CHAPTER 2
Chapter-II

The Rise and fall of Chieftainship and Social Movements

Every society is guided and shaped by the ideas and actions of its leadership. So did the Mizo society. But traditionally Mizos were guided by their chiefs. With the change in administration under the British, there emerged a new Mizo leadership in the form of a middle class. In this chapter we discuss the emergence of this new leadership in Mizo hills.

In the absence of written records and other materials, it is difficult to give a complete picture of the leadership structure of Mizo tribe immediately after and prior to their migration to the present habitat. However, through verbal sources and collateral evidence from the beginning of the nineteenth century and some written records in the neighboring territories and later on notes and writings of the British administrators and the like, an outline can be attempted. When the Mizo society was known to the outside world, it had probably passed through the "Primitive-Communal" stage, "A primitive communal society is marked by a primitive gathering, fishing and hunting economy, in which success is possible only if all co-operate and in which the results are so meagre that they must be shared equally to avoid death by starvation by some, which would endanger the survival of all by making the entire group too small and weak to function and defend itself. In that state in which these communal groups remain but chieftains, ruling class, or priest kings emerge."

In view of pressure from other neighboring tribes and need for shifting cultivation, migration was almost an order of the day. This coupled with the need for security led to the emergence of a leadership structure and a tribal elite in the shape of chieftainship. It is said that when the Mizo came to the present habitat forsaking their chief, they had no chief. But after their settlement at Selesih, they had to take a new chief. This was imperative in view of the need to perform military and other directing functions for the group in their efforts for survival.

Origin of clans in Mizo tribe:

The real founder of the chief’s clan is "Zahmuaka" \(^{(2)}\). The first Mizo settlers at Seipuikhur belonged to the Chhakchhuak clan. In course of a fight with the Paites living on the right banks of the Chindwin, one Chhuahlawma, son of a Paite fighter Ralna by name was captured by the Chhakchhuak. He was later adopted by the Chhakchhuak as their son. His first son was Zahmuaka. This Zahmuaka who was initially hesitant ultimately accepted the chieftainship after a lot of persuasion. Zahmuaka had six sons, viz., Zadenga, Pahana, Thangluaha, Thangura, Rivunga and Rokhuma. The names of the Chief’s clans owe their origin to them and they are called Zadeng, Palian, Thangluah, Rivung, and Rokhum. The name of the Sailo clan is traceable to one of the sons of Thangura called Sailova. Sailova had a son Chhungnunga who ruled over 7,000 houses at a place called Selesih. It was his prowess and ability which paved the way for the supremacy of the Sailos. Internecine quarrels and fratricidal war among different kinsmen were quite common. The Paliens and the Zadengs had to give way because of this.

\(^{(2)}\) Ibid.
The Zadengs took the help of the Pilians to defeat the Hualngos of Burma. This success made them forget the role of the Pilians. In a bid to eliminate the Pilians, the Zadengs aligned themselves with the Sailo chief Haopuituala, and in further collaboration with the Chakmas of the Chittagong Hills defeated the Pilians at the Pukzing Hill in 1830. Then they consolidated their position at a concentration of 4,000 houses near the Darlawng Peak. They also established cordial relation with the King of Manipur, and so they were sure of his help, if and when attacked. Again a fratricidal fight took place when Mangpura Sailo attacked the Zadengs. No help was rushed from Manipur as expected. The Zadengs were completely vanquished and the Sailos now without any rival from the other kinsmen established their supremacy and became powerful chiefs at the time of the advent of the British.

Among the Mizos falling within our study, the clans can be divided into two categories: dominant or chief’s clans and the commoners or non-dominant clans which did not have any significant place in the political structure in the pre-British period. The chief’s clans are Zadeng, Palian, Thangluah, Rivung, Rokhymand Sailo. The non-dominant clans include Pachuau, Chhangte, Chawngte, Hauhnar, Chuaungo, Chaauhang, Hrahsel, Tochhawng, Vanchhawng an Chhakchhuak. Despite the existence of the chief’s clans and the chieftainship, the Lushai society lacked centralized political structure. The villages did not form the smallest unit in the pyramid form of the social structure. In fact, the concept of the pyramidal structure of the society was alien to the tribe under discussion. Independent village chiefs did not combine themselves into what is known as "Tertiary" sections and then further up into "Secondary" and "primary" sections.
The structure of Chieftainship in the Mizo tribe:

McCalll 949 :245) speaks of "about sixty chiefs" when the British Government took over the Lushai Hills. Some old records of the British administration (1878-1889 : 18-21) indicate the name of the chiefs, number of houses, the area of the respective villages, number of fighting men and guns.

