CHAPTER - VI

EPILOGUE

The Formation of the District Council

The conflict between the chiefs and the Mizo Union Party (MU) continued even after Independence in 1947 and after the formation of the Lushai Hills District Advisory Council in 1948. At the maiden session of the Council, convened on 16 August, 1948, no item in the agenda could be discussed because of the differences between the Superintendent himself and the members belonging to the MU Party over the question of chairmanship. The meeting had to be adjourned and did not meet again until 1950.

As a protest against what they called "misuse of powers" by the chiefs and the partial attitude of the Superintendent in the first session of the Advisory Council, the leaders of the MU party launched an agitation on 28 October, 1948 asking the people not to pay any of the customary dues to the chiefs. To create feelings and arouse sentiments against the chiefs songs were composed

\[1\] Chaltuakhuma; *Political History of Mizoram* (1920-1960), L. B. Press, Aizawl, p. 65.

and were widely sung throughout Mizoram. Such songs mainly conveyed the idea that people were tired of the existing system and that the MU Party was their only hope. It soon spread to the whole of Mizoram and the situation soon became tense. With the exception of a handful of supporters of the chiefs, almost all the people began to disobey the orders of the chiefs as well as the Government. The villagers turned restless and started attacking the chiefs' houses, and in some cases their houses were burnt. Some of the chiefs took up arms to defend themselves against physical attack by the agitated people and their property. In the meantime L. L. Peters, the Superintendent had arrested the leaders who had gone to Shillong to lodge complaint against him to the Government of Assam for his alleged mal-treatment of the people. On hearing the news of the arrest of their leaders, people from different parts gathered at Aizawl and organized a procession shouting the slogan, Petera haw rawh se, meaning "Let Peters go home". Following this, more leaders were apprehended and imprisoned. In order to arrest the agitation the Superintendent deputed experienced Government employees in places where movements were widespread. These officers abused their powers, harrassed and arrested party leaders resulting in the widening of the gap between the Government and the people.

^A. V. Pakunga; op. cit., p. 7.
The deteriorating situation soon compelled the Governor of Assam to send Nari Rustumji, one of his Advisers on Tribal Affairs to Mizoram to observe and assess the situation. The Adviser visited Mizoram in January, 1949 and assured them that the Sixth Schedule would soon be implemented. He observed that the policy adopted by the Superintendent towards the people was both repressive and oppressive and the Superintendent was quoted as saying: "bring out the troops, shoot to kill and lock up the Mizo Union leaders."\(^4\)

In the midst of such political upheaval the Advisory Council was convened and had its last meeting on 11 February, 1950 under the chairmanship of S. Barkataki, the then Superintendent. Resolution concerning the future of the District Council that was soon due to be granted were passed. It also passed a resolution to form a Sub-Committee known as an Advisory Committee comprising of 3 chiefs and 6 Union leaders.\(^5\) The Advisory Committee was inaugurated by Bishnuram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, on 25 July, 1950. In his speech on the occasion he said that the District Council rules would be framed soon and election would be held.\(^6\) The Committee was the first of its kind in the North-East India.

\(^4\)Nari Rustumji; Enchanted Frontiers, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 95.
\(^5\)Chaltuakhuma; op. cit., p. 74.
\(^6\)Ibid., p. 75.
In the meantime, the Bordoloi Sub-Committee submitted its report on the basis of which the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India took shape. Under the Schedule, six Autonomous districts were created in Assam and each district was vested with a District Council consisting of not more than thirty members. Accordingly in 1952 a District Council consisting of twenty four members was also provided for Mizoram. In April of the same year the election of the members to the District Council was held. It was officially inaugurated by Bishnuram Medhi, the then Chief Minister of Assam on 25 April, 1952. The District Council was vested with wide range of powers including the authority to make laws on various subjects for the whole district.

Abolition of Chieftainship

The first session of the Mizo District Council was convened on 23 June 1952 and the session continued till 10 July, 1952. Armed by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which had empowered them to pass law, the majority of the members entertained a revengeful attitude towards the chiefs and expressed their views in favour of

7The Constitution of India (Sixth Schedule) Paragraph 1 (1).  
8Ibid., Paragraph 2
9Ibid., Paragraph 3.
the abolition of chieftainship in Mizoram. The Council, however, had sought the prior permission of the Governor of Assam before introducing the proposed bill. After discussing its feasibility, the members were in one accord in drafting an Act abolishing the future existence of the chiefs. Accordingly, its first piece of legislation called the Lushai Hills (Chiefship Abolition) Act, 1952, was passed by the District Council with effect from 1 January, 1953. The Act was valid only within the jurisdiction of the District Council.\(^\text{10}\)

