not be arrested before he could finish the memorandum and complete the plan of action.

In those days, the hill people of Assam were discontented with the working of the district councils under the Sixth Schedule. The Central Government, therefore, appointed a 'Three-member Commission on the Hill Areas of Assam' in 1965 under the Chairmanship of Shri H.V.Pataskar to look into the affairs of the district councils and their future. This commission came to Aizawl in January 1965 to study the political situation here.
The commission submitted 26 recommendations for the administration of the hill areas of Assam. Among other things the commission recommended the hill areas were to continue union with the plains of Assam; adequate provisions for the development of the hill areas of Assam, the grant of more executive functions to the district councils, appointment of Minister of State or Deputy Minister. The Commission Report did not satisfy the hill people because it supported the continued control of the Assam government whereas the hill men wanted to be carved out of Assam.

In Mizo district allegations of favouritism and partiality were levelled against the Mizo Union government. These allegations greatly damaged the prestige of Mizo Union in the second election to the District Council in 1957. This time the Mizo Union won only 11 seats in a house of 24. At the same time the relations between Chaliha's government of Assam and the Mizo Union was getting worse. In order to undermine the Mizo Union the Chief Minister of Assam, B.P.Chaliha pampered and patronised the MNF.

As to the reason for preparation for independence

12. Church & Political Upheaval in Mizoram-John V.Hluna P 84.
movement S.H. Pautu said in his thesis for M.Phil., "On the eve of India's independence, the Mizo people, wary of losing identity, were reticent to join India. It was with great reluctance and suspicion that the Mizo Union, the only party representative of Mizo public opinion at that time, agreed to Mizoram joining India: The Sixth Schedule held out the hope of ushering in a democratic administrative era in Mizoram. But the indifferent and neglectful attitude of Assam Government caused disillusionment among the Mizos. The refusal to de-link Mizoram from Assam, and the Central Government's scant regard for the developmental needs of Mizoram were important causes for the subsequent revival of the demand of independence from India." 14

The Mizo people's fear of losing identity was accelerated by the speech of Rohini Kumar Choudhuri in the Constituent Assembly, which stated that the autonomous district was a weapon whereby steps were taken to keep the tribal people perpetually away from the non-tribals and the bond of friendship which they expected to come into being after the attainment of independence would be torn assunder. He added that during the British days, they were not allowed to introduce their culture among those people and even after the British had left,

they found the same conditions in the new constitution of Dr. Ambedkar. He said also that they wanted to assimilate the tribal people but they were not given such opportunity so far. He added that he, living in Shillong, could not purchase houses and land without the permission of the chief of the state or the District Council. He expressed his desire to put a stop to those inabilities or restrictions. To quote his own words, "We want to assimilate the tribal people...
If you want to educate the tribal people in the art of self Government, why not introduce the Municipal Act? If you want to keep them separate they will combine with Tibet, they will combine with Burma, they will never combine with the rest of India."

When the MNF memorandum was completed it was submitted on October 30, 1965 to Lai Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Minister of India. Like the memorandum of the Mizo Union the MNF memorandum sought for the right of territorial unity and solidarity. In support of their case they related the past history of the Mizo people, how they lived in complete

independence without foreign interference, their chiefs ruled with supreme authority, their territory or any part thereof had never been conquered, though there had been frontier clashes with their neighbouring peoples which brought the British Government to the scene in 1844 and how they had their own system of administration. They stated also that a certain portion of Mizo country was brought under the British rule in December 1895 and called it Lushai Hills while the rest of the land was parcelled out to the adjoining countries for the sole purpose of administrative convenience without obtaining their consent. They stated further that though they were scattered in different countries the Mizos were inseparably knitted together by their strong bond of tradition, custom, culture, etc. feeling that they were a distinct nation.

Since Mizoram was excluded from the purview of the constitutional Act of 1935, and was classified as an EXCLUDED AREA they claimed that Mizoram had never been a part of India and they therefore, had a right to secede from India. In this connection they quoted the speech of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which was delivered on 19th August, 1946, stating, "The tribal areas are defined as being those along the frontier of India which are neither Indian states nor of Burma, nor of any foreign power". According to them he further stated that the internal administration of these areas were largely left to themselves. They said that Nehru went on saying that according to the view
of the Indian National Congress the new Government of India would enter into the same relations with the tribal areas as the Governor General maintained then unless the people of those areas chose to seek integration with India. However the authenticity of Nehru's statement is questionable and the record cannot be traced out.

On the basis of the foregoing statement allegedly made by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the memorandum asserted that British Government left the Mizo nation free and independent with a right to decide their future political destiny. The memorandum stated that solely due to their political immaturity, ignorance and lack of consciousness of their fate the Mizo Union, the representatives of Churches and other organisations chose integration with India, imposing condition, inter alia, "THAT THE LUSHAIS WILL BE ALLOWED TO OPT OUT OF INDIA UNION WHEN THEY WISH TO DO SO SUBJECT TO A MINIMUM PERIOD OF TEN YEARS."