The chiefs usually called "Lal" (i.e., Lord) were the acknowledged leaders in their respective jurisdiction. According to McCall (1949 :247) "if there is any capacity for rule or leadership in Lushai, it undoubtedly lies in the chiefly classes". From the above account it appears that the Chief was initially selected by the people at large. Later on the chieftainship became hereditary. The youngest son succeeded the father-chief in regard to the chieftainship as well as the property. Other elder sons were sometimes made subordinate chiefs in the newly set-up villages ('Khawper' with a few of the house-holds from the 'Khawpui', father-chiefs village transferred) on attainment of maturity. Though they were not required to pay any tribute to their father-chief, they had the moral responsibility to help the father-chief in his distress. On the death of the father-chief they became full-fledged chiefs. Sometimes when fathers lived long, it was usual that the sons disowned even this subordination. [3]

During the British period an important change took place in the succession process. Sir Robert Reid, the then Governor of Assam took steps for recognition of the eldest son as heir to the chieftainship, subject to their physical and mental normalcy. Following this changed method of succession, other sons became commoners.

(3) Ibid, Pp.245
During the period preceding the establishment of the British control, chieftianship was with very rare exception considered to be the prerogative of the Sailos. However, in view of better village administration through the machinery of the chiefs, the British started drawing chiefs from clans other than Sailo and allocating them vacant land for formation of new village units. These chiefs were called 'Hnam Chawm' (Commoner) chiefs. The Sailo chief also established some Hualngo and Pawi chiefs to take charge of their sub-villages. These chiefs were recognized by the British as independent chiefs. Apart from them there were some Pawi Lalcher and Fanai chiefs in the Southern part of the territory and they remained outside the influence of the Sailos.

The Lushai chiefs, leadership was confined to their respective village units. In other words, it was one-village authority. There was no central authority regulating relations among the constituent units. The state organization and the pyramidal authority and leadership structure were conspicuous by their absence. There was no classification of the chiefs. All the chiefs were independent in their areas of operation. The political authority naturally was widely distributed and diffused among a large number of village chiefs. To that extent the society can be termed as 'acephalous' society. Horton outlines the salient features of the acephalous society as, "In societies of this kind political authority is widely diffused; such authority positions as exist touch only a limited area of the lives of those subject to them". [4]

**Feuds among the Mizo Chiefs:**

In the Mizo society, the apex cohesive authority was lacking despite the existence of numerous chiefs who were dominant but independent of themselves. This absence of vertical leadership pattern has led to the emergence of a phenomenon which has been termed 'self help' by John Middleton and David Tait (1958).[5] This 'self help' relates to a kind of over-expression of hostility between groups normally beyond the range of domestic kinship. The intermittent feuds among numerous village units under 'Lais' bring into sharp focus the prevalent power structure and relations in the Mizo society. In the absence of a super-ordinate authority vested with machinery for enforcement of sanctions and decisions, feuds between the 'Eastern and Western' clans were a recurrent feature. In 1877, several encounters took place over the ownership of some 'Jhum' fields. In the first instance, the chiefs of Khalkam and Poiboi were the contending parties; in the second it was between Lalbura and Sukpilal. Later Poiboi and Sukpilal were hostile to each other.

From 1885 onwards everything was reported quiet, enmity among hostile parties continued to remain. The later records maintained by the British administration throw enough light on the nature and causes of the feuds among different groups.

May be, it was the right of ownership to Jhum lands, or availability of Jhum land and problems thereof, or the need for protection from other tribes and clans, or the theft of salt, necessitated a strong and powerful institutionalized system of control to develop, to provide leadership to the people in the respective areas.

(5) Ibid.
The fact that the independent feuding chiefs could carry out their hostilities, high-lights the absence of a centralized political authority and for that matter, brings into focus the acephalous nature of the power structure existing before the advent of the British.

**The structure of the Mizo society during the Chieftainship:**

At comparatively low levels of complexity, and institutionalized social system, the elite positions are generally "undifferentiated" and "multifunctional" [6]. The proposition remains quite valid in the traditional Mizo situation. There was no separation of roles and "functions carried out by the same set of the tribal 'elite'. Differentiation leads to the emergence of a hierarchy of elites. In the traditional Mizo society there was only one level 'elite': it is the chief and his council of Elders known as 'upas'.

A chief is repository of all power, and the fountain - head of justice. He is also the "father of the people" looking after their welfare. His role is multifunctional despite the institution of the chief's non-chiefly assistants. They are known as 'upas' chosen from those who are *thangchhuahpa*, (recipient of a title for killing a certain number of animals in the chase or giving a public feast) ones who had done *Khuangchawi* (a particular public feast given by well-to-do Mizos). They constitute a kind of council which discusses all matters concerning the village and settled disputes among the people in the village. The chief presided over the meeting of the council which was generally held in Chief’s house. In theory, chief enjoyed absolute power. The chief who was strong, controlled practically everything, while the chief who was weak, acted under the advice of the *Upas*.