According to this Act, all the existing chiefs as on 25 April, 1952 within the District Council, were to be abolished and all their powers and their rights to receive customary gifts were automatically abrogated.\(^\text{11}\) The chiefs, however, were allowed to function as rightful chiefs until another body was formed as substitute. They were allowed to continue to rule during their stipulated time only in line with the instructions which were given by the District Council from time to time.\(^\text{12}\)

The chiefs were now reduced to mere figure heads in the Mizo society. Though they retained their title, their status was much diminished. They were now no longer looked upon as absolute rulers by the people. With the enactment

\(^\text{10}\) The Lushai Hills (Chiefship Abolition) Act 1952, Chapter I, Section 3.

\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., Chapter II, Section 5.

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid.
of the Act, the people, after their struggle to throw off the yoke of the chieftains for 10 long years, were finally freed from bondage to follow their independent lives.

The Act also provided for compensation called *zawngnadawmnah* to be received by the chiefs. A settlement was made for the chiefs to receive a part of the paddy from the people as compensatory gifts. The amount or quantity each chief was entitled would depend on the basis of the number of houses over which he ruled. In other words, the amount would vary from chief to chief, some receiving more than the others. Therefore, the chief whose village had less than a hundred houses was entitled to receive three tins (approximately 30 kgs) of paddy from each house. But the chief who had more than a hundred houses was allowed to get only two tins each from each house.\(^1\)

The chiefs were entitled to receive this compensation only during their life time or within the stipulated time of 10 years or whichever was earlier. The chiefs were to get this amount every year but the District Council and the Assam Government were empowered to delay the yearly payments, reserving the right to fix the amount and nature of payment to the chiefs.\(^1\) In short, the District Council enjoyed the right to exercise overall powers over the chiefs.

\(^{1}\)Ibid., Section 6 (a).

\(^{14}\)Ibid., Section 8.
The District Council in its memorandum of 5 April, 1953, justified the abolition of the chieftainship. The memorandum accused the chiefs of exercising their powers arbitrarily and blamed them as the cause of the formation of the Political Party in 1946. It also reiterated that the existence of the chieftainship was a grave violation of the Constitution of India. The last sentence says: "In view of the prevailing situation, the declining and the unpopular chieftainship is to be abolished as soon as possible."\(^{15}\)

Thus, in view of the prevailing situations, the District Council, the Deputy Commissioner and the Government of Assam came into one accord and proclaimed that it would be a wise action on their part to terminate the chieftainship in Mizoram with a handsome compensation.\(^{16}\) In pursuit of this decision the Government of Assam passed a bill which became an Act known as the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Act 1954 (the Assam Act XXI of 1954).

The Act mainly dealt with the compensations to be given to the chiefs and the settlements of their land. It further empowered the District Council to administer all

\(^{15}\)Zoram Hriattirna (District Information) Aijal, 15 April, 1953, p. 12.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., 31 August, 1953, p. 1.
the chiefs' land. Thus with the coming up of the village council in 1954, the chief had to relinquish their chieftainship and their actual abolition came into effect on 1 April, 1955. With this, as many as 259 chiefs and upas (elders) were abolished and in the Pawi-Lakher area 50 chiefs were abolished with effect from 15 April, 1956. The elders who were the chiefs' advisers too demanded a sort of compensation for their former positions, and the District Council granted their demand. The elders residing at Aizawl and Lunglei towns were given a stall-sites and garden-sites, and those residing in villages were honoured with lifetime exemption from voluntary works, lifetime exemption from taxes other than house tax and the selection of the best choice of a jhuming site. With this, the oldest institution in the Mizo society came to an end.

The Formation of the Village Council

With the formation of the District Council the whole administrative set up was changed enabling the people to participate in the formation of the Government through adult franchise. Now with the extinction of the chieftainship, Village Councils, elected through adult franchise

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17 The Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Act, 1954, Section 6 (1) (2).
18 Chaltuahkhuma; op. cit., p. 89.
were to be formed. The proposed new system was discussed at length in the District Council sessions. The first fruit was the enactment of the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act 1953 (The Lushai Hills Act. No. V of 1953). The Governor of Assam gave assent to the Act on 29 November, 1953 and the same was published in the Assam Gazette, dated 9 December, 1953.

