Right from the inception of the insurgency of Mizoram Laldenga was bent on achieving an honourable settlement of Mizoram problem, with himself as the Chief administrator of the land. He openly expressed his disapproval of violence and armed insurrection though he vehemently preached about it and even sent volunteers to East Pakistan for armed training who returned to Mizoram with arms and ammunition for starting armed revolution. Therefore, he had been in search of the possibilities of negotiation or talks with India from the early stage of insurgency. Ever since the governments of Pakistan and China gave him cold shoulders Laldenga had no other alternative than to go back to India on any condition. Even then, how to go back to India was a difficult problem for him for the time being. After writing two humble petitions to the Prime Minister of India for mercy he was allowed to come back to India as the loyal citizen of the country, that is, to settle the problem of Mizoram within the Constitution of India.

In the second week of November 1975, Laldenga and family with Zoramthanga arrived in Bonn in West Germany, and
stayed in Cologne where he met Hassan Wali (Singal, by assumed name) an Indian representative. From Cologne Laldenga wrote a letter to the MNF Headquarters sending for four persons, namely, Tlangchhuaka the Vice President, Chawngzuala President of the MNF party, Biakchhunga Chief of Army Staff, Col. Zamana the then commander of the Dagger Brigade and any other eminent person to give their consent to his plan of what he called honourable settlement (surrender). Besides those persons mentioned above, Lahlleia, the Cabinet Secretary went with them. They went to Delhi, to Bombay, to Rome and then to Cologne where they met their leader. However, since Col. Zamana was assigned to look after the Mizo Army within Mizoram he was unable to join the party. Brig. Gen. Biakchhunga, one of the members of the party, said that from the first instant of their meeting with the President, they heard from him, to their surprise, only words of discouragement and disappointment. Biakchhunga added that they had a very high expectation when they started from the Headquarters. But on the contrary, their President told them that the only possible way open to them was to make a settlement within the framework of the Indian Constitution which was quite opposite to their expectation. ¹

In Bonn, the visiting party from the Headquarters lodged in a separate hotel, a short distant from where

¹ Biakchhunga: Why was MNF Split? p 9,10.
Laldenga and family lodged. They met every day to discuss the situation. One day Tlangchhuaka asked the President why he was so disappointed while the people in the Headquarters were inspired with a hope of getting independence in a very near future since their President could meet different representatives of different countries as he promised them before he left for Islamabad. Laldenga said that there was nothing to expect within fifteen years from then from any country. Then he was bombarded with many questions, such as: 1. "Have you met any Indian representative to make a plan regarding this meeting or any other programmes?" Laldenga falsely denied that he had any meeting with Indian representatives earlier, anywhere. 2. "If it is absolutely hopeless of getting independence of Mizoram, would it not be better to bring the matter forward before the General Conference of the MNF party for discussion?" Laldenga said that it was not necessary to discuss the matter in the General conference or Assembly of the party. He was asked many other questions during nine days of stay with them in Bonn.

During their stay in West Germany, Tlangchhuaka the Vice president said to his friends in the absence of Laldenga, that it would be dangerous for them (the delegates) to go back to their Headquarters unless they agreed upon the proposal of their President. By saying this Tlangchhuaka meant that an agreement had already been arrived at between India and their
President, and therefore to disagree with him might mean their assassination on their way to the Headquarters. This indicates that he had no faith in the honesty of his President any longer. He said further that they had better take permission from Singal the Indian representative, for their going back to the Headquarters to convince their people of Laldenga's idea.

During all these days Laldenga did not like to disclose the contacts he made with the representatives of India since 1973. He said, on the other hand, that the constitution like those of Australia, Canada and New Zealand can be expected within the framework of Indian Constitution since the constitutions of those countries were also within the framework of the British Constitution which provided them a separate government with their own parliaments and Prime Ministers. He did not like to entertain any further questions on what had already been done with India.

Tlangchhuaka said that although Laldenga told them many great things they could demand or to be demanded, he himself had already made meaningless commitment with India. He added that the delegates from the MNF Headquarters realised too late that their President had become an Indian agent, working against them. He said also that without knowing this fact they had a meeting with the Indian representatives at Cologne on the

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first week of December 1975. The topics of their talks were:

1. The feasibility of having a talk with India in New Delhi and a safe conduct for entry into India.

2. A permission for border trade should be demanded from the Government of India to be granted to the Mizo people as one of the conditions for talks.

3. All the able-bodied soldiers of Mizo Army be recruited to Mizo Armed Police, Mizoram Regiment (like Assam Regiment) or Mizo Rifles, in the same rank they held in the Mizo National Army.

4. Mizoram Rifles or Mizo Regiment be raised like Assam Rifles.

5. Mizo Rifles or Mizoram Regiment must be stationed on the border of Burma and Bangladesh so as to create troubles within those territories of the neighbouring countries. Taking The advantage of these troubles the Mizo occupied areas of both the countries should be ceded to Mizoram for the implementation of the 'Greater Mizoram' programme. But this plan should be disclosed to the Government of India.

6. The Mizo occupied areas outside Mizoram but within India should be redeemed after the completion of the programme of Greater Mizoram outside India.

After this meeting the MNF delegation were taken on a European tour. Since Laldenga and family including Zoramthanga

had already been taken on a European tour before those delegates arrived at Bonn, they did not go along with them and therefore, the journey took only a short time.

The Indian Intelligence personnel took them to India and had a series of talks on 11, 13, 16, 17 and 18th of February 1976. The talks were held at the North Wing of Rajtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. During these talks the topics of their talks with the Indian representatives in Cologne had not been mentioned or put forward for discussion, nor were they discussed anywhere else, not even in Calcutta Convention which was held later.

Tlangchhauka said that their talk with the Indian representatives at Cologne had been treated null and void because the points of the talk were not discussed with the Government of India for implementation. He said also that while Laidenga was saying about the constitutions of other countries for reference while in Cologne, he had already sent a letter to the Prime Minister of India in which he had already made commitment to make a settlement within Indian Constitution. He did not have a sign of guilty conscience while saying that a new constitution of Mizoram more or less similar to those of Australia, Canada and New Zealand could be expectable within the framework of Indian Constitution though he did not at all mean what he was saying.⁴

⁴ Biakchhunna : Why was MNF Split? p 11.
The MNF delegates led by Tlangchhuaka were living in a separate place in New Delhi, a long way off from where Laldenga and Zoramthanga stayed. But they met every day. Tlangchhuaka and his group were reluctant to have talks with India without first consulting the General Conference of the MNF. There was, therefore, a difference of opinion among the Mizo delegation led by Laldenga. According to Laldenga the then Mizo delegates led by him was the rightful representatives of the Mizo people as a whole in that the MNF party had captured all the MLA seats of the Mizoram quota in the election for the Assam Legislative Assembly before the insurgency which, according to him, was the last free and fair election held in Mizoram, other elections ever held thereafter, being under duress, were not free and fair elections and the representatives elected thereof were not true representatives.

Laldenga held, therefore, that the MNF as a party was the true representatives of Mizoram and anybody or any group representing the MNF should, automatically become the true representatives of the Mizo people and the land. Building his argument in this way he arrived at the conclusion that he and the delegation he led had a right to sign any agreement and settlement, or enter into any contract with India or with any other party on behalf of the Mizo people as a whole.

On the other hand, Tlangchhuaka and other delegates from the MNF Headquarters were of the opinion that the election held about fifteen years ago, for the Assam Legislative Assembly was for a term five years only, and since the term of their representation of the Mizo people had expired long ago, they could not be true representatives of the people of Mizoram nor did they have any right to enter into any contract, or sign any settlement or agreement on behalf of Mizoram and the people therein. However, Laldenga could prevail, at last, upon the members of the delegation to accept his view.

The talks went on for some days without arriving at any decision. While the Indian delegation tried to give minimum benefit to the Mizos out of the agreement the Mizo delegation tried to make the most of it. Being ignorant of what their President had done with the Prime Minister, Tlangchhuaka and his friends who came from the MNF Headquarters strove to make a settlement which would be highly significant for Mizoram and its future. Laldenga re-asserted that he had not done anything whatsoever previously with the Prime Minister or any other representatives of India hoodwink his friends. Since Laldenga had already made a commitment to accept a settlement within the Constitution of India, and since he had come over to India having closed all doors to other countries behind him he had no strength to put a pressure on India or to stand the pressure of India on him. But he had to keep his
friends ignorant of his weakness. At last both the parties came to terms.

The Mizo delegation acknowledged that Mizoram is an integral part of India and conveyed to the Government of India their decision to accept the settlement of the problem of Mizoram within the framework of the Constitution of India. The terms of agreement stated further that for the purpose of enabling the delegation to obtain a clear mandate and to get full authority to make an early and final settlement, the Government of India agreed to give facilities to the members of the delegation to hold a meeting with the 25 persons from Mizoram whose names had been given by the delegation, at Calcutta during the second week of March, 1976.

The Government of India agreed to make arrangement for consultation with five underground persons, presently under custody, out of a list of seven given by the delegation. In order to avoid any untoward incidents and to bring about peaceful conditions in Mizoram at the earliest, the delegation agreed to take the following steps forthwith:

(a) to issue instructions and ensure stoppage of all activities by their followers;

(b) collection of all underground personnel with their arms and ammunition inside mutually agreed camps and to ensure

the safe custody of arms and ammunition at a suitable place within each camp;
(c) thereafter no underground personnel would leave the camps without permission and order, with arms;
(d) the arms and ammunition so collected would be handed over to the government within one month of the meeting at Calcutta referred to in para 2 above.

The Government of India agreed to extend necessary facilities for the collection of all underground personnel at the selected camps and also give a suitable subsidy to maintain these camps. Suitable amenities in the form of medical aid and recreation would be provided. Adequate arrangements would be made by the Mizoram Government to look after these camps and provide liaison machinery.

The Government of India agreed to continue suspension of operation by the Security Forces. Suspension as operation would, however, not apply to operations against incoming/outgoing under-ground personnel to or from Mizoram or those attempting to cross the International border, and the maintenance of normal law and order would continue. It was also agreed that formal announcement regarding the suspension of operations would be made after the underground have taken suitable measures to stop all activities on their side.

The delegation undertook to establish contact with the group of underground personnel led by Biakvela and bring
them with their arms and ammunition in consultation with the Mizoram government to a camp to be set up for them, and the Government of India agreed to render necessary assistance in this regard. It was also stated that further talks would be held during the third week of March, 1976. The signatories of the Agreement were:

1. Laldenga President of the MNF Government,
2. Tlangchhuaka Vice President of MNF Government,
3. Biakchhunga Chief of Army Staff, Mizo Army,
4. S.L.Khurana Home Secretary, Government of India,
5. S.K.Chhibber, Lt.Governor Mizoram and

Besides the above signatories there were four persons who were present in the committee, namely, Zoramthanga Private Secretary to the President of the MNF Government, Lalthlea Cabinet Secretary of the underground Government of Mizoram and two other Secretaries to the Government of India. These secretaries recorded the minutes of the meetings but did not sign the agreement.

On the last day, the 18th February, 1976, M.L.Kampani brought to the Round Table Conference (or Committee) a ready-made typewritten terms of agreement. It was signed by all concerned. But when his turn came to sign the agreement Biakchhungha who sat next to Laldenga on his right side, the last man to sign, was very much surprised to see the point (d)
under No.4, and asked Laldenga in a whispering tone what to do with it, telling him that the point would be impossible. But Laldenga told him that the agreement was not yet finalised; it would be discussed again in Calcutta Convention where alterations would be made if necessary as the final touch. Thereupon, Biakchhunga reluctantly signed the agreement.7

In the meantime, before the MNF leaders left their Headquarters for European tour, a Cabinet meeting was held at Zotlang, near Moduk forest on 14th March, 1975. The meeting drew up points and plans for meeting with the Indian representatives, as follows: 1. They expressed their sincere desire for meeting with the Indian representatives in order to bring peace and development in Mizoram and for that purpose they suggested that a cease-fire be ordered from both sides for the time being at least. The meeting further that the conditions of cease-fire should be as under:

1. (a) The cease-fire should comprise the whole of Mizoram, such as all the areas occupied by the Mizo people in Manipur State, Tripura and Cachar District;

(b) During cease-fire the Indian Army must not send any fighting patrol beyond the defence perimeter of their respective camps;

(c) The Mizo Army should not also go beyond their defence

(d) If it is quite necessary for both sides of the warring parties to go out of their respective camps and happen to meet each other anywhere, there should not be any clash between them.

(e) There should be no arrest of both sides during the cease-fire.

2. Peace camps should be set up which should function as a channel of communication. The campers and their helpers should remain there.

3. During the cease-fire peace talks should go on and prepare a plan for Mizoram.

4. During the peace talks the proceedings of every talk or meeting be publicised through the mass media as widely as possible.

5. There should be someone who would witness the talks, arrange the series of talks.

6. If peace talks and cease-fire were possible as proposed, the political prisoners be released.

When they received a letter from President Laldenga informing them that he had already got in touch with the Prime Minister and all other dealings with India should be put to a stop with immediate effect, they had already made a headway towards unconditional talks. Laldenga first stated in his letter that if any SIB personnel or any Indian representative wanted
to contact with them they should tell those people to meet their leader. Sometime after that, they received a call from President Laldenga to come to Rome for a European tour, and in case they could not meet him in Rome, the Indian S.I.B. would be able to direct them to the right place and do anything needful for them. They were much surprised to receive such news. But the letter was written by the President with his own hand and his signature was also genuine. The letter was sent through the S.I.B. office. In his letter Laldenga instructed Tlangchhuaka, Chawngzuala, Biakchhunga, Zamana and anyone of the eminent persons among the MNF leaders should meet him at the appointed place with the help of the S.I.B. personnel and without hesitation. That was why and how they went on a European tour.

After signing the agreement in New Delhi, the first task Laldenga had to do was to organise a conference of the MNF leaders to discuss the following points: -

1. To organise a general election of the MNF since the existing terms was about to be over, and as such, Laldenga's term of office as the President of the MNF would come to an end. Should he not be elected President in the next election the aforesaid agreement between India and MNF would become null and void and a negotiation between them would have to be started all over again.

2. To review the terms of agreement signed by the Mizo delegation and the Indian representatives, Laldenga had
to convince the member of the conference to accept the terms of agreement without amendment.

Laldenga, therefore, told Singal (Hassan Wali), who was in charge of his welfare, that it would be necessary for him to go to the MNF Headquarters to organise a general election because, he said, that according to the rules of the MNF government any person who was not present in the Headquarters or in his constituency during election could not contest election. Singal told him that he would be allowed to the Headquarters if it was indispensable but on condition that he would not demand Indian guards across International borders. Then Laldenga told him that his security beyond the Indian border would be in the hand of the Mizo Army. Saying this he looked at Biakchhunaga signalling for confirmation. So did Biakchhunaga, saying, "Of course". However, Laldenga could not make decision as to where the conference should be held. Sometimes he proposed Arakan for the venue, sometimes Halflong, sometimes, Calcutta and sometimes Aizawl. He at last decided to hold it at Calcutta.  