(6) Ibid.
The entire land of the village was held by the chief. He could requisite the services of the villagers to build his house free of cost. He was also entitled to revenue like *Fathang* (a tribute in the form of de-husked rice), *Sachhiah* (a share of every animal killed or trapped by the villagers) and *Chichhiah* (a due on salt) from the villagers under his jurisdiction. He was entitled to a share of the best honey collected by the people called *Khuaichiah*. He also received fines after deciding a case in the shape of a *Mithun* (wild Bison). The chiefs could expel anybody from the village or his territory. Moreover he was entitled to the land in the best location. The chief was also the master of *Sals*, persons captured during raids. All power was theoretically in the hands of the chief, but in practice the chief had to be guided by custom. The nomadic instinct was so strong in the people that, if the chief was unduly harsh, they would migrate to other villages, may be, villages of rival chiefs. This was called *Pern*. This meant loss of man-power and resources. This acted as a check on the arbitrary and autocratic actions of the chief. According to McCall:

"The chief and his *Upas* had powers limited only by the temper of the people they ruled. Until they overstepped the mark the people had no other course open than to submit".  

Even in judicial matters the chief had to be guided by customs. To cite an instance, when the son or daughter of a chief was involved in a dispute pending with the council for arbitration, the chief would voluntarily withdraw and allow the *Upas* to try the case according to their best judgement.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid.
**Administrative setup during the Chieftainship:**

For proper administration of the village the chief appointed several functionaries: *Ramhual* and *tlangau; Ramhuals* are expert Jhum cultivators who tender advice to the chief regarding allotment of Jhum plots. They are required to pay heavier *fathang* than ordinary villagers to the chief. The *tlangau* is the village crier whose duty is to proclaim the chief’s orders. Apart from them there were *Zalens*, men of possession, *thirdeng* (black smith), *Khawchhiar* (the village writer), *Sadawt* (the chief’s private priest), *tlahpawi* (*Sadawf’s* assistant) and, *Puithiam* (village priest). [9] These functionaries, though appointed by the chief were paid by the villagers directly in kind. This stresses their obligation to the public.

Despite certain checks inherent in the system, the chief was the emblem of authority and source of leadership to the people within his jurisdiction. In addition to general supervision and administration, he was responsible for maintenance of village pattas, water points and for fostering the spirit of *tlawmngaihna* (an almost untranslatable term for a compelling moral force- the core of the Mizo’s code of ethics. It enjoins everybody to be kind, hospitable and helpful to others. In peace or war, or in dealing with individuals or groups this spirit of ‘*tlawmngaihna*’ guides the Mizos’ thought and action.) . The elders and other functionaries appointed by him assisted him in proper discharge of his roles. The chief and his council are to be seen as one unit. The 'elite, situation and roles thus remain undifferentiated at the simple and 'primitive' level of the Mizo society.

It is, therefore, also a cause of 'multifunctional' elite to the extent that the same role-holders i.e. the chief and his council initiate and control action in major spheres of activities in the society.

**Events that shaped the present day Mizo life and their consequences:**

The important events which considerably shaped the present day Mizo life and institutions are: [10]

(a) Consolidation of the British administration.

(b) Christianization.

(c) Introduction of the constitution of India and the provision of the Sixth Schedule therein governing the administration of the then Lushai Hills along with other scheduled areas.

(d) The Mizo insurgency in 1966 and the introduction of village grouping. The far reaching changes that these influences brought about led to the emergence of a new class structure — creation of a "privileged class" and the consequent decline of the old power structure.

The above mentioned events except the Mizo insurgency, are discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs. The Mizo insurgency is discussed in detail in Chaper-V of this thesis.

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Consolidation of the British administration:

The first phase of the Anglo-Mizo relations was marked by hostility, and sporadic incidents of raids of varying intensity were quite common. Probably it all started with tea plantation on the foot hills of the Lushai Hills. In fact, after the 1872-73 operations the British authorities remained quiet for some time, but the raids by the Mizos continued unabated. A serious attack involving death of Lieutenant J.F. Stewart of the 1st Leinster Regiment along with three others on 3rd February 1888 evoked deep resentment and anger. Ultimately, the British Government decided to launch another expedition to mete out due punishment to the offending chiefs of the Lushai Hills. The operation was carried out under the command of Colonel F.V.G. Tregar of the 9th Bengal Infantry in January 1889.

The British Government decided on 11th September 1889 to start another expedition on a bigger-scale. That expedition is known as the Chin-Lushai Expedition 1889-90. Three columns took part in the expedition and Bengal, Burma and Assam were involved. Another force composed of the men from the Surma Valley Battalion of Military Police under W.W. Daly advanced. Mr. Daly came to the Aizawl range, and built a stockade on a site which subsequently became the Headquarters of the Lushai Hills District. The object of these expeditions was to secure release of the captives to set up posts and establish communication, and to punish the chiefs and others responsible for raids.
Administrative re-organization and the formation of Lushai Hills district:

The Chin-Lushai expedition which was completed in March 1890 resulted in administrative re-organization of the area resulting in two districts, viz the North Lushai Hills and South Lushai Hills with Headquarters at Aizawl and Lunglei respectively. The North Lushai Hills formed part of the chief commissionership of Assam, while the South Lushai Hills was tagged with Bengal.