The MNF leaders expressed in their memorandum that during fifteen year of close contact and association with Indians the Mizo people had not been able to feel at home with them or in India, but they rather felt that they were neglected and treated as aliens by the Government of India. As a result, the only political cry of the Mizos was the creation of Mizoram, a free and sovereign state. They stated also that, to them, independence was not a subject of controversy but only a recognition of human rights and the Indian leadership, the
champion of world peace was expected to bless the Mizo people with independence without violence.

In the memorandum the MNF leaders assured the Prime Minister that since they had committed themselves to the policy of non-violence they had no intention of employing any other means to achieve their political demand. But warned the Government of India against the use of weapons since soul cannot be destroyed by weapons. They pointed out also that if the Government of India tried to retain Mizoram as a part of their territory it would be against the U.N. resolution on Human Rights.

On 19th January 1966 came Tarlok Singh, a member of Planning Commission, to Aizawl to study the political situation in Mizoram. Mizoram, the most neglected area in India became the headache of the Indian leadership and was therefore, visited by Indian dignitaries one after another. On 2nd February 1966 Vishnu Sahay, the then Governor of Assam also came to Mizoram. Last of all, Pataskar, the leader of the Pataskar Commission came a second time, to Mizoram on 7th February 1966 with a fresh offer of Scottish pattern.\textsuperscript{17} The offer, though apparently better than the Mizo state or somewhat preferable to independence the price of which would be too dear for the Mizos to pay and

\textsuperscript{17} Government and Politics in Mizoram 1947 - 1986, by R.N.Prasad p 178.
unlikely possible after all, it was altogether too late since the hectic preparation for independence movement had already been afoot and reached its climax.

Meanwhile, the Intelligence network of Assam stepped up its activities to get the fact about the movement of the MNF's arms and ammunition, while the MNF was running its Headquarters openly in the busy place of Aizawl town. The relations between Chaliha and MNF had also become more and more tense. Military training was given to the MNF volunteers openly in interior villages. Many educated Mizos resigned their jobs as government servants and joined MNF party.

By the end of 1965 R.Zamawia and Malsawma Colney were sent by the MNF Headquarters to meet the leaders of the Naga National Council (Underground government of the Nagas). They met Imkong Meren, Isak Shu, Muivah, et al., at Chidema, Nagaland and told them that the Mizo people had been ready to start independence movement.

In the meantime, the CID personnel intensified their search for the locations where arms and ammunition of the MNF party were dumped. They endeavoured to have an informant within the MNF organisation, especially from the high ranking officers. Before long, they became successful in establishing a clandestine relations with a certain colonel of the MNF volunteers, Laimana, one of the top commanders of Lunglei area who handed them over the secret of the party. Had he not bought new expensive pieces
of dress he would have remained above suspicion.

One night, at about 7 p.m. Laimana went to a certain, somewhat isolated house of one Thangpuii, a Gramsevika, which was at the outskirts of Lunglei Town, and left there an envelope carefully sealed. He told the owner of the house that it would be taken by someone soon. Then Laimana left the house. Feeling ill at ease about the content of the mysterious envelope Thangpuii, the owner of the houses secretly opened it with utmost care so as to tear it or to make any suspectable mark on it.

When she read the letter she rather trembled for fear of its content, because it clearly pinpointed the exact locations of the armed catches. Hardly had she finished reading the letter when she hurried to Lunglei Town Hall where a public meeting addressed by Laldenga was in progress. She had been waiting outside the town hall until the meeting was over. She did not like to disclose the secret of her mission to anybody except Laldenga himself. No sooner had the secret been disclosed than a detachment of SF was detailed to set out at once to shift the catches swiftly to other locations. An order was issued from the MNF Headquarters to the SF for the assassination of Laimana who fled Lunglei town and lived in the Assam Rifles' camp at Aizawl. Three SF personnel, one with a beretta (like bren-gun), were kept stationed for 24 hours at Bawngkawn gate, the Northern exit of Aizawl town on the highway to Silchar so that Laimana might not leave Mizoram safely. But he did not
Laimana was hunted in Aizawl town for six days. Though the SF personnel saw him and ran after him they could not kill him for sometime. But on the night of 31st December 1965 he was cornered in a house in the town. As he came out of the house with his brother's son at 9:15 p.m. was shot dead by the SF with a beretta.

In the month of January 1966, R.Zamawia and Malsawma Colney set off to meet all the leaders of tribal political organisations in Manipur state. They met Vumkhom, the leader of Paihte National Council (PNC), Demkhawsiak, the leader of Kuki Union, Thanglawra, the leader of Hmar community, Vungkam and Darkhuma, the leaders of the Mizo Union in Manipur State. They simply informed the Mizo people over there that Mizoram was ready to start independence movement, so that they might not be surprised or panicked when the time came.19