On 19th February 1976, Tlangchhuaka, Chawngzualia, Biakchhunaga and Lahlleia left New Delhi for Mizoram and the MNF Headquarters. They were assigned different tasks to do as follows: Chawngzualia was to observe from Aizawl...
political atmosphere of Mizoram and come back to Calcutta along with delegates from the MNF Headquarters for the conference. Biakchhunga was to convene a meeting of the Senior Officers of the Mizo Army and to convince them of the benefit of the settlement within the framework of the Indian Constitution, to remain in Mizoram during the Calcutta convention and to look after the Mizo Army stationed in Mizoram. Zoramthanga was to go to the MNF Headquarters in Arrakan to persuade the MNF leaders in the Capital to come over to Calcutta for the proposed conference. Very much importance was attached to Calcutta convention for the problem of Mizoram would be solved there and then, once for all. The Government of India, therefore, allowed even the MNF leaders in prison to attend the convention. But Lalnghenga i/c of SSA (State Security Agents) and Maj.Kapchhunga were not released for the purpose though their release was demanded.

When Zoramthanga went to the MNF Headquarters and broke the news of the proposed convention at Calcutta, the people exclaimed in surprise, "What? A convention of MNF at Calcutta! Whoever could think of a convention of freedom fighters to be held in a city of their enemies, at the expense and under the sponsorship of their enemies?" Zoramthanga explained that India could no longer afford to fight a very expensive war like ours in the face of Chinese threat of expansion towards the border of India, and desired to settle our problem even at the expense
of its territory. The people in the Headquarters told him that they did not have the knowledge of any threat of Chinese expansion neither from the newspapers nor on radio. But Zoramthanga said in defence of his argument that the threat had not yet been exposed but India sensed the secret intention of Chinese Government. Therefore, India was willing to pay any price for the purchase of peace with the Mizos, and this had brought about a golden opportunity for them to demand anything at the negotiation table, he added.  

Calcutta Convention: The leaders of the MNF in the Headquarters, therefore, reluctantly left for Calcutta under the safe conduct of their enemy, the Government of India. Malsawma Colney said that they were pushed out of the Headquarters at gun point.  

Late Ngurkunga Palian said that the Government of India gave Laldenga a blank cheque for the expense and preparation of Calcutta convention. He said also that the members of the delegation were accorded with all facilities and amenities including all kinds of meat and drink. The National Emergency Convention or the so-called Calcutta Convention was held on 24th March 1976, and lasted to 1st April.

10. Ibid
1976. According to the version of Ngurkunga, Laldenga spent nearly two days for scolding the delegates for proposing the general election of the MNF in his absence and without his knowledge. He described this as a conspiracy against him, repeating the same thing over and over again for one and half day. At last Ngurkunga told the convention and the President that it was he who proposed the general election of the MNF because their term of office had already expired and unless renewed the President and the Ministers became constitutionally powerless. He stated further that there was no conspiracy or anything against the President but simply a proposal for the renewal of different offices so as to make them constitutionally valid. Ngurkunga said that the President bought a pair of suit and a suitcase for every delegate except for him (Ngurkunga) because he was the one who proposed a general election of the MNF during the absence of the President.\footnote{Ngurkunga Palian: an interview with him}

From the afternoon of the second day of the convention the business of the meeting was taken up. The first item of the agenda was - The Mizoram National Emergency Convention (Calcutta Convention) should have the power of the General Assembly of the Mizo National Front. A resolution was passed without any difficulty. It was also resolved that since his term of office had expired Laldenga was declared President of
the MNF for the next term with Tlangchhuaka as the Vice President. The third resolution stated that after taking the problem of Mizoram politics into careful consideration the convention unanimously accepted, in principle, the proposal for the settlement of Mizoram problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution, and the President was authorised to pursue the matter in this respect.

The last resolution could be passed only after a long discussion and when Laldenga threatened the members of the convention to suppress it with the force of India if anybody or group of persons would not accept the proposal. President Laldenga appointed Capt. Lalsangliana Sailo to keep careful watch on the members of the Convention and to record of anything said against the proposal. Being surprised by the threatening statement Malsawma Colney asked President Laldenga whether certain arrangement or plan had already been made with India in connection with the settlement of Mizoram problem. Here Laldenga asserted that nothing was done with India and not even a meeting or contact was made with the representatives of India in connection with peace settlement. Laldenga was not speaking the truth.

Laldenga did not disclose the letter he sent to the

Prime Minister of India and his dealings with the Indian leaders including the negotiations and agreement he had already signed prior to Calcutta Convention. Even the members of the MNF delegation who had signed the agreement did not disclose the facts probably at the instance of President Laldenga. However, some delegates of the convention suspected that there was an understanding between Laldenga and the Government of India and therefore, asked whether or not there was any previous commitment or agreement.

It may be noted that at the time of signing the agreement in New Delhi Laldenga told Biakchhunga that the terms of agreement could be reviewed in the convention of the MNF leaders and alterations could be made in it if deemed necessary. If that is so, Laldenga should have placed the New Delhi agreement before the convention for discussion. He also promised to the Indian Government that he would have the agreement approved by the MNF General Assembly. Yet, he denied that he had made any agreement with the Indian representatives prior to the Calcutta convention.

The convention formally elected their leaders as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Laldenga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Tlangchhuaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Secretary</td>
<td>Zoramthanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Aichhinga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Treasurer - Vanhlira
Financial Secretary - Lalthawmvunga

Thus Laldenga was elected President of the underground government of Mizoram as well as President of the MNF party while Tlangchhuaka was also elected Vice President of the MNF government as well as the party.

The fifth resolution stated that the next election of the party should be held at the end of three years from the date of election as usual, or until peace was settled between India and the MNF, whichever was earlier.

Since the convention accepted a settlement of Mizoram political problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution, members of a delegation had to be selected to pursue the matter and the following were selected for the same:

Laldenga, President
Rualchhina, Finance Minister,
Col. Biakvela A.G. and
Zoramthanga, General Secretary.

The delegates of the Calcutta Convention returned to the MNF Headquarters infuriated. They complained that the convention was held in a hall where the walls had ears to listen what they said, and whatever was said against India and against the proposal was to be reported to the authority for punishment. Further, Laldenga said time and again that any idea or people
that hindered the implementation of agreement should be removed with the force of Indian Government. There was, therefore, no freedom of expression in the convention, all through. It was, rather, a convention where one man's idea reigned supreme. There were a number of delegates who were strongly against the proposal for the settlement within the framework of the Constitution of India, but they dared not express their idea freely.¹³

Two contradicting opinions arose among the people of the MNF Headquarters regarding the Calcutta Convention. While one faction was in favour of making settlement of any sort, even within Indian Constitution, considering the sufferings and hardships of the Mizo people as a whole, the other faction, the hard core, strongly opposed the idea of any settlement with India except full independence.¹⁴

July Agreement and its Aftermath: A meeting of the MNF delegation and that of India took place on July 1, 1976 and India was represented by S.L.Khurana Home Secretary, S.K.Chhibber Lt.Governor of Mizoram and M.L.Kampani Joint Secretary (North East) while the MNF was represented by the four persons who were elected in Calcutta convention as mentioned above. However,

¹³ Biakchhunga: Why was MNF Split? p 19.
¹⁴ Ibid
in the text of agreement Tlangchhuaka, Biakchhunga and Chawngzuala were included by mistake or purposely on the ground that they were signatories of the previous agreements. In fact they did not participate in the talk of July 1, 1976.

The agreement simply mentioned the names of participants. The MNF delegation acknowledged Mizoram as an integral part of India and conveyed to the Government of India that they resolved to accept a settlement of all problems in Mizoram within the framework of the Indian Constitution. In order to bring about a climate of understanding and atmosphere of peace and tranquillity in Mizoram at the earliest, the MNF delegation agreed to abjure violence and suspend all activities. In furtherance of the above objectives, the underground delegation agreed to collect all underground personnel with their arms and ammunition inside mutually agreed camps within one month after their establishment and also agreed to hand over arms and ammunition to the Government of India.

The agreement also stated that the Government of India agreed to suspend operations, thereafter, by the Security Forces. Such suspension, however, would not apply to operation against underground personnel attempting to cross international border and to the maintenance of law and order. It was also agreed to continue the talks further.15 The agreement was signed by

S.L.Khurana on behalf of the Government of India and the members of the Indian delegation, and Laldenga signed it on behalf of the MNF Government and the other members of the MNF delegation.

It is apparent that this agreement was made on the basis of the agreement signed on the 18th February, 1976 and also on the resolutions of Calcutta Convention. When the full text of agreement was publicised there was public reaction against it. Seeing this, Laldenga felt it necessary to twist the wordings of the agreement so as to pacify the public criticism and grievances. Accordingly he tape-recorded his speech and multiplied the cassette and spread throughout Mizoram. This cassette was seriously viewed by the Government of India for it was twisted in his own favour which could be interpreted against the integrity of the nation. Laldenga's movement was therefore, strictly observed by the government, but since nothing serious or dangerous was found in his movement no action was taken against him. However, a number of Indian newspapers published how the India leadership looked upon Laldenga, saying that he had been dealing with them with two-faced policy.16

In 1977, Congress was replaced by Janata in the Central Government, the negotiation between India and MNF was continued for quite sometime. The first meeting between the MNF delegation and the Indian representatives under the new Government took

place on 18th May, 1977. The MNF delegation comprised Laldenga, Zoramthanga and Lalrinchhana while that of Indian consisted of S.L. Khurana, M.L. Kampani and Srivastava (Intelligent Department). In this meeting the Indian delegation strongly insisted on the implementation of the conditions laid down in the agreement signed on 1st July 1976. Since Laldenga could not give definite answer the talk came to a deadlock. Laldenga was puzzled. He then sent for Biakchhunga to come over to New Delhi.

On reaching New Delhi Biakchhunga received an instruction to go back to Mizoram to convince Mizo National Army officers and men to accept the resolutions of the Calcutta convention. Biakchhunga, then, returned to Aizawl to persuade his officers on duty at Aizawl to accept the resolutions of Calcutta convention. After this he took some of his officers to the Capital (Headquarters) to persuade the civilians, officers and men of the MNA there, to accept the resolutions. When they reached the capital they found the people strongly against the resolutions. Even the officers and men of the MNA in the Headquarters flatly rejected and condemned the resolutions of Calcutta convention.

The opinion against the resolutions of Calcutta convention was so strong in the Headquarters that no action could be taken against the leaders who opposed the resolutions. That was the reason why Biakchhunga the Chief of Army Staff
and other Senior officers, who had been stationed in Mizoram at that time, were called upon to come over to the MNA Headquarters to persuade the members of the MNA to accept the resolutions.

Biakchhunga and senior officers of the Army found that the political atmosphere in the Headquarters was extremely critical. They first approached Zoramthanga, the General Secretary of the underground government as well as of the party, who had been deputed from New Delhi as a special envoy of the President to convince the people in the Capital that the Calcutta convention did everything possible for the good of the country. At the first meeting Zoramthanga informed Biakchhunga and party that he was utterly failure in convincing the people in this regard. He also said that it was even dangerous to support the resolutions of Calcutta convention and that if the Chief of Army staff and party were disappointed the MNF would be broken into pieces or even worse than that.  

Biakchhunga and party, therefore, had a meeting with the MNF leadership to meet the situation created by the Calcutta convention. They, decided to visit all the Brigade Headquarters, battalion Headquarters and the outposts of the MNA. The meeting also drew up how to persuade the people to accept the resolutions. With this object in mind Biakchhunga and party set out for a mission impossible. After completing their tour:

of campaign they found themselves hated by the people and the political atmosphere to be worse than ever before.

Biakchhunga and party persuaded the people to accept the resolution of the Calcutta convention, for those resolutions were passed in accordance with the wish of the people of Mizoram and the underground government of Mizoram. If these resolutions were not good enough for us all, then they would be modified in our favour or the agreement could be treated as cancelled and a new agreement could be signed. The campaigners knew for sure that the agreement could be signed once for all and no alteration could be made whatsoever, but they did not care to employ the cheap means to achieve their goal. They further stated that to disown the resolutions of Calcutta convention would mean a rebellion against the underground government of Mizoram, against the MNF leadership and a mockery of the wish of the Mizo people for whom they struggled to achieve independence.

A majority of the underground people considered the acceptance of the resolutions as betrayal of their cherished cause, and anybody who preached in favour of this as a traitor. They, therefore, wished that Biakchhunga and party should be dismissed from the MNA and thrown out of the MNF party, for betrayal of party policy. Thus the MNF split for the second time.

Among the underground people, many of the MNA personnel and the civilians remembered President Laldenga's public speech at Chhantlang, before the so-called blue faction were arrested, in which he said that the soldiers of the MNA would not be worthy of being called Mizo youths if they dared not shoot him right at the forehead if and when he tried to lead them back to India. If the so-called Blue faction were charged with the case of having clandestine negotiation with India for a status of Protectorate state or other status lower than independence and were arrested for that reason, they asked among themselves, what about Laldenga who had negotiated with India secretly but beyond any shadow of doubt, for a status much lower than even Protectorate state. Thus they reacted against the resolutions of Calcutta convention.

At the same time, there were among them who were so loyal to the underground government and the MNF leadership as to obey the command or order of authority to the letter, those who got tired of underground life in general and those who gave up their hope for independence. These people readily accepted the resolutions. That was why there was a split among the underground MNF for the second time. This ideologically difference resulted in the breaking up of the whole population of the underground people into two opposing groups. These two groups were so bitterly opposing each other that their reunion
Laldenga spread a propaganda that the Government of India was willing to provide a special provision for Mizoram state. But since there was no mention of special provision in the terms of agreements the anti-Laldenga's faction could not believe it and regarded it as baseless and unfounded. No hint was given to him that there would be a special provision within the Indian Constitution for Mizoram. According to the version of Biakchhunga, nothing was said in the talks about special provision, on the contrary, the talks came to a deadlock when Laldenga tried to twist or alter any part of the terms of the agreements signed between the MNF and India. 

Since there was a deadlock in the negotiation more armed forces were to be depatched into Mizoram for major operation. Understanding this development a good number of people approached Biakchhunga the Army Chief who was stationed at Aizawl, with earnest requests to go to New Delhi to meet and request Laldenga to resume the talks with India so that the impending major operation might be withdrawn. At these requests Biakchhunga sent a telegram to Laldenga applying for a permission for going to New Delhi in connection with resumption of talks.

Meanwhile, as the deadlock of the talks was attributed to Laldenga's insincerity and his failure to implement the conditions of the agreement on his part, the Government of India was infuriated at him and issued an order of his expulsion from the Indian soil in accordance with the conditions laid down in the last talk. He was thus ordered to leave India on 6th June 1977. Distressed and perplexed at the order, Laldenga sent his son Danmawia to approach Dr. Rothuama the then Mizo M.P. with a request to arrange his meeting with the Prime Minister. Accordingly, Dr. Rothuama met Prime Minister Desai to arrange the meeting.