Later, on 1st April 1898, these two districts were amalgamated and a new district called the Lushai Hills District under the Chief Commissioner of Assam was formed under a proclamation by the Government of India No.591-EB (Assam Secretariat, Foreign A.May, 1898 No. 13-46). By another proclamation of 1st April, 1898 the new district was placed under the charge of Major John Shakespear who was designated "Superintendent of Lushai Hills".

Impact of the British administration on the institution of Chieftainship:

The extension and gradual consolidation of the British administration influenced the power relation, the leadership structure and the institution of chieftainship to a great extent. The administration followed the policy of "the internal control of the villagers by their own leaders, the chiefs" (Reid: 1942). The principle was to "interfere as little as possible between the chiefs and their people" and "to impress upon the chiefs their responsibilities for the maintenance of order in their villages". [11] Major John Shakespeare, the first Superintendent noted in a note recorded on 22.3.1905:

"it is better to uphold the Government of the Chiefs and to govern through them, rather than to try to govern without them".

(11) Ibid.
The reduced status and rights of the Chiefs:

Though the British required the institution of the chiefs and administered the district through them, only certain restrictions and curtailment of the traditional rights of the chief's was ordered. As a result, the chief's power and wealth started diminishing with the coming of the British. In the words of N.E.Parry:

'On the other hand the British as we have stated earlier, to protect their interest in governing the area with minimum expenses favored the chiefs in contrast to the common people. This however could not check the growth of an enlightened section of the Mizos (because of education and Missionary activities) viz., traders, nurses, teachers, public men.'

Despite the policy of least interference, steps were taken to curtail the power and freedom of the chiefs. The most important of these is what is known as 'Land Settlement. The land was vested in the British Government who then distributed land to the chiefs, though generally in accordance with the existing possession pattern. In the process land was allotted even to persons called Hnamchawn chiefs, who do not belong to the ruling clan but are appointed chiefs by the British administration.

McCall points out abolition of several rights and prerogatives of the chiefs, which lowered their status to a considerable extent which are mentioned below.

1. Right to order capital punishment.[13]

2. Right to seize food stores and property of villagers, who wished to transfer their allegiance.

3. Proprietary rights over land now arbitrarily reserved by the Government, in the interests of the public living in neighboring areas in British India.

4. Right to tax traders doing business within the chief’s jurisdiction.

5. Right to freedom of action in relation to making their sons chiefs under their own jurisdiction. (The practice of appointing the youngest son next heir was given up in favor of the eldest son.)

6. Right to help those Bawis (dependents) who were, by custom, not open to redemption.

7. Right to freedom of action in relation to other kinds of Bawis, who used to constitute the means whereby the chiefs could cultivate and acquire the ability to sustain their villages in peace and war.

8. Right to attach the property of their villages when they wished or deemed fit, with or without fault on the part of the villagers.

This abridgement of the traditional rights of the chiefs resulted in erosion of their authority in relation to the new administration as well as people at large. A new power structure was in the process of coming up.

There are divergent opinions on this changing power structure in relation to the chieftainship under the British administration. Pakem (1981) is of the view that autocratic power of the chiefs over their people increased considerably under protection of what McCall described as 'Pax Britannica'. [14] In the absence of people's retaliation, the chiefs backed by the Governmental authorities became a vehicle of oppression. In this connection he referred to the system of free 'Coolie labor' for the British officials on tour. The chiefs used to pick up people for this. Even in judicial matters, he adds, the authorities upheld the chiefs decisions making them sole authority for the people.

Though the British authorities governed through the indigenous system of the chieftainship, the abridgement of powers abetted by the emergence of a new class following large scale Christianisation, paved the way for diminution of the power and prestige of the chiefs. This aspect is discussed below in detail.

Christianisation:


(14) Ibid.

(15) Ibid.
Rev.D.E.Jones worked alone in almost all important villages for sometime. In 1899 two Mizos were converted to Christianity for the first time. Later other missionaries joined Mr.Jones. Rev.Savidge and Rev.Lorrain also came back under the sponsorship of London Baptist Missionary Society and concentrated their activities in the Southern part of Mizoram. Gradually two mission groups had a sort of division of area of work. The Northern part fell under the Presbyterian (Welsh Presbyterian) Mission activity with the unit headquarters in Aizawl. The Baptists confined themselves mostly to the Southern Area with their unit headquarters at Lunglei. The church became very popular and the evangelization process went on rapidly. The Presbyterian meeting in 1917 decided to observe the entire month of September every year as a Special Campaign month. The result was easily discernible. The number of Christians went up to 90 in 1905 from 15 in 1900, to 7168 in 1915 and 34,893 in 1925. Now more than 96% of the total population of the state of Mizoram, follow the Christian faith.