The Act empowered the District Council to form a Village Council in every village within the jurisdictions of the Mizo District Council as on 26 January, 1952. It also provided that the number of members in a Village Council would vary from village to village depending upon the number of houses. Villages exceeding 600 houses would have a maximum member of 10. A President and Vice-President would be chosen from among the members. The tenure of the Village Council would be for 3 years but the District Council had the power to dissolve or shorten its life for a period of not exceeding 6 months. After every 3 years there would be an election to be presided over by the Returning Officer and other officers appointed by the Executive Committee of the District Council.

20 Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 Chapter II, Section 3 (2).
21 Ibid., Section 5.
22 Lushai Hills District (Election to Village Council) Rules, 1953, Chapter V, Section 27.
The Village Council was to regulate, among other things, hnatlang (community work) and was responsible for the collection of Zoram buhchhun also known as fathang. Each Village Council was to have one tlangau (crier) whose function was to inform the public of the decisions taken by the Village Council meetings and other Government notices. The Council was empowered to administer justice in the village. It had the power to try suits and cases of people residing within its own jurisdiction in accordance with tribal laws and customs. The court was, however, not competent to try cases or offences where imprisonment was involved under Indian Penal Code. Though the court had no power to pass any sentence of imprisonment it could impose a fine up to a maximum limit of Rs. 50. It transferred a case to a competent court if the village court found the offence or the case not within its own jurisdiction. Thus, after finalising the procedures, the District Council organized elections to the Village Councils in stages starting from the date 21 April, 1954. After elections, the elected members were thus directed to assume their respective offices on 16 August, 1954. The Village Council is now the only body in which the village-level administration is entrusted.

23 The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953, Chapter II, Sections 8 (1) (2), 9(1)(2) and 10.
24 The Lushai Hills (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953, Section 14 (a) (b).
25 Ibid., Section 15 (1).
ThePoliticalDevelopmentAfter1954

The replacement of the chieftainship by the Village Council was not the end of the political aspirations of the MU Party; by it only its short term objective was fulfilled. Its long term goal was the achievement of a politically higher status for the Mizo. The party now cultivated cordial relations with the Government of Assam. Meanwhile the United Mizo Freedom Organization, formed on 5 July, 1947 with secessionist ideas, but received unstinted support from the people, changed its strategy to form a "Hill State" and for this purpose it emerged in 1955 with the Eastern Indian Tribal Union (EITU), a political party founded in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The EITU party demanded a separate "Hill State" for all hill people in Assam. But the movement became unpopular when Mautam (famine) broke out in Mizoram the same year. At the same time some people with vested interests and some of the MU Party dissidents formed Tam do pawl known as Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) in 1959 with a view to seeking some means to help the famine stricken people the MNFF was converted into a political party in 1960.

The good relations maintained between the MU Party and the Government of Assam could not remain long primarily due to the fact that the former was not satisfied with relief works done by the latter. The State Official Language
issue - Assamese as State Official Language - was also another important issue that created differences between them. In view of these new developments the MU Party soon lost interest in Assam and turned its attention to the other hill areas joining hands with other parties representing the hill areas. Accordingly the local hill parties joined together and formed the "All Party Hill Leaders Conference" (APHLC) in 1960. The main objective of the party was the creation of a "Hill State" comprising of the hill areas of Assam, Manipur and Tripura within the Indian Union. But the political activities of the MNFF leadership were not palatable to the MU leaders and forced them to leave the APHLC.

In the meantime, the MNFF transformed itself into the Mizo National Front (MNF) on 28 October, 1961, with Laldenga as its first chairman, then President. The MNF aimed at achieving "Sovereign Independence of Mizoram" for the MIZOS under the name "Greater Mizoram" comprising all the Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur, Tripura, Assam in India and Burma. They also submitted a memorandum to the Government of India seeking to represent the case of the Mizos for freedom and Independence. The party soon

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27 Memorandum submitted by the MNF General Headquarters, Aizawl on 30 October, 1965.
covered whole of Mizoram and within two years it became formidable. This brought estranged relation between the MNF and the MU Parties. The MU Party threatened to take "direct action" which would involve bloodshed in achieving its demand for "Mizoram State".

An attempt to bring the two parties together was made when a Political Conference was held at Churachandpur in Manipur in January, 1965. The Conference thus abated the tense situation. The Mizo Union also postponed its proposed "direct action". The Churachandpur Conference resolved for the creation of the "Greater Mizoram State" comprising all Mizo-inhabited areas.