However, the Prime Minister told him that he would consider the possibility of his meeting with Laldenga only on condition that Laldenga wrote with his own hand a pledge of abandonment of violence and acceptance of Indian citizenship before the meeting could take place. So, Laldenga, in his letter to the Prime Minister, stated that he accepted the citizenship of India and as such, he came to New Delhi to hold talks with the Government of India to seek peaceful solution of the political problem of Mizoram within the Constitution of India. He further stated that he denounced violence especially as a means to achieve political objectives.

He begged the Prime Minister to kindly grant him

an opportunity to meet him so as to enable him (Laldenga) to present his point of view in detail for the Prime Minister's consideration.21

On the receipt of Laldenga's permission Biakchhunga and Capt.Lalsangliana left Aizawl and reached New Delhi on 23rd July 1977 bringing to the notice of Laldenga the report on the Indian military movement in Mizoram and their preparation for major operation. By this time, Dr.Rothuama had already arranged the meeting of Laldenga and Prime Minister Moraji Desai. Taking Biakchhunga with him Laldenga met the Prime Minister on 2nd August 1977 as scheduled. After asking why he wanted to meet him the Prime Minister told Laldenga that Rothuama and Brig.T.Sailo were ready to be called if required. Laldenga agreed that both of them should be called.

When the Prime Minister asked him what kind of political demand he had for Mizoram, Laldenga said that he could not say off-hand anything about that there and then, unless he first consult his colleagues. Thereupon, the Prime Minister said, "You promised that you would be able to tell what kind of political demand you would make after consulting your colleagues and you made also a list of persons whom you wanted to consult. So, we give an ample time for meeting with them and allowed even some prisoners to attend your conference.

Did you not have a conference at Calcutta to discuss political demand for Mizoram? Can you not make any political demand for Mizoram even after staying nearly two years in New Delhi? Don't you have any political demand for Mizoram even after going underground for so many years?" The Prime Minister's dealing with Laldenga seemed to be rather insulting, said Biakchhunga.

Laldenga could not make any definite answer except that he stood firm on the agreement signed on 1st July 1976. Since the Prime Minister used strong terms untempered with courtesy and politeness Laldenga was not in a position to go against him or to speak steadfastly against him. Biakchhunga surmised that Laldenga recollected the letter he had sent from Geneva to Mrs. Indira Gandhi the former Prime Minister of India, the resolutions passed at Calcutta convention and his humble petition to Morarji Desai the Prime Minister of India, for this talk. The atmosphere of this meeting seemed to be so unwholesome that it came to an end prematurely and the next meeting was scheduled to be held on 5th August 1977, for the final talk. Thus the meeting ended in failure, without arriving at any consensus point.

As scheduled Laldenga and Biakchhunga went again to the Prime Minister on 5th August, at 8 a.m. After a few minutes of talk Prime Minister Morarji Desai asked Laldenga whether he would agree to call Dr. Rothuama and Brig. T. Sailo into the meeting room to listen to them. As he agreed they
were called in. This time the atmosphere of the talk became less uncongenial than before. Since Laldenga asserted that he did abide by the terms of 1st July agreement, the talk was resumed in a somewhat pleasant atmosphere.

The first business of the talk was to draw up a draft scheme of peace camps where the MNF civilians and armed force were to reside temporarily before their rehabilitation could be settled, and where they should submit their arms and ammunition. The task of drawing up the draft scheme was entrusted to Biakchhunga the Army Chief from the MNF side and A.K.Doval the Assistant Director, S.I.B., Aizawl, from the other side. After this, the Prime Minister told Laldenga to pursue the matter with the Home Minister.

After the sites for Peace Camps, how they should be set up and looked after were taken into consideration, Biakchhunga was taken ill. Therefore, Tawnluia, who was newly promoted to the rank of the major, and Capt.Lalsangliana were invited to take the place of Biakchhunga in drawing up of the draft scheme of the Peace Camps. Complying with the invitation Maj.Tawnluia and Capt.Lalsangliana took great pains spending a great deal of time to draw up the scheme. When it was completed it was brought to Biakchhunga for approval. In the meantime, A.K.Doval did the same work separately to be compared with the other one by the authority when both of them were completed.
When the draft drawn up by Maj. Tawnluia and Capt. Lalsangliana was improved and finalised Biakchhunga brought it to Laldenga for approval and necessary action. But Laldenga put it aside after reading a few lines of the content and prepared a fresh scheme with the help of A.K. Doval.

In pursuance of the meeting with the Prime Minister, Laldenga and Biakchhunga met Home Minister Charan Singh and his colleagues on 31st August, 1977. In this meeting the Home Minister asked Laldenga whether he would allow Dr. Rothuama and Brig. T. Sailo to participate in the talk. When he agreed they were invited to come into the meeting hall. The business of the meeting was to study and compare the two draft scheme prepared by the MNF and the Government of India which were to be implemented with immediate effect if approved. However, there was a tug of war between the MNF delegates and the Indian delegates. The Indian delegates demanded that the MNF should lay their arms before the political talk while the MNF demanded that a political talk should be held before their arms were laid down. At this point the Home Minister said, as he rose from his seat as if he was going to leave the chamber, "Now we have come to the same point which was arrived at last year by this time." What he meant to say was that they had come to the deadlock once again.

As the Home Minister was about to leave the meeting chamber it seemed for a moment that there was a deadlock once
again. If that was so, the suffering of the Mizo people could not be imagined. There and then, Brig.T.Sailo ventured to step in with a suggestion that since the two parties were sincerely desirous of making peace there should be no difficulty in accepting the middle path - to have a political talk and laying down of arms at the same time. After the suggestion was accepted by both of the parties the talk was continued for two hours discussing the scheme of camps. Since the scheme passed by the meeting was to be scrutinised and approved by the National Emergency Committee Laldenga sent Maj.Tawnluia on September 8, 1977 to the MNF Headquarters with the scheme. Biakchhunga also left New Delhi for Aizawl along with Maj.Tawnluia.

When they reached Aizawl Biakchhunga and Maj.Tawnluia called a meeting of the MNA senior officers stationed in Mizoram. They discussed in the meeting the scheme of camps, and the meeting lasted three days. After this Maj.Tawnluia left Aizawl on September 12, 1977, for the MNF capital. He was accompanied by some of the senior officers from Aizawl. The scheme was scrutinised by the National Council and made modifications here and there. Maj.Tawnluia then left the Capital for New Delhi with the modified scheme which was to be laid before Laldenga on October 14, 1977 for his approval.

Some days after Maj.Tawnluia's arrival at New Delhi Laldenga met the Indian leadership with the scheme modified by the MNF leaders in the Headquarters. But no progress was
made in the talk for quite sometime because, according to Biakchhunga's opinion, the Indian leaders attributed the reasons why the talk could not make headway to Laldenga's insincerity and his inability to convince his men even though he himself might be willing to accept the terms of agreement in to-to. Biakchhunga stated further that the Indian leaders had lost faith in Laldenga as he promised them time and again to accept a status within the Indian Constitution but spread at the same time, a propaganda among the Mizo people contradictory to his promises. They said that since Laldenga dealt with them with two-faced policy, peaceful policy of the Mizoram problem was not foreseeable through him or his instrumentality.²²

As he was often warned against the danger of his expulsion from India if the peace talk was not fruitful, the order of Laldenga's expulsion was, once again, issued on November 5, 1977 which was to be effective from November 11, 1977. Accordingly, he had to undergo medical examination for a certificate of physical fitness for going abroad. When everything was ready for his departure he wrote a letter to the Home Minister which he wanted to be treated as top secret and a personal letter not to be read by anyone else under any circumstances.

In the first point he stated that he wrote him a letter

²² Biakchhunga : Why was MNF Split ? p 29.
sometime back enclosing a copy of the scheme for establishment of peace camps in Mizoram approved by the MNF Headquarters. He further stated that the approved scheme incorporated certain changes including (i) the MNF President's immediate visit to Aizawl to meet the Executive Committee for finalising the political demands of the MNF; (ii) commencement of political talks forthwith and (iii) postponement of elections till the finalisation of the talks, etc. He pointed out that the Government of India's inability to consider the modification favourably was the reason of the deadlock in the peace talks.

Laldenga further stated that he was determined to restore peace in Mizoram and that the deadlock caused a serious concern and anxiety to him. He explained that he had taken up the difficult task of bringing about peace in Mizoram with complete dedication and sincerity, and that he was determined to make it a success and remove its obstacle in its path. He tried to make the Home Minister understand that he did not want to take a rigid and uncompromising stand which might stand in the way of restoration of peace, and also that he was misunderstood and his bonafide doubted by the Government of India.

Laldenga expressed his gratitude to the Home Minister of India for his kind promise in the previous talks to forgive and forget the past mistakes and crimes committed by the MNF if they gave up their secessionist ideology and accepted the
Constitution of India, handed over their arms to the Government and lived like loyal Indians. He thanked him further for giving all the MNF personnel great hope and courage by his assurance of forgiveness, and he, therefore, felt that the peace talk should not end in failure. He also begged that the Government of India would kindly treat them, after surrendering their arms, as other Indian citizens and help solving their problems.

Laldenga assured the Government of India that he would take full responsibility for restoring complete peace in Mizoram if India favourably considered his case. He, therefore, proposed to lay down arms straightaway unconditionally at suitable places and he expressed his confidence to complete the process of laying down arms at the appointed places by January 26, 1978, the Republic Day. He promised that arms would be surrendered without difficulty and there should be no need of constructing elaborate camps and armouries, etc. He also promised that he would shoulder full responsibility of convincing each and every person in the MNF organisation; and he further assured the Government of India that he would accomplish the task of restoring peace in Mizoram within a short period of time with the help and cooperation of the Government of India.

Laldenga praised the Home Minister for having an open mind and sympathetic heart towards the Mizo people and for not being averse to give statehood to the people of Mizoram. He expressed his expectation of being permitted to come to Delhi
with the representatives of various groups of political and social organisations to present the aspirations of the people of Mizoram, after fully restoring peace in Mizoram. He added that he would request, at that time, the favour of granting statehood, with special safeguards, to Mizo people as fulfilment of their aspirations and not as a rewards of an armed rebellion to the MNF.

Laldenga stated also that he understood that there should be sufficient gap between his men's laying down of arms and the Home Minister's considering the demand of statehood for Mizoram. He also stated that that idea would receive the blessings of the Home Minister but he assured him that he would faithfully discharged his obligations of bringing about complete and permanent peace in Mizoram.

Laldenga stated also that he withdrew all the changes suggested in the proposed scheme. He stated further that as it was not considered proper by the Government of India that he should go to Mizoram at that stage, he was prepared to postpone his visit till the process of handing over of arms was well in progress. He added that the question of demanding holding of political talks also did not arise. As regards holding of elections, he said that he left the decision regarding choice of suitable timing, to the Government of India, which, he said that he was sure, would keep in view the greater task in hand of restoration of peace in Mizoram and also their
interests, while taking a decision.

Laldenga humbly suggested that the psychological atmosphere of 'trust Parcel' and friendship be built up in Mizoram even after handing over arms and restoration of peace in Mizoram. He went on saying that he would be grateful if the Home Minister could consider utilising his services by offering him a suitable office during the transitional period for that task. He added that he wanted to avail that opportunity to prove his bonafides to the people and the Government of India and convince them that he, as a true nationalist, would dedicate his entire energies for the development of Mizoram and the country as a whole. He said that it would also give him an opportunity to look after the interest of his erstwhile colleagues in the MNF who would have various personal, psychological and political problems to face immediately after handing over their arms. He said also that this would enable him to deal effectively with persons from their old organisation who might decide to take the path of violence, which however, was a very remote possibility. He also volunteered his services for bringing peace in other parts of North-Eastern region in any way the Government deems fit. He informed the Home Minister that he might like to avail of the cooperation of two of his colleagues to assist him in that task.

As he had been given a time-bound programme of action and the time that he had suggested was extremely short he would
be grateful if he could be obliged with a clearance from the Home Minister's side at the earliest. He concluded his letter with a request to treat that letter as personal.  

As he humbled himself to the Home Minister with such words of promises and assurance the order for his expulsion from India was sympathetically withdrawn. From the fact that he offered his services to be utilised by the Government of India, considering his promises and assurance and in view of his withdrawal of all conditions and demands made by him and his party on behalf of Mizoram, it was evident, Biakchhunga said, that Laldenga was so much afraid of expulsion from India that he subordinated all the interests of Mizoram to his personal interest and safety. 

The Government of India advised Laldenga to go to Arrakan to discuss the scheme of camps with his colleagues and key persons among the underground. Laldenga flatly refused to go there, but rather sent for Tlangchhuaka the Vice President, Zoramthanga Secretary to the underground government of Mizoram, Biakchhunga Chief of Army Staff and Col. Biakvela to meet him in New Delhi. He named this meeting a "High Power Delegation." His letter to Tlangchhuaka said that the hard nut had been crushed and therefore, the need for the coming of the leaders

23. Biakchhunga: Why was MNF Split? pp 32-34.
24. Ibid.
to New Delhi to meet India leadership could not be over emphasized. The letter said further that the General Secretary Zoramthanga, Brig.Gen.Biakchhunga, Col.Biakvela and, if considered necessary, another suitable person, in fact, full power delegation was to come. Maj.Tawnluia was sent as a messenger to deliver the letter and to explain its content. The letter was written in New Delhi on 22.11.1977.

Since nothing was written in the letter about the matter, the leaders in the MNF Headquarters demanded explanation from Maj.Tawnluia. He then said that the Indian authority demanded that the MNF should lay down their arms before political talks so that the Indian leaders might not be blamed by new generations and the peoples of other states for having talks with armed rebels, which might be interpreted by them as submission to the threat of armed rebels. He added that the Indian delegation further stated that after laying down their arms the MNF would take over the Ministry of Mizoram U.T. for about three months, then the terms of agreement should be proclaimed. He said also that in order to make the Indian leaders blameless before the eye of other states and new generations in this case, their demand might kindly be complied with before the coming of Christmas or before the new year at the latest. But nothing about that was written in the President's letter. What was said in the letter was only the need for the High Power Delegation to visit New Delhi and the
matter would be explained by Maj. Tawnluia. But Maj. Tawnluia said that the MNF were to lay down their arms before political talks, after that the Ministry of Mizoram U.T. would be taken over by the MNF for three months, then the terms of agreement would be proclaimed.

When Tawnluia finished his explanation of the message the National Council requested him to go out of the meeting hall so that the matter might be discussed freely in his absence. After discussing the matter the Council passed the following resolutions:

1. (a) The MNF should not lay down their arms before political talks with India, for it amounted to unconditional surrender;

(b) The acceptance of U.T. Ministry could not be considered for the MNF had never set their goal at the achievement of the status of U.T. except full autonomy. Since an agreement had been signed with India, a full-fledged state with special provisions higher than any other state in the country could be considered instead of full independence. Therefore, Laldenga's proposal for the acceptance of U.T. government could not be considered.