The impact of Christianity in the Mizo society:

The spread of Christianity gave rise to a significant phenomenon in the Mizo society - the emergence of the 'articulate Lushai'. It accelerated the process of the detribalization of the Mizos. Education was virtually the sole responsibility of the Church. The Government was content by providing small grants in aid. This factor coupled with the non-exposure of the people in such a remote corner to any other influence made education and Christianity virtually synonymous. Salaried jobs ensuring freedom from the difficulties of Jhum cultivation were accessible to those who had academic experience and for that matter Christian affiliation. Old customs were in the process of dismantling.
The power and prestige of the chiefs was on the wane. It is the Church and educational mission which started molding the mind of the people- their attitudes and ways of living. New education and Christian ideas - the importance of the individual, made a large segment of the people aspire for democratization and freedom from the chieftainship system.

Thus, in the Mizo villages hitherto characterized by the chiefs and their subjects, primarily Jhum cultivators a new element emerged - a new privileged educated class connected with the mission and Government, became powerful. This class is, to quote Major McCall:[16]

"imbued with the thrill of seeking independence of the chiefs and freedom from customary communal discipline, their motivation being based on their superior academic experience, often cemented by acceptable salaries. It is this oligarchy that can well be called articulate Lushai..."

From the above mentioned facts, it is to be noted that the the impact of Christianization on the Mizo society is that it created a literate and powerful middle class and also prepared the people to aspire for freedom from the oppressive organization of chieftainship. The successive war time changes, political upheavals and nationalistic fervours, nationally and internationally, activated these new middle class who though weak in terms of number, were on equal footing with the middle class people of the plains.

(16)Ibid.
Detribalisation and westernization:

The advent of the British rule had some-what altered the socio-economic structure of the Lushai Hills. The turbulent years of Anglo-tribal conflict soon gave way to a more peaceful life in Lushai hills. The British sought to de-tribalize the Lushai through the introduction of Christianity, western education, modern hygiene, medicine. However, during the process of detribalisation, the British followed a superficial policy of non-interference in their life and culture. In other words, it was felt by the British that the only way to 'tame' these 'savages' as they were referred to, was to bring changes in their mode of production. So trade marts were established at the foot-hills so that the tribal need not raid. Three such trade marts in the Lushai foot hills were at Tipai-Mukh, Lushai-hat and Jhalnacherra. [17]

In these marts the tribal people sold or bartered their rubber, ivory etc. for salt, iron, brass-utensils, tobacco and cattle. The shifting cultivators were taught to produce potato, cabbage etc. Links with the outside world were established through road communications.

Between 1871-72, the road between Sungoo valley and Dalekmai and between Demagiri and Lunglei was complete. The Silchar-Aizawl road was completed by 1872. The East Bengal Railway was extended upto Chittagong in 1896 connecting Chittagong with Calcutta. By 1898, Silchar was connected with Calcutta and soon a branch line was opened till Lalabazar at the foot hills of the Lushai district. The water-scarcity was taken care by establishing elevated water reservoir at Aizawl in 1900.

The British rendered immense service to the Lushais when the periodic famine devastated the Lushais in 1881-82. Western medicines and hygiene were introduced with education. Momentous changes in the life patterns of the tribes were taking place. But interestingly the British insisted that they retain the tribal dresses and hair-cuts and not dress and cut hair like the British or by-then-westernized Indians.

In the Mizo hills, the British emphasis was on structural detribalization while encouraging the retention of tribal way of superficiality. However, the production process of Mizos was being drastically changed. The food-gathering Mizos were introduced to commercial crop production like rubber and vegetable, cattle rearing, poultry, piggery and trading.

Impact of Detribalization of Mizos on their Ethnicity:

The process of detribalization of Mizos by the British resulted in the emergence of a middle class which became the natural leaders of the Lushai's. The extension of administration integrated all the sub-tribes by stopping their constant mobility as inter-tribal feuds. As a result, the disintegrated groups were gradually loosing their sub-ethnic identities to the extent that in the role of British period, the Census reports started classifying them as Lushai, Kuki, Pawi, Lalcher, Hmar, etc. Almost the entire population in and around the major administrative centre of Aizwal and Lunglei were as Lushai, their immediate neighbours on the South as Pawi, and inhabitants of the south-east corner of the district as Lalcher.

Strong groups of population on the northern side were called HMAR and the inhabitants of the Southern hills of Manipur were given the name of Kuki. Benefits of administration and church education went to the people of northern and central parts. Thus the Lushais emerged as the most advanced group followed by the HMAR. It was from these two sections that the early leadership of the Mizos emerged.