The proposed "direct action" of the Mizo Union Party attracted the attention of the Government of India. Accordingly the Government sent the Pataskar Commission to Mizoram in 1966 to study and examine the demand of the MU Party. But the MU leaders were unhappy with the Commission for its indifferent attitude towards them. They then boycotted the Commission. The Commission was, however, met by the MNF and they submitted a memorandum. But the visit was perturbed by the outbreak of the disturbance on 28 February, 1966. This was followed by the immediate declaration of Mizoram as a "disturbed area" under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955 and the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Power Act 1958.
During the period that followed, the sufferings of the people knew no bounds. Thousands of people were imprisoned in different parts of India and hundreds of people lost their lives as a result of fighting between the Indian Army and the MNF. The period 1966 to 1970 may be called as a "dark period" of the Mizos. "Reign of Terror" reigned upon the people. The activities of all political parties in Mizoram subsided. The Congress party, which was founded in 1961, came out with a slogan, "peace and tranquility" but with no result.

But political activities received a new impetus when Mizo Hills District was upgraded to the status of Union Territory under the name "Mizoram" on 21 January, 1972 with a Legislative Assembly of 33 members out of which 30 were elected members. The District Council was dissolved and election for the new Assembly was held on 12 April, 1972. In this election the MU Party won 21 seats out of the 25 it contested for. The first Ministry was formed on 13 May, 1972 by the MU Party with CH. Chhunga as its first Chief Minister.

Two years after its formation the Ministry found it difficult to cope with the Union Government at the Centre. The result was that the two parties - the MU and the Congress merged into one party under the name "Congress" in 1974. The merger had profound effect upon the people. Most of
the members of the MU Party had no interest in any political parties other than regional ones. The situation was exploited by Thenphunga Sailo, a retired Brigadier from the Indian Army. He started with a non-political body called "Human Rights Committee" in 1974. Due to the pressures from the people, the Committee was converted into a political party under the name "People's Conference" (PC) the next year. The people supported him and in the Assembly election held for the second Assembly in 1978, his party captured 24 seats out of 28 it contested for. He became Chief Minister in the second Assembly on 2 June, 1978. His ministry lasted only 6 months, and he was deserted by some of his party men. As a result, Mizoram was declared under President's Rule. Consequently when an election was held for the next period, this time the PC Party captured 18 seats out of 30 seats. Brig. Thenphunga Sailo became Chief Minister for the second time and held the post till the end of the Assembly term in 1984. During his term of office, Mizoram attained remarkable achievements in different spheres, especially in the realm of power and food production. He aimed under what he called "Six basic needs" for self-sufficiency in food, power, drinking water supply, communications, transport and rural development.
The Abolitions of Personal Residence Surcharge, Cooly, Sachhiah, Chikhurchhiah, Khuaichhiah, Thirdenzchhiah, and Fathang

In 1952, the District Council passed a resolution abolishing the discriminatory regulation known as the Personal Residence Surcharge, a system introduced by the British. According to this system the Government restricted immigrations of the local inhabitants to Aizawl and Lungiei towns and every male adult over 18 years who had been residing in these towns had to pay Rs. 3 annually. Its main objective was to control and discourage settlements in the two towns. However, the restrictions did not include permanent Government and mission employees. The District Council thus abolished the surcharge in 1952, with the result that the people could move into towns freely.

The abolition of cooly (kuli) was another remarkable event in the history of the Mizos. The District Council soon abolished it by a resolution passed on 13 January, 1953.

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28 A. G. McCall; District Cover, op. cit., p. 76.
29 Zoram Hriattirna, 15 November, 1952, p. 3.
It has already been stated that a Mizo common man was obliged to pay a number of dues such as *sachhiah* paid to a chief (the left fore leg of an animal killed), *chikhur chhiah* (salt tax), *khui chhiah* (bee tax) and *thirdeng chhiah* (paid to a village blacksmith of three ribs of an animal shot). By a resolution in 1952, the District Council abolished these dues. It says; "It is, therefore, resolved that the *sachhiah* and the *thirdeng chhiah* which imposed on us a feeling of bawi, be abolished as soon as possible." In accordance with this resolution, the District Council framed an Act known as the Lushai Hills District (Social Customs) Act, 1953, (The Lushai Hills Act No. 11 of 1953). The Act became effective on 1 June, 1953. This was widely notified to all chiefs and the general public.