2. The members of the National Council resolved that they would not recognise the unauthorised "High Power Delegation" and its members for the following reasons:
(a) A group of only four or five self-styled representatives of the Mizo people should not commit Mizoram to accept an unacceptable and distasteful agreement which had a far-reaching effect. The true representatives of the Mizo people as a whole should rather be elected if and when necessary, by the people to represent Mizoram to sign an agreement with India provided the terms of agreement or the questions were referred to the people for referendum. Therefore, the National Council could not recognise the so-called High Power Delegation nor could it depute the members of the delegation.

(b) Since there was a serious split of ideology among the underground MNF personnel the Council thought it expedient for anyone of the leaders not to leave the Headquarters for the time being.

Since the decisions of the National council were as stated above, it was considered necessary for the council to pursue the matter. So, the following resolutions were passed:

1. Laldenga be invited to come over to MNF Capital Headquarters to discuss the critical problems with them. In case of his inability to come over to the Headquarters he should be invited to come at least as far as Pharhva the last Mizo village on the border of Burma.

2. A member of the National Council should be commissioned to
fetch Laldenga from New Delhi as early as possible, and Zoramthanga was selected for the mission.\textsuperscript{25}

Accordingly, Zoramthanga left the Capital Headquarters on December 11, 1977 for New Delhi along with Maj. Tawnluia, the special envoy of the President. Meanwhile, a propaganda spread in Mizoram that had the High Power Delegation been sent to New Delhi the Government of India would have given statehood with special provisions to Mizoram as a Christmas present. But the special provision had never been mentioned by the Indian delegations at any time, nor did the President of the MNF demanded it even once.\textsuperscript{26}

When Zoramthanga reached New Delhi, contrary to the message he brought to the President, he went with Laldenga to meet the Prime Minister of India assuming to be the true representatives of the National Council and reported to the Prime Minister that the National Council demanded the interim government for Mizoram which was not a fact. The National Council did not even mention interim government whatsoever. Anyway, the Prime Minister of India informed Laldenga and Zoramthanga on January 16, 1978, that it was unconstitutional to give them interim government. Biakchhunga said in this regard that Laldenga concealed their meeting with the Prime Minister.

\textsuperscript{25} Biakchhunga : Why was MNF Split ? pp 36-37.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
because they did it without the approval or knowledge of the National Council.27

The MNA personnel on duty in the Link Office of Aizawl suspected the secret deals and tried a number of means to detect the truth about President Laldenga's activities without the approval or knowledge of the National Council. The facts they detected were:

1. Laldenga's letter to Indira Gandhi, the late Prime Minister of India which he wrote from Geneva on 28.8.1975.
2. The letter he wrote to Prime Minister Desai on 30.7.1977
3. Other important documents, his clandestine agreement with Indian leaders, such as an agreement signed on 18.2.1976.
4. Zoramthanga who was sent to New Delhi to bring the President to the Capital Headquarters had been detained by Laldenga and both of them met the Prime Minister to whom they, on behalf of the National Council, presented the demand for interim government for Mizoram.
5. Instead of reporting the matter to the National Council they sent the report to Zaidarhzauva, the brother-in-law of President Laldenga.
6. Laldenga and Zoramthanga secretly prepared a memorandum to be signed by leaders of all the political parties in Mizoram.
7. They proposed to organise the National Convention to review

27. Biakchhunga : Why was MNF Split? pp 38,29.
the demand of interim government for Mizoram. 28

8. Later, they found out three letters of Laldenga to Vice President Tlangchhuaka. The copies of these letters were collected.

The Senior Officers of the MNA stationed in Mizoram U.T. held a conference at Aizawl and discussed the above discoveries and findings. The conference seriously viewed the matter and decided to sent them to the National Council through special messengers, namely, Maj.Vawmkaia and Lt.Rothianga, for consideration and necessary actions.

The message was reviewed by the National Council on February 8, 1978. Before necessary actions were taken, another report was brought to the Council by Khawtinthanga according to which the President was bent on supporting Janata Party, Mizo Union and Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee against the People's Conference. So, the matter was put off for 14.4.1978.

Accordingly, the National Council sat again on Feb.10.1978, to consider the same items of agenda because in the former meeting no decision could be arrived at owing to difference of opinion among the members, one group was in favour of Laldenga and the other strongly against him. Even this meeting could not take any decision for or against the President. Some of the members could not believe the aforesaid points of discovery against Laldenga and thought it necessary to sent delegates to New Delhi or at least to Aizawl to clarify the
matters, while others thought it unnecessary to send a delegation but to take necessary action against the President on the basis of the report given by Col. Vanthanga on behalf of the senior officers of MNA in Mizoram.

Since Col. Vanthanga sent a reminder to the Capital Headquarters requesting the National Council to take necessary action on the report sent through special messengers the Council sat again on 14th February, 1978 and appointed Biakchhunga and Thankima to go to Mizoram to study the political situation there. These two delegates left Dinthar Tlang (Capital Headquarters) on 17.2.1978 for Mizoram. They were met at Pharhva by A.K. Doval, Assistant Director, S.I.B., Col. Vanthanga and Diwan on Feb. 20, 1978.

On reaching Aizawl Biakchhunga called a meeting of Senior Officers on 23rd February 1978 at 8 a.m. In the meeting he said that the MNF reportedly split into two factions but it should not at all split, otherwise the party would never stand, and freedom would never be achieved. He said further that India tried to split the party inserting a thin end of the wedge between the leaders as well as the members. After doing all the needful, and since the President demanded his resignation, the Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga left Aizawl by helicopter for Pharhva taking with him all the secret documents of the President to be laid before the National Council for consideration, or to support his case against President
Laldenga's demand for his resignation.

When he came to the Capital Headquarters on April 8, Biakchhunga submitted forthwith the Photostat copies of the following documents, to the Vice President:

1. Laldenga's letter to the Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi which he wrote from Geneva on 28th September, 1975.
2. Laldenga's letter to Prime Minister Desai, written on 30.7.1977.

In his letter to Tlangchhuaka Laldenga stated that he regretted that only Zoramthanga could come to New Delhi to comply with his call for the meeting of High Power Delegation to discuss and confirm his time-bound plan for the peaceful and honourable settlement of political problem in Mizoram. He stated also that he and Zoramthanga met the Prime Minister recently once again.

He told Tlangchhuaka also that the Government of India strongly insisted on their laying down of arms before political talks because the MNF delegation made a commitment to do so in their agreement on July 1, 1976 and that was accepted by Calcutta convention. He stated further that after accepting the terms of agreement their first and foremost duty was to lay down arms. He said also that as they were struggling on for return of peace and tranquillity to Mizoram the Government of India should see their sincerity and honesty in their dealing.
with them. Saying that it was for them to surrender arms he expressed his strong desire to implement the surrendering of arms before March 1978. He stated also that in his previous talks with the leaders of India he mentioned the protection of the honour of freedom fighters who laid down their lives for the country, but that part was not included in the terms of agreement.

Laldenga told Tlangchhuaka in the letter that he mentioned the status of statehood in his talks with Indian leaders for the protection of Mizo customary laws. He made mention also that he made a demand for interim government which was refused by the Government of India on the ground that it was not constitutional. He urged Tlangchhuaka to make haste to surrender arms and ammunition before 31st March 1978, and said that he hoped the National Council would also kindly make a favourable decision in that matter.

Biakchhunga, commenting on the above letter said that Laldenga foresaw that nothing would come out of the talk and therefore, wanted to shift the responsibility or blame to the National Council.\[29\]

In the meantime, Laldenga could no longer trust the Link Office in Aizawl and as such he ignored it and established contact with the office called 'Bengvarna Office' (roughly

\[29\]. Biakchhunga : Why was MNF Split ? pp 39, 40.
interpreted 'Information Centre). Even among the lower ranks of the MNA there were two opinions: an opinion in favour of Laldenga and the other against him. Anyone who knew about the secret documents and believed in their authenticity completely lost faith in President Laldenga and his propaganda, and those who did not know anything about it or who wished not to know the truth clung to the faith in him and his propaganda.

Taking advantage of this Zoramthanga, coming from New Delhi claimed that the Executive power was handed over to the President and the General Secretary. On the basis of this claim he sent letters of information to all commanding officers telling them that the National Council had handed over the executive power to the President and the General Secretary. The letter was written on February 15, 1978, but the executive power had been vested in the National Council till January 1979. That is, the President and the General Secretary had no right to exercise the executive power then, so far.

When the MNF personnel in the Link Office discovered the secret documents they were much surprised and deeply grieved to learn the painful truth. The conference of the senior officers of MNA, on May 30, 1978 at Aizawl passed resolution as follows:

1. Considering his commitments to India, and the executive power he had so far exercised for the implementation of his commitments we consider Laldenga unworthy of being
supported by the Mizo Army.

2. It was resolved that the above resolution be submitted to the Chairman of the National Council for consideration and necessary action. This resolution was signed by 9 senior officers. That means it was signed by all senior officers of MNA stationed in Mizoram except Lt.Col.Kawlvela. Accordingly the resolution was submitted to the National Council.

Vice President Tlangchhuaka summoned Biakchhunga, Army Chief, on 13.4.1978 at 10 p.m. to appear before him for interrogation for he received reports against him. The interrogation was considered necessary to find some points to support President's demand for the resignation of the Chief of Army Staff.

On 18th April, 1978 the National Council met and Biakchhunga the Chief of Army Staff was asked to leave the meeting for his case was to be considered. But no action was taken against him. After the meeting the Defence Secretary asked him to send the following messages to all Army officers:

1. All Mizo Army officers must come to the Capital not later than 15th May, 1978 each one leaving behind one junior officer to look after his battalion.

2. All battalions should be instructed to keep all arms secure against surprise attack by the Indian Army.

30. Why was MNF Split? pp 36-37.

The National Council resolved further that the President be not dethroned immediately but the matter be put off to be decided by the General Assembly of the party which should be convened shortly. All the Army officers were called to come to the Capital to attend the General Assembly of the party.

The National Council met again on April 20, which passed the following resolutions:

1. Acceptance of the agreement with India for the settlement of Mizoram problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution as passed in the Calcutta Convention.

2. All the commitments by the MNF leaders to the Government of India were cancelled as the Indian Government stopped the talks with President Laldenga and detained Zoramthanga the delegate sent from the Capital. These actions of Government of India were considered to be the breach of their of honour.

The Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga received a letter from Col.Vanthanga who was stationed at Aizawl. In his letter Col.Vanthanga expressed his fear that the whole MNF organisation would get into greater trouble. His reasons were:

1. The President had sent and spread through the Janata Party an audio cassette which contained disintegrity and insecurity rather than unity and security. He had also dismissed three senior officers: - Maj.Vawmkaia, Maj.Laldinthara and Maj.Biakzama in his recorded speech. This cassette
had been multiplied and spread in enormous quantity by Bengvarna Office and Janata Party who had utilised it for the campaign of MLA election.

2. Since the content of the tape record had made Lt.Col.Kawlvela and his followers gain ground Col.Vanthanga deemed it expedient to publicise the President's secret documents to contradict that false propaganda spread by Laldenga and his faction. He stated further that all the workers of MNF in Mizoram U.T. were good except Lt.Col.Kawlvela and his battalion, as the Chief of Army Staff understood it. He reported that the members of the contingent who have returned from China had joined their respective units and their arms were kept secure in accordance with the order of the Chief of Army Staff.32

There were other messages received by Biakchhunga from Col.Vanthanga, the commander of the Mizo Army stationed in Mizoram. The messages were mostly the reports on the activities of President Laldenga:

Message I : The Chief Secretary of Mizoram U.T. had stationed Warram Singh, the Inspector of S.B., C.I.D. and someone else to bring about a split in the Mizo society.

Message II : Thakur, S.B., C.I.D. recently to Calcutta Inspector Bhora and Lalbahadur Chhetry to contact President

32. From Biakchhunga's diary.
Laldenga and Warram Singh. He gave each of them Rs 1500/- for their expense. Having achieved their goals these two messengers had come back to Aizawl.

Message III: On March 22/23, 1978, Ngurchhina received a letter from the President. There was a reason to believe that the letter was brought by Inspector Bhora and Lalbahadur Chhetry. Ngurchhina sent the letter to the Vice President through Thankima. Though the full text of the letter was not known except to Ngurchhina and the Vice President, one point had leaked out. That is an order for removing Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga (which could be interpreted for assassination according to the MNF term).

Message IV: Thakur S.P. S.B., C.I.D. reported that Zaidarhzauva, the brother-in-law of Laldenga received on April 8, 1978 another letter from the President. The letter was believed to be brought by Warram Singh who came to Aizawl on April 8, from New Delhi. It was believed that Warram Singh was actively working with Laldenga to bring about settlement of Mizoram problem within the framework of the Indian Constitution. In order to achieve this goal India had to strengthen the hand of Laldenga and weaken the power of the National Council which was in favour of a status greater than a state, meaning a settlement outside the Constitution of India, or a state with special privileges and

33. From Biakchhunga's diary.
provisions.\(^{34}\)

It is clear from the above messages that there were two bitterly opposing factions in the MNF organisation. There were also mutual distrust and suspicion which influenced their activities and ideology to a great extent.

The Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga received another message from the commander of Mizo Army in Mizoram U.T. which stated that since the Chief Secretary of the Government of Mizoram and Thakur S.P. had no longer dared to make personal contact with Ngurchhina, M.C.Lalrinthanga, Lt.Col.Kawlvela and Capt.Zaidarzhauva, they rather utilised the services of Inspector Bhora and Lalbahadur Chhetry. Accordingly, Bhora went to Ngurchhina's house on the night of 12th April 1978 and discuss how to topple down P.C. party to be unable to form a government, and to sabotage the ensuing election for MLA. At the same time Inspector Chhetry went to Zaidarzhauva's house for the same purpose.

On 28th April, a message was received again by the Chief of Army Staff from Col.Vanthanga stating that Capt.Rotawna was arrested by the Police on the night of 22nd April and seized from him Laldenga's audio record and his letter in which was written that Col.Vanthanga, Maj.Biakzama, Maj.Laldinthara and Capt.Lalsangliana were dismissed and to be killed if they said

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34. From Biakchhunga's diary.
anything against Laldenga. Rotawna said that the cassette and the letter were given to him by Zaidarhzauva. The letter also contained an order for the promotion of Lt.Col.Kawlvela to the post of the Chief of Army Staff in place of Biakchhunga. The message urged Biakchhunga to solve the problems in the Army as early as possible.35

In order to solve the problems in the Army as well as among the civilian workers in the MNF organisation Biakchhunga thought it necessary to dethrone the President first since, according to him, the President was the source of every trouble in the MNF family. He, therefore, met the Defence Secretary Lalrinchhana on 28th April, 1978 from 10 a.m to 1 p.m. Biakchhunga started the conversation stating that the time was ripe for the President to be dethroned from the Presidency since there were many documentary proofs that he had done many things against the MNF policy. All these documents proved that he had no longer been a member of the party and moreover, he was unlikely to come back to lead the party again. But Lalrinchhans, the Defence Secretary said that there was no ground for dethroning the President, for the authenticity of all the documents against him was doubtful, and there were some people who still believe that the President would come back to lead the party again.