Under the initiative of the church and the administration, the Mizos already had the experience of organization when they had formed the Young Lushai Association in 1930. It was socio-religious organization dominated by church leaders and prominent citizens who collectively worked for the social welfare of the people. This was the first middle class attempt at actualizing modern concepts of Association. The main objective of the YLA were (1) to utilise the leisure constructively (2) Aim at the improvement of Mizoram and (3) advocate Christian way of living. The YLA soon realized the term "Lushai" included only the Zo tribe. Thus the term was replaced by "Mizo" to include all the sub-tribes. R.Vanlawma, the first matriculate of the Mizo's was its general secretary. The formation of Mizo Union was only a logical follow-up. The former was social while the later was full-fledgedly political. The removal of the Mizo union office bearers, on the ground that they lacked 'college education' shows the importance of modern education among the Mizos and the movement for the abolition of 'chieftainship' showed the emergence of a modern middle class in the Mizo hills and their westernized perspective. The integrationist and secessionist debates also shows the dilemma between the old chiefs and the new middle class. In effect, it was the reflection of a society in transition - a society making a wild leap: from tribal stage to a bourgeois society.
The Mizo dilemma and uprising against chieftainship:

The Mizos were generally complacent under the British rule. After a long period of violent life, hard struggle for existence, they had settled down to a peaceful life. The peaceful life of the Mizos was broken by the abrupt British decision to withdraw from India. They were not certain as to what was their political future after the British withdrawal. They first had to mobilise themselves under a single political organization. But the Mizos had other problems to confront - Chiefly Autocracy.

The Mizo tribals had evolved a strong patriarchal system where the Chiefs has supreme power over most of the society.\[19\] This development was the result of a long evolution of a political system, during which Sailo Chiefs emerged as the most prestigious among the Mizos.\[20\] It was these Sailo chiefs whose rule in course of time became autocratic and oppressive. Each chief ruled his own territory. The Sailo chief were so dominant that all the earlier British officers who came in contact with Mizos suggested the policy of reconciliation with the Chiefs.\[21\] They administered a district through the chiefs whom they conferred even greater power they enjoyed traditionally. British officers held conference with the chiefs council with 22 elected chiefs. The council was taken to be representative of the people. Thus, the Mizo society was divided into groups as minority of chiefs and majority of commoners. The commoners were not only victims of chiefly oppression, but they also had no means of approaching the Govt, without going through Mizo Chiefs.


(20) Surojit Sinha, "Tribal Politics and state system in Eastern and Northern India", Calcutta, 1904.

(21)Ibid.
Therefore, when the British announced their decision to withdraw from India, the Mizo had two major problems. One, whether to remain in India or withdraw from India after the British departure, and two, how to liberate themselves from chiefly oppressions. But the Indian National Congress's announcement that it would abolish all the middleman practices like, Zamindari system and chieftainship, connected the two issues solving the problem for the Mizos.

The role of the church education:

The impact of the British administration and church gave rise to a new leadership wedded to the democratic ideas and committed to fight the vested interests of the chiefs.

McCall lamented:

"In traditional Lushai there was no place for the politician. In modern Lushai the politician is needed but unavailable." [22]

But his apprehension was short lived. Politicians and the political party under the name of Mizo Union appeared on the scene. This new phenomenon brought to the surface the inner contradiction of the Mizo psyche, its unmistakable dichotomy. On one side there was the appeal to the traditions of the people, the question of ethnic identity which includes the continuance of chieftainship, while on the other the aspiration of the emerging class was insistent on democratisation of the polity and abolition of the privileges and autocracy of the chief. On one side advocacy for separate state or merger with Burma (objective of

the United Mizo Freedom organization founded by L.B.Thanga and Mizo Union dissidents) at the time of transfer of power consequent on India’s independence in 1947, and on the other integration with India.

In other words, it meant that if they remain in India, they could liberate themselves from the bondage of chieftainship, but if they withdraw from India, they would have to put up with the oppression. The choice of integration with India was forcefully put forward by Mr.H.K.Bawichhuaka, one time Secretary of Mizo union during evidence at the Bordoloi Sub-Committee. He told the Sub-Committee: [23]

"If the Lushai Hills choose to be independent, it means eternal severance with the other Mizo countries outside Lushai Hills. If it goes to Burma, the same is the case, so the best interest of those living in the Lushai Hills is to be connected with India."

The Mizo Union became very powerful. The Superintendent of the Lushai Hills who had even opined that the Mizos might join Burma before the Bordoloi Sub-Committee revised his opinion and said that the Mizo's future lay with India. [24]

However, Peters disfavored abolition of the administrative machinery where the chiefs played a significant role. Bordoloi Sub-Committee wanted to go slow and set up an interim local council pending establishment of the District Council.