By an Act known as the Lushai Hills District (Reduction of Fathang) Act, 1953 (the Lushai Hills Act No. III of 1953), the amount of *fathang*, also known as *lalbu chhun*, was reduced from six tins of paddy to three tins and from rupees two to rupee one per year, if paid in cash. The reduction was notified to all the chiefs in

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31 Ibid., 15 November, 1952, p. 3.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 15 April, 1953, p. 1.
Mizoram in the same year.\(^3^4\) The notification clearly mentioned that those who had enough paddy to last the whole year would pay the required amount but those who were in shortage of paddy even for half a year, were subject to pay one rupee only. But they had to be pardoned and excused provided they were completely without means. The above rate remained unaltered till the chieftainship was abolished in 1955. With the abolition of the chieftainship \textit{fathang} continued in the form of \textit{Zoram chhiah}.\(^3^5\) The people now pay rupees two per house. \textit{Fathang} thus continues though under a different name.

On the social sphere the political activities of the contending parties to some extent influenced the social life of the people. But the 1966 disturbance had great effect on the Mizo social life. Chaos and confusion prevailed in the society. In order to purge and save the society from further deteriorations, various organizations are taking measures to deal with them. Of these, mention may be made of two bodies - the Presbyterian church and the YMA. The Presbyterian Church is the biggest Church in Mizoram and therefore, its efforts in any direction can transform the shape of Mizoram. The YMA is the biggest

\(^3^4\) \textit{Ibid.}, 15 May, 1953, p. 1.

\(^3^5\) \textit{Ibid.}, 30 November, 1954.
social organization in Mizoram. Hence the influences of these two organizations are felt in the whole of Mizoram except in the Chhimtuipui District where the large majority of people are not covered by these organizations. As such, whatever guideline these bodies have issued are accepted as a general principle for the whole of Mizoram.

The Church is also employing its efforts in bringing about reforms in the society. Imposition of night curfew following the 1966 disturbance, created considerable inconveniences to all activities at night. The Mizo custom of the bride's first preliminary two-night stay at the groom's house, before full initiation into her husband's family was shortened to only one night by the Church. Thus the instruction has been followed almost throughout Mizoram. The Church is expected to play more effective roles in reforming the decayed Mizo society.

The YMA in its General Conference held at Sercanip in 1980 resolved that on the occasion of death, a black flag should be flown, and in case of an occasion where marriage takes place, a white flag should be flown. This has an impact on the social life of the people and it has become a social practice over the whole of Mizoram.

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36 66th Synod Executive Committee Resolution No. VIII (B) 1980, p. 4.

37 YMA General Conference 1980, Resolution No. 8.
In fact, the YMA is very instrumental in bringing about reforms in the society as a whole, yet in this regard its "branches" are more instrumental and more effective in their respective localities. As a matter of fact, the social administration in a village or locality is completely in the hands of the branch YMA.

Besides these organizations mentioned above, other organizations like the Mizo Hmeichhe Tangrual Pawl, Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkham Pawl, Village Defence Party, etc. are also making valuable contributions towards reforming the society. These organizations are taking effective measures towards social reforms within their own areas of operation. Recently, another body called the "Social Reform Society" has been formed and its main objective, among other things, is to promote a healthy society in Mizoram.^

Tremendous progress was also made in the field of Education. Till the year 1948, there were 259 Primary Schools, 22 Middle English Schools and 2 High Schools in Mizoram. After Independence the rate of growth in education has been faster with more systematic systems. There were rapid increase in the number of educational institutions. The number of schools under the District Council was high. There were 390 Primary Schools, 190 Middle Schools and 30 High Schools. More spectacular progress in terms of numbers

\[^{38}\text{Memorandum of Association of the Social Reforms Society, 1982, p. 1.}\]
was made after Mizoram achieved Union Territory in 1972. In 1981-82 there were 700 Primary Schools, 300 Middle
Schools, 130 High Schools and 10 Degree Colleges. Till 1984, there are 822 Primary Schools with 90263 pupils,
There are 380 Middle Schools with 27582 students. There are as many as 144 High Schools with 15530 students. There are 12 Colleges recognised by the Government with 4602 students. The Government is also giving more attention to Adult Education. Its programmes are carried out through YMA branches and other bodies and they are found very effective in introducing changes in the society.

With the wide use of radio sets the people's outlook have widened. When the Radio Station was set up at Aizawli in 1966, the people were brought closer to the rest of the country infusing to the already active and open mind of the people, a spirit of kinship and oneness with the rest of India, which is a sure basis for a deeper bond for national integration. And with the coming of TV sets and the transmitting centre, changes are more rapid in the society and the people are no longer isolated from the rest of the world.