35. From Biakchhunga's diary.
Biakchhunga argued that Laldenga's letter to the Prime Minister of India from Geneva was, beyond doubt, a fact and there was no reason to doubt its authenticity whatsoever. He told the Defense Secretary further that the President's letter to the Prime Minister of India unmistakably stated that he accepted an agreement within the framework of the Indian Constitution which was a clear proof of abandonment of independence policy for which the MNF party stood, and since he had no longer stood for independence policy, he could no longer be a member of the party the main policy of which was independence. He added that the President's letter to Home Minister Charan Singh moreover stated that he expected to be able to let the Mizo National Army lay down arms, which was absolutely against the and that he had no authority to do so. This fact was confirmed by his letter to the Vice President which stated the same thing. He made such a serious commitment with India against the party without consulting National Council or the party.

Biakchhunga went on saying that the President that, other MNF representatives, including himself (Biakchhunga) signed an agreement with India and that agreement was to be laid down before Calcutta Convention for consideration so that it might be brought into force. In case the motion could not carry, the agreement, though it was already signed, should become null
and void. But President Laldenga withheld the document from the convention so as to avoid discussion and to implement it without the knowledge of the party and the council. Biakchhunga added that the President had gone over to the enemy's side by working together with the SIB - CID Thakur, the SP who received an award for killing and capturing the MNF personnel in the greatest number. President Laldenga had made that notorious SP of CID his main instrument against the party and the National Council.  

In view of all these facts, Biakchhunga wondered how the Defense Secretary could say that there was no ground for dethroning the President. He concluded therefore, that those people who blindly followed Laldenga personally rather than the policy or ideology of the party would never be convinced of his faults even when they saw them with their own eyes. 

Since he could not convince the Defense Secretary, the Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga approached the Vice President on 30th April 1978. Biakchhunga started to say that President Laldenga was supporting the Janata party in the MLA election. He added, however, that the Janata party did not seem to be the best political party in Mizoram to be supported by the underground government of Mizoram. To him, it was not difficult to defeat the Mizoram Janata party. If the Mizo Army on duty

36. From Biakchhunga's diary.
in Mizoram were allowed to release the President's secret documents. Janata party would be defeated and the P.C. party would win the election. He asked the Vice President whether they would allow the Mizo Army on duty in Mizoram U.T. to publicise the President's documents. The Vice President did not give him definite answer. He only expressed his belief in the P.C. party's winning the election, after all. He further stated that he was desirous of meeting Brig.T.Sailo in order to know how far he would go for Mizoram.

Biakchhunga told the Vice President that Brig.T.Sailo would not run the risk of danger of being arrested by the Government of India. He seemed, however, to be determined to form a greater Mizoram comprising the Mizo occupied area in Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura within Indian territory and its constitution, though he never expressed that idea.

The National Council sat on May 11, 1978. The members present were:

1. Tlangchhuaka, Vice President - Chairman,
2. Vanlalauva - - Secretary
3. Lalrinchhana, Defense secretary - - member
4. Rualchhina - - "
5. Lalthawmvunga - - "
6. Biakchhunga, Chief of Army Staff - - "

The following resolutions were passed:

1. The petition for the Presidential pardon submitted by
Lt.Col.Lunghnema was rejected after due consideration.

2. Since the term of suspension of Col.Biakvela who left the Capital Headquarters for Burma without the knowledge of the authority, had ended he should be declared deserter along with 2/Lt.Lalthangvunga and Lalsiama a Supply Officer who also ran away without the knowledge of the government of Mizoram.

3. All the commitments made by President Laldenga with India should be treated as null and void, and the President should also be officially informed not to continue his talks with India and keep away from it.

4. Future Programmes :
   (1) The proposal put forward by Lalthawmvunga for the shifting of the Capital to an area safe from the attack of the Indian Army was put off for reconsideration if and when considered necessary.
   (2) Rualchhina's suggestion to sabotage the ensuing MLA election was not accepted.
   (3) The meeting requested the Defense Department to draw up a programme for the Army operation.
   (4) Rualchhina's proposal for informing the people of Mizoram that all the commitments so far made by President Laldenga were treated as cancelled was not accepted.

Capt. Lalsema fell, by chance, into the hands of the Chief of Army Staff. The contents of the letter were:

1. The Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga, Col. Vanthanga, Maj. Laldinthara, Maj. Vawmkaia, Maj. Biakzama and Maj. L. S. Liana were dismissed by the President, Lt. Col. Kawlvela was appointed as the Chief of Army Staff in the place of Biakchhunga and Col. Zamana as the U.T. commander in the place of Col. Vanthanga. In his letter Lt. Col. Kawlvela stated further that he had asked Col. Zamana whether he would take over charge of U.T. commander to replace Col. Vanthanga, and he said that he was quite reluctant to comply with the President's order.

2. Lt. Col. Kawlvela gave an order to Capt. Malsawma to collect all the arms and ammunition from the Brigades and keep them safely because arms were the main strength of the freedom fighters.

3. The political atmosphere in Mizoram U.T. was so heavy that he, the sender of the letter, could do no work. Money was badly needed.

4. The opinion of his (the sender's) battalion was unanimous but they had to beware of their fellow members of the Mizo Army as well as Indian soldiers.

5. The addressee was to make sure that all arms and ammunition were collected. The letter was written on 24th April, 1937.

37. From Biakchhunga's diary.
After reading the letter the Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga sent a letter to Col. Vanthanga telling him the contents of Lt. Col. Kawlvela's letter, and to come to the Capital immediately to solve the problems among themselves.

In reply to the letter of the Chief of Army Staff Col. Vanthanga sent a message stating that he was too busy to come over to the Capital, for Mizoram Congress (I) party and Lt. Col. Kawlvela, supported by a few soldiers of the Mizo Army, had attacked them by means of Laldenga's audio tape compelling them to publicise the President's secret documents. To encounter the prevailing false propaganda spread by President Laldenga and Lt. Col. Kawlvela, all the National Army on duty in Mizoram UT had been on tour. So, it was not yet possible for him to leave Mizoram for the Capital for the time being. He added that that was the only possible way for Mizoram to survive. This letter was received by Biakchhunga on 16th May, 1978.

The message was discussed by the Chief of Army Staff and the Vice President, and took a serious view on the fact the Army Chief's order was not complied with.\(^{38}\)

In those days the two opposing factions were accusing each other of helping the Indian Government against the MNF organisation and the Mizo people as a whole. It was very

\(^{38}\) From Biakchhunga's diary.
difficult for the public to discern the right side from the wrong. Many people among the underground or overground chose one of the two sides thoughtfully or blindly then shun the propaganda of the other side. But others used their common sense wisely while the mass of the people had no idea about the what and the how of the politics, and were carried by the mainstream like reeds swayed by the wind.

Laldenga's faction outdid their opponents in making and spreading propagandas but they were defeated after all, in the election campaign for the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. Some of their pamphlets were in the form of government orders or notification. In the last week of May 1978 a pamphlet was publicised without date and signature. It stated that since the people of Mizoram did not know the stand of the government of Mizoram regarding the then political issue, the government considered it necessary to clarify its stand so that the people might know what to do.

First, they declared that Laldenga was the President of the MNF party as well as the President of Mizoram. He was also the leader of the Mizo delegation in the peace talks with India. Whereas the Government of India had refused to continue her talks with Laldenga it follows that she had refused to have talks with the Mizo people as a whole. Since India had refused to talk with the Mizo people it was clear that she did not want peace and tranquillity for Mizoram. Every Mizo should
know, therefore, that India did not want the Mizo people to enjoy peace.

Secondly, The Government of India had arrested Zoramthanga the delegate of the National Council who was also the Secretary of the MNF, preventing him to submit the reports to the Headquarters. They served him a false notice in the name of President Laldenga and dishonestly cheated him to come to New Delhi where he was arrested contradictory to the safe-conduct they guaranteed. In this way they deceived not only Zoramthanga but also the whole population of Mizoram. This act of damnable treachery was the manifestation of their contempt of Mizo nation.

Thirdly, whereas India did not like to talk with Laldenga the leader of the Mizo delegation and had arrested Zoramthanga it was clear that India did not want settlement even within the framework of her own constitution. This indicated, on the other hand, that independence was the legitimate right of the Mizo people.

Fourthly, there were some people among the high ranking officers and leaders who conspired to dethrone President Laldenga with the help and at the instigation of outsiders. But it was impossible for any dissenter or opponent, to dethrone the President except constitutionally. Those who conspired to depose him were acting contrary to the constitution of the government and the party. Those conspirators were the enemies of the state
and the nation. Beware of them.

Fifthly, whereas the government of India had refused to make settlement even within the framework of her own constitution the government of Mizoram, the MNF party and the National Army had determined to carry on their struggle for independence of Mizoram.

Sixthly, in order to bring about peace and tranquillity in Mizoram, the government of Mizoram condescended to accept the Indian terms of agreement unanimously at Calcutta convention. However, since the Government of India had stopped the peace talk unilaterally the National Council of Mizoram had declared in its full sitting on 20th April, 1978, that the Government of Mizoram stripped itself off all the bindings of commitments of peace talks so far held previously.

Seventhly, the Government of India was preparing election in Mizoram against the will and request of the people therein. This clearly indicated that she did not want peace for Mizoram. MNF had always been against elections in Mizoram under the Government of India, for any election stood on their way to freedom and would never bring about peace in their country.

The Chief of Army Staff, Biakchhunga, took this notification to the Vice President on 26th May, 1978 for discussion. Since there was no date nor signature, and the wording being irrelevant Biakchhunga expressed his doubt about
its authenticity. The Vice President told him that it was published by the publicity Department of Mizoram government (underground government). At this point Biakchhunga expressed his desire to write the fact to counter the half-truth propaganda spread by the President. The Vice President gave his consent to write it.

Biakchhunga stated further that it was not good to conceal the secret documents of the President, because the people remained in the dark about the truth. "All the workers should be enlightened by publicising the truth," he added. The Vice President said that he did not take the matter seriously as they had stripped themselves off all the bindings of commitments made by the President in his talk with India making the documents ineffective. However, he said that when all the officers had arrived at the Capital for conference as scheduled, all the issues, including the President's documents should, anyway, be explained to them.

The fact that the Vice President did not take these issues seriously implied that he had no objection to the spreading of the documents as well, according to Biakchhunga's interpretation. So, Biakchhunga prepared a book entitled "The Outlines of Peace Talks between India and MNF" and allowed many people to read the manuscript even before he gave it to the press for printing. When the book came out of the press it was immediately distributed widely.
In the meantime, the MLA election was held for Mizoram in spite of strong opposition from Laldenga's faction of the underground government. The results of the election was officially announced on 30th May, 1978 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People's Conference (P.C) party</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram Congress (I)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram Janata party</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of Laldenga's strong opposition the P.C. party returned overwhelmingly and the party he had supported were in the absolute minority. The results of this election undeniably evidenced that Laldenga's popularity as a political leader had greatly declined for the time being.

However, the internal politics of the MNF was so critical that it seemed impossible to bring the two poles together. There were thus two groups of people in the Capital: (1) Those who were convinced by Biakchhunga and took side against Laldenga and (2) those who chose to believe Laldenga's propaganda than that of Biakchhunga. Still there were some other people who did not like at all to have talks with India but to carry

on armed struggle believing that God would give them victory over India somehow in course of time. But these people were not in group and were not regarded as a faction. Meanwhile, Laldenga and Zoramthanga did not lose time and energy to propagate against Biakchhunga and other leaders of MNF in the Headquarters. They spread pamphlets throughout Mizoram and released audio cassettes to justify themselves and to counteract Biakchhunga's publicity. Thus Biakchhunga, who was once the running dog of Laldenga became the arch-enemy of his old master because of "Top Secret" letters and other confidential documents which were brought to the lime light by him. The "Top Secret" scandal and counter scandal had been in the air creating ideological war in Mizoram as well as in the MNF Headquarters.  

A Cabinet Meeting: On the receipt of President Laldenga's letter Vice President Tlangchhuaka called a confidential meeting of his cabinet consisting of Rualchhina, Lalrinchhana and himself; without the knowledge of the National Council. The content of the President's letter was not disclosed to anybody except to the cabinet members, nor were the agenda and decisions of the cabinet meeting revealed. But Capt. Khawthinga was sent as a special messenger to Mizoram U.T. to convey the decisions of the cabinet meeting to the commander of the MNA there.

The members of the National Council and other members

40. From Biakchhunga's diary.
of the MNF in the Headquarters suspected that a certain serious matter was decided by the cabinet meeting. Their suspicion was based on the ground that the Vice President never did anything important without the knowledge of or consulting the National Council previously but this time he did not like to disclose anything about cabinet meeting, yet a special messenger had been sent to Mizoram with the decisions of the meeting.

Their suspicion grew from bad to worse and the Vice President was bombarded with so many bombastic questions that he could no longer withhold the fact and told as follows:

The special messenger Khawnginga was sent on the following three missions:

1. The President's instruction was carried out in the cabinet meeting, to dismiss all the senior officers of the MNA who were suspected to be disloyal to him.

2. Another mission was to release the Vice President's message to the people of Mizoram concerning the internal political problem of the MNF.

3. The third mission was to publicise the government press release. 41

This information was given by the Vice President to the National Council only 6 or days after the messenger had left the Capital. The Vice President's message was normal and

41. From Biakchhunga's diary.
ordinary statement while the government's Press Release was rather exciting and inciting statement which went, "Those who repudiate President Laldenga are to be regarded as enemies of the nation, standing on the way of the Mizo people's struggle for freedom... etc." The political atmosphere of the MNF Headquarters was heated by this press release and the President's order for the dismissal of senior officers of the MNA whom he suspected. The opposing faction requested the Vice President to allow them also to publicise clarification of the "Top Secret" but he refused to allow them.

The Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga went to Sector I on June 10, 1978 at Chhaihkhiang where he delivered a lecture to the Mizo Army on the President's secret documents and explained to them the MNF notification published and distributed concerning Laldenga's commitments. He told them that it was good for them to prepare to go on fighting for independence, not for a settlement within the framework of the Indian Constitution. He also underscored integrity and unity among them.

On June 15, 1978, Vice President Tlangchhuaka asked Chief of the Army Staff Biakchhunga to see him 9:30 a.m. in connection with the reports of the senior officers who had recently arrived at the Headquarters from Mizoram. The information was conveyed to Biakchhunga the Chief of Army Staff by the Secretary to the President. The Vice President asked
him what kind of report was brought by the senior officers. the Chief of Army Staff told him that the Mizo National Army detachment in Mizoram U.T. considered President Laldenga as a deserter from the MNF party and its policy as he initiated a negotiation with India for a settlement within Indian Constitution and they felt also that they could no longer get along with him owing to his various commitments with India. They therefore, wanted the National Council to take an appropriate action against him as early as possible.