(23) Bordoloi Sub-Committee Evidence Part I
(24) Comments of Mr.L.L.Peters, Superintendent at the meeting of the Mizo Union on 1.10.1947
Reorganization of the Mizo commoners and the formation of the Mizo Union:

The first task of the Mizo commoners was to organize themselves. The Mizo middle class tried to form an association by precluding the chief and formed the Mizo Commoners association. Subsequently, they dropped the word commoners. This started a process of mobilization. Most of the Mizos supported the Mizo Union because it was for the abolition of the chieftainships. A small minority of Chiefs however opposed the Mizo Union and formed the United Mizo Freedom Organization. Needless to say that the Mizo Union was in favor of remaining in India whereas United Mizo Freedom Organization wanted to have an independent sovereign status outside India. In the process that followed, the Mizo Union emerged victorious.

The non-cooperation movement by the Mizo Union:

The Mizo Hills remained with India only on prospect of having a chiefless society. But after Independence, the alteration of the government to this institution was slow to come, partition the problem of the refugees, integration of the princely state, secessionist demand from the Naga, and the threat of commoners uprising had kept the new government of India occupied. It had first to consolidate its new found Independence before it could concentrate on other local and regional micro issues. But for the Mizos this was life and death issue and on which they had mobilized the entire population behind the idea of Integration with India. The common Mizos were becoming increasingly restless, which the institution of chieftainship perpetuating the independence had little meaning. Pressurized by the people, the Mizo Union could no longer wait for the government of India. They, therefore, decided to launch a non-cooperation movement.
When Indian Independence was drawing near, a sense of uncertainty and apprehension filled the minds of the more enlightened leaders of the Lushai Hills. Therefore during the formation of the Mizo Union as the first political party in April, 1946, there was practically no organized agency through which the people of Lushai Hills could voice out their aspirations and grievances. In fact, the Mizo leaders became aware of the current political developments in the Indian sub-continent. Those who were educated in the colleges of plains during the Indian national movement had witnessed what was happening at the national level.

The British Administration of the Lushai Hills:

The British Administration in the lushai hills mainly aimed at securing the loyalty of the Mizo people at the cost of minimum expenditure so that they would no longer create problems in the neighbouring British territories. Besides, as far as possible, the British tried to keep the lushai Hills isolated from the plains. The political situation in the lushai hills district under the British administration was characterized by the dual autocracy of the District Superintendent and the local chiefs. It should be remembered here that the Mizos lived in isolation from culture, ruled by their local chiefs. Hence, the British administrators carefully saw to it that the internal rule of the villages by their respective chief, remained undisturbed.

Before 1947, the Governor of Assam administered Mizoram as a district through the District Superintendent of the area.
The great distance between the capital of Assam, Shillong and Aizwal with poor communication system enabled the District Superintendent to exercise his powers "both autocratically and aristocratically". [25] He exercised both civil and criminal jurisdictions. Moreover, the provisional Government did not wish to interfere with his administration since he was an agent on the spot. Thus, the real administration of the District was in the hands of the Superintendent who successfully managed to use the local chiefs as administrative instruments. The Mizo Chiefs who ruled over the villages were thus submissive to the Superintendent, as the later had the authority to punish, remove and replace the chiefs as situation demanded. On the other hand, so long as the Mizo chief carried out the orders of the Superintendent to his satisfaction, their protection was safe-guarded by the British.

Chiefsly oppression of the Mizo commoners:

With the coming of the British administrators, the common people of the Mizo society had to perform dual obligations with new additional burden of coolie while they had to pay taxes and build the Chief's houses etc. The common people were virtually at the hands of both the British Superintendent and their chiefs. Everything depended upon the sense of values of Superintendent. As a result, the Administration at Shillong did not understand the aspirations and the actual administrative conditions under which the Mizo people were living. Added to this the District Superintendent, an Englishman, never really understood the sentiments and feelings of the Mizos.

(25) V.Venkata Rao, "Century of Govt, and Politics in North East India (Mizoram), Delhi, 1991."
The local Chiefs, on their part, owed their office to the good-will of the British and hence their main obligations were directed to the British administration, not to the welfare of the subjects. As long as they could please their British over lords, the danger of their disposal from office was out of question. So they became irresponsible, autocratic and burdensome for their subjects who paid them all their necessities. In order to ensure the stability of their positions, the chiefs started a very bad practice of bribing the superintendent with live stocks. Sarep (smoked meat), eggs, rice etc, which they frequently demanded from their subjects. For the common man, the visit of the officials to his village meant for his live stocks or other. This was an irksome for the common people. Besides giving all the taxes such as fathang, (rice tax) and Sachhia (share of meat) etc, to the chief, a common man must not complain even if his fruits or vegetables in the garden were fallen by the Chiefs family members without permission whatsoever. Nobody dared to criticise the actions of the Chiefs openly.