Biakchhunga told the Vice President further that the message sent by Col.Vanthanga was the decision of the meeting of the senior officers on duty in Mizoram U.T. held on 30th May 1978 consisting of the following senior officers:

1. Col.Vanthanga  
2. Col.Zamana  
3. Lt.Col.Lalbawnga  
4. Lt.Col.Lalsailova  
5. Lt.Col.Lalpianga  
6. Maj.Vawmkaila  
7. Maj.Thanchhuma  

He made him understand also that these officers made a unanimous decision and gave their signature on the resolutions of the meeting which was brought to the Headquarters. However, Lt.Col.Kawlvela did not attend the meeting though a notice was served on him.

Brig.Gen.Biakchhunga went on saying that the senior officers could not come to the Capital Headquarters because they were rather too busy counteracting the false propaganda widely publicised by President Laldenga and a handful of his
supporters using audio cassettes, etc. There was mutual distrust in the National Army in Mizoram U.T. and could not entrust arms to them.

Since the Vice President did not make any comment on it, Biakchhunga suggested that in order to uphold truth and justice the National Council should boldly decide the matter as soon as possible in the interest of the state and the nation, otherwise something worse might happen in the meantime. Vice President Tlangchhuaka said that if and when President Laldenga received the decision of the National Council which stated that all the commitments made by him in the peace talks with India were declared null and void, he would resign his post of his own accord.

The Chief of Army Staff Biakchhunga politely contradicted the Vice President saying that President Laldenga would not strip himself of the commitments and bindings he had already made with India, but he would write a long letter defining his position. Tlangchhuaka said that no decision should be made hastily. But Biakchhunga said that it was make decision because much time had passed since 1973 when the first commitment was made and the photostat copies of the documents were submitted to him (the Vice President) in the month of September 1977. "Since you know for certain that the documents of President Laldenga were not false or forgery" he added, "You must be bold enough to uphold truth and justice, not making decision for
a period of one year as you have done now, otherwise you will not be fit to be a revolutionary leader."

Biakchhunga went on saying that in a revolutionary period like the one they were in, they must be prompt to take necessary actions, otherwise their revolution would never be a success and would never achieve anything whatever. The leaders should pull their followers and not be pushed by them. No leader should steal a march on his colleagues as a group or individually, but he should be bold enough to call a spade, a spade and to stand for truth and justice at all costs. He pointed out for example, that Vice President Tlangchhuaka sent a certain Capt. Lalkhawnglinga to Mizoram empowering him to dismiss commanding officers. He told him further that it was not right to empower a captain to dismiss commanding officers since he, the Chief of Army Staff, was there in the Headquarters, and in doing that he had stolen a march on him (Biakchhunga) and offended the senior officers; and also it was not a proper channel, nor a correct procedure for the Vice President to give orders directly to the junior officers of the army.

Biakchhunga stated further that when the decisions of Calcutta Convention was reviewed in the National Council at the Headquarters, the Vice President did not allow him to attend the meeting on the pretext that his case was to be taken into consideration. But when he was allowed to attend the third day meeting of the Council he heard the Vice President read
out the decisions of the council which included many items having no connection whatsoever with his case. He, therefore, expressed his grievances this time, saying that he was at a loss to understand why he was not allowed to attend the meeting and yet, he was wanted to share the responsibility for its decisions. He told him also that when he attended the meeting on June 15, 1978, the decisions made previously were simply read out for information of the members. Biakchhunga emphatically said that he could not at all sign a decision of the meeting in which he did not participate. He challenged the Vice President saying that what was done to him was quite objectionable and damnable, for he had every right to protest his expulsion from the meeting even when his case was not considered.

Biakchhunga went further pointing out another contemptible and foolish act of the Vice President: that he sent Capt. Khawnghinga to Mizoram U.T. to deliver a foolish message which condemned anyone who said anything against Laldenga, as an enemy of the state and the nation. He told him that in doing so they labelled 80 p.c. of the MNF workers and of the Mizo people as the enemies of the state and the nation. Those whom they have labelled enemies of the nation did not speak ill of Laldenga they rather simply narrate what he had actually been doing. He directly questioned the Vice President whether he thought it fair to condemned those who speak ill of Brig.T.Sailo, Lalthanhawla or any other Mizo leader.
as enemies of Mizoram, whether he could say that there was freedom of speech under such threatening and intimidation. He added that that was how it had always been done under the leadership of Laldenga.

The Chief of Army Staff continued his verbal intercourse with the Vice President saying that it was Laldenga that should be condemned, not the people who spoke of what he had been doing. He said that he failed to see why they should label those people who spoke ill of Laldenga as the enemies of the state and the nation while they freely criticised Brig.T.Sailo, Lalthanhawla and other Mizo leaders. He told him that he believed the people whom they called the enemies of the nation were true patriots who loved the country more than Laldenga did, for Laldenga was the true enemy of the nation considering what he had done against the nation. He went on saying that they must be bold enough to condemned what Laldenga had done against Mizoram, MNA and MNF party. "All that Laldenga had done against the nation and the support you give him will be reflected in the history of Mizoram" he added.

The Vice President replied that they sent Capt.Lalkhawnginga to Mizoram with good intention and there was nothing bad in his mission. Biakchhunga retorted, "Then why was it done surreptitiously? How could those evil things be done with good intention?" He asked why the Vice President released Laldenga's audio cassette to the Mizo Army knowing
for certain that it was intended to destroy the truth about his secret documents. He said that he wondered how the Vice President did not release the President's secret documents but dared to release the false propaganda which put the Army in a public situation. He exclaimed, "What a dare devil you are!"

The Vice President said that he and his cabinet members were party to Biakchhunga's publication of the President's secret documents. Then Biakchhunga asked why he counteracted it with false propaganda. He said that the leaders should stand for the truth for all occasions and at all costs without playing fast and loose. He added that they should be brave enough to face the fact and reality. He also requested the Vice President to stop his Secretary's distributing Laldenga's cassette. When Tlangchhuaka told him that he had no knowledge of President's cassette being distributed by his Secretary, Biakchhunga said that there was a reason to believe that the Secretary got the silent approval of the Vice President.

Even after this, the Secretary of the Vice President gave warning to some army officers against saying or doing anything against the President. From their discussion it is evident that the Vice President was uncertain of what action to take or which path to follow. Sometimes he supported Laldenga and sometimes disapproved his actions. Generally he

43. From Biakchhunga's diary.
supported Laldenga in those days.

On June 16, 1978, the Chief of Army Staff sent a message to Col. Vanthanga, the commander of the Mizo Army detachment stationed in Mizoram, informing him that the administration in the Headquarters was weak and all the National Army were informed to take necessary steps to improve the political situation.

On the following day, the Vice President and the Chief of Army Staff met again in connection with the early convening of the National Council. The Chief of the Army Staff put pressure on the Vice President to convene the council as early as possible so as to prevent critical situation which seemed imminent. He said that the Government notification published by the Publicity Department had created an unwholesome atmosphere in the National Army and a remedy should be found as early as possible. The vice President agreed to call the National Council and asked Biakchhunga to prepare a message and send it immediately. The message was sent as follows:

The U.T commander was informed that Capt. Lalkhawnginga left the Capital with the following messages to be delivered to him:

1. A notice for the meeting of the Mizo Army officers to be held at the Capital Headquarters.

2. The National Council's decisions should be publicised in Mizoram and be sent to the President. The decision stated that the National Council stripped itself off all the
bindings of the commitments so far made by the Mizo delegation in their peace talks with India, because the Government of India unilaterally discontinued talks with the Mizo delegation.

3. Government notification published by the Publicity Department was prepared by the Vice President and his two cabinet members without the knowledge of the National Council.

4. The Vice President empowered Capt. Lalkhawnghinga to dismiss and replace the commanding officers. In doing so, he disregarded the Army Chief, Army Headquarters and the National Council. This was absolutely contemptible.

5. Regarding Serial No. 3 & 4 the Army Chief had remonstrated with the Vice President about his action. The U.T. Commander is, therefore, instructed to make no change in the organisation of MNA until further order. He is informed also that though the administration in the Headquarters is very weak, there is a hope to improve it.

6. The National Council had not empowered Capt. Lalkhawnghinga to publish the so-called Government notification.  

On 19th June 1978, another message was sent to the U.T. commander by Vice President Tlangchhuaka as follows:

1. The Government notification published by the Publicity Department, Government of Mizoram, s/No. 4 is cancelled.

44. From Biakchhunga's diary.
2. Other Government orders and notifications were also cancelled.

3. Serial No. 2 & 3 should be withdrawn even if they have already been released.

To calm down the heated atmosphere of the Capital it was considered necessary to organise a political meeting. Accordingly, a meeting of 43 leaders and officers were held on 19th June 1978 which considered internal problems and their solution. As the main cause of the heated atmosphere was President Laldenga's secret documents it was necessary to solve that problem first. The meeting unaminously condemned Laldenga's action. There was no support to the President. Even the Vice President and the cabinet members were silent. Some of the members were not quite sure of their unanimity on the first day and therefore, the Chairman put the matter to vote on the second day and it was proved that there was no vote defending the President. So, the unanimity of the previous day's meeting was confirmed.45

After this the Army Chief Biakchhunga sent a message to the U.T. commander informing him that the joint meeting of all government officials, party leaders, civilians and Army officers under the Chairmanship of the Vice President, in connection with the political atmosphere, agreed to withdraw

45. From Biakchhunga's diary.
the Government Notification and other papers. In short, Capt. Lalkhawnginga's mission was altogether cancelled.

The meeting held on 19th and 20th June, 1978 considered it necessary to call the Executive Committee of the MNF party to review the draft constitution of the MNF party, to organise the MNF General Assembly as early as possible and to chalk out the programme and agenda of the Assembly.

The Executive Committee met on 21st June 1978 to:
1. review the draft constitution which was to be laid before the General Assembly of the party for discussion and
2. nominate the delegates of the Assembly. The delegates were nominated as follows:
   (a) from the Army: the rank of the major and upwards,
   (b) from the civil services: the Deputy Secretaries upwards. The nomination was subject to the approval of the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee notified that the 16th General Assembly of the MNF party would be held on 27th June 1978 from 9:30 a.m. to consider:
1. how the Executive power was devolved by the President;
2. to review the past and present nature of the MNF to see whether they still followed the original democratic path and principles;

46. From Biakchhunga's diary.
3. to review the President's order issued in May, 1978 for the dismissal or suspension of the senior officers of the MNA;
4. confirmation of action taken by the National Council for the suspension of talks with India;
5. President's letter to the Government of India which was sent without the knowledge of the party and
6. Laldenga's letter to Prime Minister Desai through Dr. Rothuama M.P.

General Assembly of the MNF: The Vice President presided over the Assembly. Explaining how the executive power was devolved the Chairman said that the President did not directly devolve the Executive power to the Vice President, but put up a suggestion to the National Council which devolved it to the Vice President in accordance with the suggestion of the President. The Assembly was of the opinion that as the executive power had been vested in the Vice President, the President had no executive power to exercise, any longer, and it followed that his order that dismissed senior officers was "misuse of power." Then the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m. till the next day.

The second day session was started at 9:30 a.m. on 28th June 1978. The first item of agenda on the second day

47. From Biakchhunga's diary.
was the question of abrogating the decisions of Calcutta convention. Since the mover slightly changed his stand the motion was shelved to be discussed after election. The third and the fourth days of the sessions were spent in the discussions of the draft constitution.

The first item on the agenda on the fifth day was the authenticity of the President's documents. In course of the debate some member of the Assembly expressed their belief that the documents fabricated by the Government of India and other ill-wishers of Laldenga while others said that he himself confirmed it in his audio cassette saying, "I sent my suggestions to Home Minister Charan Singh." After all LaLdenga's group chose to disbelieve anything that was done or said against Laldenga. Therefore, the genuineness of the documents was put to the vote and 17 members out of 22 voted that the documents were true and the signatures of Laldenga were also genuine. The rest of the members abstained. The Assembly thus accepted Laldenga's letters to the Prime Minister of India, Home Minister Charan Singh, etc. as authentic. Only a negligible number of them still persisted to believe that the documents were forged.

Secondly, considering the documents, whether Laldenga deserted the MNF policy or not was put to vote. The result was: 16 members out of 22 voted that he had deserted the party policy, and the rest of them abstained. The Assembly declared, therefore, that President Laldenga deserted the MNF policy.
Following this declaration the underground government of Mizoram announced that there would be a party election at 5 p.m. on 3rd July, 1978 Monday.\textsuperscript{48}

As he read out the resolutions the Chairman of the Assembly, Tlangchhuaka, also said that he had already sent a letter to the President asking him whether the letters were genuine which he did not reply. The resolution passed in the Assembly against Laldenga was, "Whereas Laldenga has deserted the MNF policy, of his own accord, the 16th General Assembly of the MNF party held on June 27, 1978, accepted this as dissertation of the party as well."\textsuperscript{49}

The election of the MNF party leaders as well as the leaders of the government of Mizoram was held as scheduled and the leaders of the party should also be the leaders of the government automatically, for example, the head of the party should also be the head of the government, General Secretary of the party should be the General Secretary of the Government as well. The result of the election was as follows:

1. President : Brig.Gen.Biakchhunga. He defeated his opponent Tlangchhuaka, the out-going Vice President, by two votes, i.e. 12 against 10.
2. Vice President : Malsawma Colney.

\textsuperscript{48} From Biakchhunga's diary.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
3. General Secretary: Lalthawmvunga

4. Cabinet members: (a) Defense Secretary - Lalhleia
   (b) Publicity & Health - Chawngzuala
   (c) Finance & Supply Secretary - Vanhlira

5. Newly elected members of National Council:
   (1) Chawngzuala 14 votes against 8; (2) Tlangchhuaka 14 votes;
   (3) Lalhleia (decided by lot); (4) Vanhlira 14 votes;
   (5) Lalrinchhana 12 votes; (6) Thankima 12 votes;
   (7) Rualchhina 12 votes; (8) Ropianga (decided by lot);
   (9) Vanlalmuana 12 votes;

The voters were 22 in all. 14 votes were against 8, and 11 votes were against 10.

The President and the Vice President were sworn in at 11:15 a.m. The meeting of the National Council was called on 5th July, 1978. The meeting heard the report given by Lalnghenga and Chalrikhuma who came from Mizoram U.T. When they finished giving their report the two messengers left the meeting hall, and the members had a discussion on the political atmosphere in Mizoram. They decided to send a letter to Brig.T.Sailo. The new Vice President and the General Secretary were requested to draft the letter.

The second item on the agenda was deployment of Mizoram Army in Mizoram. It was resolved that it should remain unchanged.
until further order.

3. The third item was how to collect tax and donation from the people of Mizoram. It was decided that the ministry concerned should work out the detailed procedures and lay it before the next meeting for discussion.

4. Foreign policy was the next item. Since Laldenga discontinued the links with Pakistan and China it was considered necessary to resume relations with them, and other new friendly nations should be sought for.

5. The Next item was sizing of the staff which was left to the President's disposal.

6. The last item was the cases of Lt.Col.Lunghnema and P.Rohnuna. These two persons were previously arrested by the Indian Army and came back underground. The question was whether they were to be suspected or not. As to the case Lt.Col.Lunghnema, it had been considered previously and found guilty already. It was, therefore, decided that appropriate action should be taken against him.

On the next morning the National Council met again to consider the report on the amount of money taken by Laldenga from the MNF treasury. It was understood that he took more than 260,000 rupees in Pakistan currency for the maintenance of his family and attendants numbering only ten, before he left for Islamabad. The meeting considered that the amount taken for the maintenance of Laldenga and family as well as for his
official use in foreign dealings in Islamabad was unreasonably larger than the amount left over, less than one fourth, for the whole underground population, numbering to the tune of three thousand. The former Vice President Tlangchhuak was requested to trace out the next amount from the old files.50

On July 8, 1978 (Saturday) the installation of the new government was held with a religious programme in the Church. Speeches were heard from the President, Vice President, General Secretary, Ministers and some members of Mizo National Council (MNC). The President briefly related the past history of the MNF and emphasized integrity of the organisation condemning selfishness which spoiled integration and solidarity. He laid emphasis on self-help and self-support, not to be dependent on foreign assistance. He stressed on the need of having bold and just administrator, and in order to have such an administrator he said that the people should be truthful and just first, and the people should strengthen the hand of the administrator. He encouraged the people to be brave enough to stand for justice and to repudiate injustice.

The religious function was immediately followed by the meeting of the Mizo National Council (MNC) in which:
1. The Vice President announced his intention to go on a journey in search of friendship with foreign countries. He stated

50. From Biakchhunga's diary.
that he was confident that he would be able to establish relations with Bangladesh and some other countries. The meeting approved his programme.

2. It was resolved that "the appointment of all high ranking officers should be within the purview of the President, subject to the approval of the MNC.

3. As regards the membership of the President and the General Secretary in the MNC it was decided that all the office-bearers of the party and the cabinet members should be the ex-officio members of the Council and the President should be the ex-officio leader.

On July 11, 1978, the President, the General Secretary, Defense Minister and Finance Minister sat in a committee at the residence of the President and passed the following resolutions:

1. Owing to the scarcity of food the number of visitors to the Capital be restricted to the minimum.

2. The Mizo Intelligence Bureau (M.I.B.) be made a separate directorate under the President's portfolio and direct supervision.

3. The Chittagong Hill Tracts affairs and the Capital administration should be under the Home Ministry.

4. The Agriculture Department and the Production Wing should be under Finance Ministry.

5. The finance Minister reported that there was $ 5800/- (Five
thousand eight hundred dollars only) in Laldenga's hand. The meeting decided that this should be realised as early as possible and the Finance Minister should pursue the matter.

On July 14th, 1978, a meeting of MNC was held. The meeting heard the reports and the future programmes of different ministries. It was also reported that Lalnghenga and Chalrikhuma who left the Capital on 7th July, 1978 had arrived at Aizawl from Pharhva by helicopter. The meeting extended the order of suspension of operation up till 15th August 1978. It was also reported that Capt.Kamliana, who was stationed at Kachin had come to Aizawl leaving two soldiers at Kachin and another soldier at the Headquarters of the Naga Federal Government.

The meeting continued on the following day, i.e. 15 July. The first item on the agenda was how to treat Laldenga's order in which many of the leaders and officers were dismissed or replaced. The meeting decided that it should be treated as null and void, for Laldenga had no longer been the President of the MNF as he had already surrendered to the Government of India. It was also unanimously agreed that political education be launched among the workers including army personnel and civilians. A report was given that L.Col.Kawlvela, Maj.Lalluauna, Capt.Lalrawna and Capt.Malsawma met together at the Headquarters of 'T' Battalion the commander of which Maj.Lalluauna. They said that they did not have confidence in the new government, for they believed, that it was set up
in accordance with the plan of the Government of India. Thereupon, the meeting was prorogued for a moment to give them time to offer a very serious mass prayer for those who did not have confidence in the new government.

Another meeting of MNC was held on 17.7.1978 in which they considered the case of Lt.Col.Lunghnema who had been given order to leave MNF Headquarters for Mizoram as early as possible, but refused to go home. This case was seriously viewed and his presence at the Headquarters was considered dangerous.

A report was received in the capital from Mizoram on 19.7.1978, stating that Col.Biakvela who was arrested by the Government of Burma had been handed over to India on 30th June and had been kept in Gauhati jail being charged under IPC. It was reported also that Laldinliana MIB and party were arrested by the Bangladesh Army.

Army Officers' Meeting : On 20th July 1978, President Biakchhunga sent a WT message to the commander of Mizoram UT instructing him to realise 5,800/- dollars from Laldenga. On the same day the President called a meeting of Army officers. This was the first Army officers' meeting he called ever since he became President. The President told them that:

(a) the peace talks with India was mishandled by Laldenga,

51. From Biakchhungra's diary.
(b) Laldenga had already made a commitment with India to accept a settlement within the framework of Indian Constitution.

(c) and the Mizo people and the Mizo Army stationed in Mizoram demanded that a new government of Mizoram should be set up soon, because they thought that Laldenga's demanded was too cheap.

The President instructed the Army officers to implement the policy and programmes of the new government. He told them also that it was the duty of the Army to be loyal to the government and to the party irrespective of their individual opinions.

He went on saying that forgetting the past problems in the Army, the officers should discharge their duties faithfully. He encouraged them to be prepared to carry on the struggle for independence. However, in view of the economic condition and inadequacy of arms and ammunition he discouraged enrollment of new recruits for the time being. Also, they should not be off-guard simply because of cease-fire.

The MNC meeting was held on 21st July 1978. It considered the report of the Vice President's visit to Bangladesh. Second, how to procure food and how to get money for the purchase of essential commodities. The newly framed financial rules were approved; and the feasibility or otherwise of rescuing Laldinliana (MIB) and party who were arrested by the Bangladesh Army was also considered. The meeting considered the shifting of Fiangpidung camp to a suitable place nearer
to Mizo boundary, the administration of Chittagong Hill Tracts, etc. and had a review of the pamphlets prepared by the Publicity Department, as well. The Vice President reported that the Army officers stationed at Sunsong village did not cooperate with him. Moreover, one of them gave warning to the Secretary of the Vice President saying that he and his boss (Vice President) should be careful about what they say, for they were under the military control. This matter was taken into consideration and was seriously viewed by the meeting.

The Vice President reported also that Ex-Lt.Col. Lunghnema tried to seek political asylum in Bangladesh so as to enable him to raise volunteers whom he would take to a foreign country to undergo a military training. Since there was a standing order for his expulsion from the MNF defense perimeter it was resolved that he should be treated accordingly, but the action taken against him should not be recorded in the minute.

On 22.7.1978, the President and the Director of the Mizoram Intelligence Bureau (MIB) made a plan to send MIB personnel into Mizoram to detect Laldenga's plan and strategy to overthrow the underground Government of Mizoram and how far he had gone in his plan. They should also try to discover the agents of SIB of India, how they worked for Laldenga or how India tried to use Laldenga as their instrument to win the underground people over to India. Lastly, they should try to
find out the public opinion on the new government of the underground MNF.

The chief of Army Staff received a message from the commander of MNA in Mizoram stating that Capt. Zaidarhzauva (younger brother of Laldenga's wife) and Lianzinga arrived at Aizawl on July 18, 1978, deserting the Army and doing anything possible for Laldenga against the underground government of Mizoram. The message added that on July 19, Ngurchhina sent M.C. Lalrinthanga as a messenger to New Delhi to meet Laldenga in connection with what to do for him against the new government of MNF.  

Since Biakchhunga had been elected President of the MNF government a new Chief of Army Staff should be appointed to take his place in accordance with the constitution of the MNF government which provided that no one should hold the posts of President and the Chief of Army Staff together at the same time. Therefore, Biakchhunga proposed Col. Vanthanga for a new Chief of Army Staff of the Mizo Army. The proposal was unanimously agreed upon.

The MNC met on 26th July. The meeting considered it necessary to send an Army detachment to the area occupied by the Mizos in Manipur State to educate the people in the MNF political ideology. But since the Government of India declared

52. From Biakchhunga's diary.
Manipur a disturbed area they thought it wise to first study the situation. It was reported in the meeting that Ngur-chhina (younger brother of Laldenga), M.C.Lalrinthanga and Hrangthanga who had recently joined Janata Party left Aizawl for New Delhi to meet Janata leaders and Laldenga. The report added that those people were likely to invite Laldenga to lead the Minoram Janata party.

Petitions for the new President's resignation: On 1st August, 1978 the following Army officers submitted in writing that they had no confidence in the President and they could not cooperate with him and as a result, they could not support him any longer:

1. Lt.Col.Kawlvela  
3. Capt.Lalthansanga,  
4. Capt.Lalrawna,  
5. Capt.LianruaJa,  
6. Capt.Malsawma  

In addition to their letter of no confidence Lt.Col.Kawlvela and Capt.Lalkhawnghinga submitted a letter to the President demanding his opening of a court of law where they might stand to defend Laldenga from his being accused of deserting the MNF policy. They stated also that they wanted to prove false all the "secret documents" or letters allegedly sent to the Government of India by Laldenga. They said that as plaintiffs they wanted to bring the cases of Laldenga to the court of law, or special tribunal.53

53. From Biakchhunga's diary.
The MNC meeting was called on 7th July 1978 to consider the letter of no confidence submitted by Lt.Col.Kawlvela and other 7 Army officers; and a petition submitted by Lt.Col.Kawlvela and Capt.Lalkhawnginga for the setting up of a special tribunal to enable them to fight for the case of Laldenga against his removal from the Presidency on the ground that he had been accused to have deserted the MNF policy in writing. The meeting considered that it was time and good for them to settle every question in the most peaceful way. It was decided, therefore, that the Defense Minister should try to convince them in amicable way before any action could be taken. The second item on the meeting agenda was to send for the National Army in Mizoram U.T. to come to the Capital Headquarters before the end of September 1978.

They thought it necessary to recall the Army from Mizoram because Lt.Col.Kawlvela and his group were gaining ground in the cold war among the underground MNF while the Army detachment in Mizoram UT were all against Laldenga. Had Laldenga been in Biakchhunga's position he would have nipped the opposition in the bud. President Biakchhunga adopted the soft and tender policy to win the people's heart, for he thought it to be more lasting than the strong and fearful policy reinforced with flattery, adopted by Laldenga. For quite
sometime even Laldenga could not stop opposition from the 
civilians for he was always absent from the mass of the people,
but he never allowed any opposition to crop up against him from
the Army, especially from the high ranking officers. Campaigning
against him and submitting the letter of no confidence to the
government against him was out of question and unthinkable.

There was an MNC meeting on 11th August 1978. Since
Col. Vanthanga had arrived he had to take over the charge of
the Chief of Army Staff as unanimously decided by the MNC meeting
of 25.7.78. Rualchhina raised a strong objection to
Col. Vanthanga's taking over the charge of the Chief of Army
Staff. But on the basis of the fact that it was unanimously
approved already in the previous meeting the objection fell
flat. Nevertheless the meeting decided that no other promotion
or appointment should be made for the time being. It was also
decided that the members of the MNC should have an informal
meeting with Lt. Col. Kawlvela and his group on the following
day, because the representatives of the MNC failed to convince
them. But Kawlvela and his group declined their invitation
for the meeting because they had already met the representatives
of the MNC and knew their views and points. They said that
as the face-to-face discussion could bring about personal enmity
between the individuals they thought it better to avoid more
talks with the MNC members. Moreover they warned them saying
that what they had brought to their notice were very important
and urgent, being national interest, and as such, if any trouble broke out in the organization as the result of the government's refusal to implement them they (Kawlvela and his group) should not be held responsible for it. They concluded their letter saying that they were preventing the outbreak of trouble inside MNF family. 54

Since the invitees did not comply with the invitation, the members of the MNC had an informal meeting. Some of the members stated that it was better to stop the agitation immediately before it developed into an armed revolution. But the President, Vice President and the Secretary thought it better to solve it in a peaceful way. They stated that if the members of the MNC were integrated it would be possible for them to prevent the outbreak of revolution. Some of the members suggested that the problem should be considered in a formal meeting as early as possible.

Thereupon, the President said, "Since the members of MNC unanimously accepted the 16th Assembly of the MNF party as genuine and authentic the election was constitutionally held in that Assembly. Even if someones do not accept the constitutionally formed government it should not be dissolve in any way, and the elected members should not step down at all." He stated further that the same problem had already been

54. From Biakchhunga's diary.
faced even before the last election and for that reason fervent prayers were offered individually and in the Church continually. Therefore, he felt that the newly formed government was recognised by God, and leaders were also God's chosen ones. He said that they must safeguard their constitution by all means and respect the divine providence. He said further that if someones wanted to do harm to them only because they safeguarded the constitution they must suffer gladly and passively. If the opposition adopted resentful attitude against any one of the leaders or officers of the government, there was a set of constitutional rules by which any leader of member can be dismissed or removed from his place if the accusation or charge levelled against him is proved true. They should follow the right procedure. The President wanted everybody to understand this.

On 16th August 1978 President Biakchhungra received a joint petition from 'K' Battalion demanding his resignation stating that whereas no action had been taken by the government on their demand on 29th July 1978, the officers and men of 'K' Battalion declared hunger strike in protest against the absence of favourable response from the government and MNC. They requested the government to give a serious consideration to the demand. In case the new government would resign they demanded that an Acting President should be elected in a general election that should be prepared by the old government. They
demanded further that the date for the Presidential election should be fixed on 10th October 1978. The letter was signed by Kawlvela, R.C.Thansanga and R.L.Liana and was submitted on the 15th August 1978.

A letter signed by seven members of 'K' Battalion was submitted to the government stating that since they could not accept the new government and their petition for fresh election had been rejected by the new government they had decided to start hunger strike from the afternoon of 18th August 1978 unless and until the new government had resigned or dissolved. They gave the copies to the commanding officers of 'CH' Battalion and 'T' Battalion for information and necessary action.

Another letter was received by the President along with the above letter demanding the resignation of the new government. The ten signatories of the letter informed the government that they decided to start hunger strike from 18th August 1978 forenoon unless and until the new government resigned. They stated that they did not allow anybody to come to their place except to announce that the new government resigned or dissolved. They informed the government further that they would not obey the orders or commands of the government unless their demand was complied with.

Two similar letters, one of them signed by four persons

55. From Biakchhunga's diary.
and the other by three persons, were received by the President informing the government that they would go on hunger strike from 18th August 1978 until resignation of government. These joint petitioners were, in the opinion of Biakchhunga, incited by vested interests who had ill-will for the new government, since nothing wrong was done by the new government so far, during a very short period of time. As a matter of fact, there were a large number of the underground people who blindly pinned their faith in Laldenga only because he was the founder of the party. Many of them joined the MNF party only because of Laldenga's charismatic oratory and these people had no faith in the leadership of others. Their blind faith in Laldenga was not affected even though he was insincere and dishonest.

The opposition was so strong that the President could no longer keep silent. He called an informal meeting of the MNC and the leaders of the opposing group. The demand of the opposition was to dissolve the whole government machinery and to prepare an election for the new government. But Biakchhunga asked the leaders of the opposing group, in the meeting, if they would accept if he alone resigns without dissolving the whole government. Since they agreed to his suggestion he announced his resignation. On 18th August, 1978, a meeting of MNC was held at the Capital Hall at Dinthar Tlang and the President submitted his resignation.
Ideological was which culminated in disarming and capturing the power of the government: An ideological war between Laldenga's faction and the hard core led by Biakchhunga, the Chief of Army Staff started from 1976. However, since Biakchhunga participated in some of the talks with India he was not in a position to lay all the blame upon Laldenga for making settlement of the problem of Mizoram within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Even Biakchhunga himself persuaded the Mizo Army to accept a settlement within India. But there were many people who could not accept a settlement within Indian Constitution. However, he did not accept the terms and conditions imposed by India on Laldenga because, in his opinion, they were "too cheap and far from satisfactory." He attributed all the weaknesses of Laldenga in the peace talks to his carelessness, political short-sightedness and foolishness. He said also that Laldenga had been defeated right from the beginning of the talks with India to the last. He, therefore, said that he could not support Laldenga and his foolish commitments.

When Biakchhunga brought out the weaknesses of Laldenga in the limelight it brought about a split in the MNF organization which could never be repaired. A cold war broke out between the two factions of the MNF. To counteract the scandal of 'secret documents' Laldenga had to clarify the matter by means of audio cassettes and pamphlets which were distributed
among the people of Mizoram as well as the Mizo Army against Biakchhunga and his supporters. Those who were against Biakchhunga propagated also that the 'secret documents' were all fabricated by India and Brig.T.Sailo to support Biakchhunga. They alleged and propagated also that Biakchhunga gave an order to Col.Vanthanga commander of Mizoram UT to take over all the arms and ammunition brought by the contingent under Maj.Vanlalnghaka, from China and hand them over to the Government of India.

Others said that since Biakchhunga was the opponent of Laldenga he should not be the President of the MNF government otherwise there would be two factions among the underground, one faction supporting Laldenga and the other supporting Biakchhunga. Lt.Col.Kawlvela's group propagated also that the Mizo Army on duty in Mizoram UT did not like to come back to the underground Headquarters in protest against Biakchhunga's leadership in the MNF government.

Earlier it was planned that all the MNF workers should be called together in a General Assembly to solve the problem. But owing to the shortage of food supply they cancelled the programme. Some of the leaders considered it necessary to revive the programme so as to restore or re-enforce the decisions of the 16th General Assembly of the MNF party. They deemed it unreasonable and unwise to revoke the decisions of the General Assembly only because some people did not accept it. So, a
meeting of all workers of the MNF government was convened in the Capital Headquarters in September 1978. The government expected that all the problems should be settled when the MNF workers in Mizoram UT, who formed the two thirds majority of the whole population of the MNF, came to the headquarters.

When the Brigade commanders, Battalion commanders and a few officers came to the Capital they found that the political atmosphere in and around the Capital was worse than they expected. They reported to the Headquarters that Chinese arms and ammunition were not handed over to the Government of India, and the MNA stationed in Mizoram UT who had been reportedly unwilling to come back to join the underground Mizo Army, were also coming to the Headquarters within a few days' time.

Mass arrest: Understanding that their propaganda proved false and unsuccessful, Lt.Col.Kawlvela and his supporters thought it better to start the strike first while the other group were off their guard. On the night of October 5, 1978, Lt.Col.Kawlvela and his group came to the Headquarters while the Church meeting was in progress. They collected arms left in the barracks by the Church-goers. When the Church meeting was over Kawlvela's group lay in wait at the Church gate and arrested the active members of anti-Laldenga group including Biakchhunga the ex-President. On the same night they did
likewise in every outpost and arrested 50 members in all.

The arrested persons were kept in improvised prisons like prisoners under the guard of sentries. When the sentries were asked the reason for the mass arrest they simply said that they just carried out the order of their commanders. Some of the barracks were made prisons. Understanding that the National Army who were coming to the Capital were anti-Laldenga, Kawlvela sent troops to waylay the MNA who were on their way to the Capital to attend the General Assembly. Accordingly, Kawlvela's troop disarmed the incoming Mizo Army, one batch after another and arrested 80 officers and commanders.

After this Kawlvela's group felt secure and relaxed. However, Kawlvela ordered the Vice President Malsawma Colney to hand over charge of the President to Tlangchhuaka before the ensuing election. Possibly he was afraid to lose the election. But Malsawma Colney said that he did not take over charge of the President nor did he act as such though the outgoing President Biakchhuunga officially declared that he handed over charge to him. He added that since he did not take over the charge, he had no Presidential power to hand over to Tlangchhuaka. All the same, Kawlvela appointed Tlangchhuaka as the ex-tempore or ad hoc President of the MNF.

During that period nobody dared to express his opinion for fear of being arrested since they did not know who was who. Each one feared that his nearest man might be his opponent.
In the meantime, the peace talk between Laldenga and India came to a dead-lock which was a heavy blow on Kawlvela's group. Previously they advocated Laldenga's talk with India and safeguarded Laldenga's secret documents. But now, since the talk came to an end they had to advocate the continuation of armed revolution for full independence. In fact, Kawlvela's group had no politics nor policy except Laldenga's self that is, to carry out his command, to go on his errands and to follow his footsteps without questioning. They publicly expressed their wish to reinstate Laldenga as the President without election.

At midnight, October 26, 1978, 8 leaders of Laldenga's faction including Kawlvela were arrested by the National Army. They were thrown into the prison where Biakchhunga and his supporters were kept. Soon after this the 17th General Assembly of the MNF party was organised. In the Assembly the last letter of Laldenga to Kawlvela, which was written after Biakchhunga and his supporters were arrested, was read out. In his letter Laldenga instructed Kawlvela to prevent the MNF party election by all means unless he (Laldenga) was sure to be elected. In case Kawlvela's efforts were failure he (Kawlvela) should muster as many soldiers as he could and escape with them from the underground Headquarters and march along the Sazek range to

56. From Biakchhunga's diary.
After hearing the reading of this letter, the National Army's antagonism against Laldenga grew from bad to worse. They were surprised to hear that Laldenga, the founder of the MNF, could incite some of the high ranking military officers to destroy the integrity of the party and the nation. They, therefore, formed an idea that he was purely a self-seeking politician. For this reason, the 17th General Assembly of the MNF party passed a resolution for the expulsion of Laldenga from the MNF party once again. He was already expelled by the 16th General Assembly but was not accepted by Kawlvela and his group. That was why he was expelled again in this Assembly. Kawlvela's group and Biakchhunga's group remained in prisons during this Assembly. In the party election, Tlangchhuaka was elected President and Ropianga General Secretary. Since Tlangchhuaka and Ropianga belonged to the Mizo Church which was a regional Church, having no connection with any church or denomination in and outside Mizoram they passed a resolution to recognise it as an established church of Mizo underground government.

Meanwhile, Kawlvela instructed his old battalion ('CH' Battalion) to cause his release and the release of the 7 leaders and 50 others from the prison and capture the Capital to form

a new government; and in case of failure, he instructed them to go to Sazek range as quick as possible. On hearing this instruction, the National Army set out at once by night to capture 'CH' Battalion which was at 5 miles distance from the Capital Headquarters. They reached the place in the morning when the battalion were taking breakfast. They took them by surprise and after disarming them they captured the leaders of the battalion and put them in the same prison where Biakchhunga and his supporters were imprisoned together with Kawlvela and his followers.

The new government formed by the 17th Assembly of the MNF party had been in power under the guidance of the Wizo Church the leaders of which intimidated those who did not embrace the established faith into joining the church on pain of arrest or dismissal from their respective posts. They advocated the institution of ceremonial services of the Old Testament dispensation with a High Priest to offer burnt offerings. They wanted that the President should be the ex-officio High Priest and the cabinet members to be the clergy. The members of the new church were given double or treble promotions. They taught that by setting up this form of worship (ceremonial services of the old Testament dispensation) God would give them independence.58

58. Biakchhunga : Why was MNF Split ? p 58.
The National Army resented the administration of the new government and the activities of the Mizo Church. As a result, five key persons of the Mizo Church were arrested and sent to the prison where Biakchhunga's group and Kawlvela's group were kept. Thus there were three groups in one and the same prison, none of them having arms. Being all of them disarmed they had no reason to be afraid of each other. They could have, therefore, free and frank discussion about various disputed points in the prison. Biakchhunga's group got the better of their opponents in the verbal war within the prison. As they convinced even the prison guards of their ideology Biakchhunga's faction were given more freedom than any other group inside the prison.

By free and frank discussion, the political atmosphere within the four walls of the prison was somewhat better and it was hopeful that the political situation outside the prison could also be improved to a great extent. With this object in view, Biakchhunga's group sent to the government petitions three times for the setting up of Inquiry Commission so as to solve the problem of misunderstanding among them. They wanted especially, to vindicate themselves through legal procedures.

The petitions were taken up in the cabinet meeting for consideration. Some of the cabinet members said that as they did not know the reason why the detenues were arrested the matter should be left to the authority by whom they were
arrested. But President Tlangchhuaka and General Secretary Ropianga said that the reason was known to the government. That is, some of the cabinet members did not know the reason while others did. Therefore, President Tlangchhuaka and Secretary Ropianga had to bear the sole responsibility of the mass arrest. The other members of the cabinet said that since they did not know the reason for arresting the detenues they themselves were afraid of being arrested at any time.59

On the following day Secretary Ropianga set out as if he was going to visit the prison in response to the petitions submitted by the detenues. When they heard that the Secretary was coming the detainees were very anxious to meet him to explain their problems. They wanted to inform him that the three different groups of people in the prison had their misunderstanding amicably settled to a great extent. They expected that he would inform them something about the inquiry Commission which they requested the authority to set up. But Ropianga refused to meet them.

Meanwhile, the National Army were dissatisfied with the administration of the new government and the interference of the church into the administrative affairs of the government. Moreover, they resented the new form of worship and the new doctrine imposed on the underground people by the government.

The Mizo National Army, therefore, submitted a petition signed by ten persons, demanding the resignation of the President and the Secretary.

To safeguard their position and to suppress the opposition President Tlangchhuaka and secretary Ropianga released Kawlvela and his group from the prison without trial and gave them offices in the government to enable them to spread a propaganda against Biakchhunga's group. Meanwhile President Tlangchhuaka and Ropianga issued an order to take out Biakchhunga and 19 other members of his group from the prison and to push them back to Mizoram at gun point without any trial. The National Army were indignant at the action of the government's releasing some of the detenues without trial to work against the opposition of the President while others were condemned without trial and sent to Mizoram at gun point surreptitiously. They, therefore, sent messengers to run after Biakchhunga and his group to fetch them back to the Capital. But the messengers could not overtake them since they had already gone too far.

The Army commanders resented what they called misgovernment and injustice, and wanted to arrest the key persons of the government. But the civil officers persuaded them not to use force before attempting to solve the problem amicably. So, the civil officers submitted a petition demanding, for the second time, for the resignation of President Tlangchhuaka and General Secretary Ropianga. Since the pressure was strong enough
the two key persons of the government resigned in December 1978. The office of the President was taken over by Rualchhina who gave a portfolio to Lt.Col.Kawlvela and reinstated the members of his group who were recently released from the jail without trial. The Army officers were infuriated because some of the prisoners were released without trial and reinstated while others were discharged from their service in the MNF government and sent home at the point of gun without any trial. Accordingly, the commanders of all battalions submitted a joint petition to the government demanding the dismissal of Lt.Col.Kawlvela and all the members of his group. In compliance with this petition they were all dismissed and sent home to Mizoram on January 15, 1979. All others who were imprisoned were released and sent home.

Immediately there was a formal election in the month of January 1979. Malsawma Colney was elected President. He wanted to renew relationship with China and establish friendship with the Government of Bangladesh. In the meantime, Laldenga did not remain idle in New Delhi. It was said that he was a tool in the hand of India. So, the Government of India supported Laldenga and strengthened his hand to recapture the power. They did not like to start peace talk all over again with a new President. They believed in the saying that 'a known devil is better than an unknown angel'.

Therefore, they supported Laldenga. Accordingly,
India plotted with Laldenga, Zoramthanga and Tawnluia against the new President of the MNF. Zoramthanga and Tawnluia were sent to the MNF Headquarters as if they were going to join the underground government led by the new President. When they arrived at the Headquarters they reported themselves to the authority saying that they came to join the underground government. They said that they cheated the Indian Intelligence in Delhi, Calcutta and Silchar so as to come to the Headquarters to join the Mizo government.

The commanders of the Mizo National Army suspected them and wanted to arrest them. But Malsawma Colney, the then President of the MNF did not allow them to arrest Zoramthanga and Tawnluia, for he said that he wanted to restore unity and integrity of the underground people by calling back those who were sent home to Mizoram just before he came to power. He would not allow any deed or word that could lead to disintegration or misunderstanding among them. He said that he wanted to win them by love and truth.

Malsawma Colney was confident that he would be able to bring about integration within the MNF organization under his leadership. He planned to reinstate all the dismissed soldiers to their former posts when they came back from Mizoram. He saved the two doubtful soldiers from arrest by showing mercy to his opponents.
persons from being arrested or killed by the commanders of MNA. But this act of kindness could not soften their hearts so as to change their evil design against him. One night, in the month of March, while Malsawma Colney was confined to bed with fever Zoramthanga and Tawnluia secretly gathered a small band of armed soldiers and took him by surprise, arrested and sent him out of the MNF defence perimeter very early on the following morning.60

Lalluauva, who took charge of the Chief of Army Staff and his senior officers sent some soldiers as messengers to bring back Malsawma Colney to resume his Presidential office and prerogative with the help of the Army. But he refused to go back to the underground Headquarters, according to his version, to avoid bloodshed and violence. Malsawma Colney stated that Zoramthanga sent some armed soldiers to kill him on his way to Mizoram. He stated further that the soldiers overtook him on the way but refused to carry out their mission because they respected him.

The role of women in the MNF movement: From time immemorial the Mizo women have been playing a very important role in the society as well as in the family. They work in the jhum side by side with men. In ancient time, there were famous women

60. An interview with Malsawma Colney.
poets such as Pi Hmuaki, Saikuti, Laltheri, Lianchhiari, et al. This indicates that they were no less talented than men. They were also as capable as men in many respects. At the beginning of Mizo politics, there were women among the leaders. A Meeting of Accredited Leaders of Lushai Political Parties was held at Aizawl on 14th August 1947. Among 50 leaders of this meeting there were three women namely, Zami, Kapthluaii and Biarvel. In the Advisory Council there were two women. Lalziki Saiho was the first woman member of Mizo District Council. Thanmawii was also a member of the District Council for sometime. In Mizoram U.T. there was a woman MLA, K.Thansiami on the P.C. ticket and in the full-fledged state also there was a woman MLA Lalhlimpuii on the MNF ticket.

Even before insurgency in Mizoram, women played a very important role in the MNF party as trainers of women volunteers. Many of them enrolled in volunteers as members of Signal corps. Many Mizo women went underground as nurses serving in the rear. During the major operation of the Army, village women supplied food and clothing to the Mizo Army secretly when men could not do that.