As Jhuming was vital part of the Mizo culture, anything which concerned, Jhuming came to be the most sensitive issues. During the 1940's there were complaints to the Superintendent as to how Jhum lands were distributed by the Chiefs regarding the preference given to Ramhuals and Zalen. These Ramhuals and Zalen were selected by the chief from his favourites and they enjoyed the privilege of assisting the Chiefs in his day to day administration along with the Upas or Councillors. The commoners did not find the reason why these Ramhuals and Zalens who had no contribution to the public, should choose Jhum land before them. On the other hand, the Ramhuals and Zalen tried to please the chief by any possible means so as to retain their dignified positions. This was greatly
resented by the commoners and the abolition of this system became one of the first demands of the Mizo Union Party. The Mizo Union submitted a memorandum to L.L. Peters, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills in 1949 in this regard. However, the Superintendent replied to the memorandum fully safeguarding the authority of the Chiefs, as well as the positions and rights of Ramhuals and Zalens.\(^{[26]}\)

**Lack of support for commoners from the British administrators:**

The reply of the Superintendent to the memorandum submitted to him by the Mizo Union, strongly convinced the commoners that there was no room for them in British Administration. The two World Wars had a great effect on the social and political outlook of the Mizos. Those who served in the army during the Wars came home with a more wider knowledge of the outside world. They were regarded by their kinsmen as moneyed and well-to-dos. Moreover there were some Mizo Boys with education and political bending who were looked upon as learned and leaders. At this time, some Mizos at Aizwal ran business successfully. The flow of money and the experience of serving in the army, getting recognition in Government service, professions, trade and commerce and living outside the confines of the hills resulted in the emergence of a new class in the Mizo society who wanted recognition of their status and hence they came into conflict with the local chiefs. There were also some Mizo Unionists who were fully conscious of the British instrument of Mizo. The Mizo leaders accused the British of keeping the Mizos ignorant.

\(^{[26]}\) Notice No. 7320(a) G. of 28.8.1948 by L.L. Peters, Superintendent, Lushai Hills.
Thus, the more progressive sections of the Mizo society, were fully aware of the tendencies of the local chiefs. The resentment against the oppressions of the superintendent and the chiefs gained momentum among the commoners all over the District and found enthusiastic leadership in educated commoners which in turn, led the people to organize themselves into political party, the Mizo Union on 9th April, 1946.

**District Conference:**

During the time of political uncertainty of Mizos, Mr. A.R.H. McDonald, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills named District Conference in January, 1946. This was the first body in which the commoners were included in any kind of administrative body with 20 representatives of the chiefs. The conference would consist of 20 representatives of the chiefs. The conference received a great response when in January 1946 the first meeting of the conference under the Chairmanship of the Superintendent himself, passed the abolition of the power of the Chief to expel any villager from his village. The commoners felt that, with the Superintendent on their side, they would receive a sigh of relief from the oppressions of their chiefs. It was McDonald who gave permission to the first political party in the Mizo Union. [27]

**Hostile attitude of the Superintendent towards the Mizo Union:**

As the Mizo Union party was formed with the permission of the Superintendent, it was felt that he was on the side of the commoners. As such, the party attracted members from all walks of life, Government servants, teachers, etc.

This gave the hills, a rapid growth of the Mizo Union party. But seeing the developments and the rapid growth of Mizo Union party which put six District Conference in the back ground, the Superintendent presented a hostile attitude towards the party.

He suspected that they had some connections with the Indian National Congress. On the other hand, the Mizo Union leaders suspected that the Superintendent had some specific intention to lead them under the crown colony scheme. Added to this, the Teacher's Conference of the South Lushai Hills under Mr. Carter passed a resolution that they welcomed the Crown colony scheme for Mizoram. When the Mizo Union leaders who worked all these decades under the British rule, with their experiences under it, strongly opposed the continuation of the British administration who safeguarded the autocracy of the local chiefs. To them, the absence of the British in Mizoram meant the end of the oppressions from their chiefs and with that alone would the commoners survive.

The anti-chief attitude of the Mizo Union:

The anti-chief attitude could be found in the Mizo Union right from its birth. In its first conference on 34th September, 1946 at M.E.School, those members from villages openly shouted slogans against the chiefs. Pu Lalbuaia said that shouts from outside could be heard through the windows like 'Lai on ban Ish Chuan ka ughawng ka Fikang' (I will cut my neck unless the chiefs are deposed).


(29) Ibid.
The Assembly resolved that the 'Upas' Chiefs (elders/councillors) should be elected by the people, that Ramhual should be abolished. Kuliph (hard labor) be stopped etc. and satisfied the draft constitution of the Mizo Union. On 7th November, 1946, the third District conference met again under the Chairmanship of Macdonald. As was apprehended, the Superintendent declared:

"The first business of the meeting today is whether to inform the Governor or not that the Mizo Union does not represent the Mizo people and that only the District conference represents the people".301

This was a drastic step by the Superintendent to reduce the influence of the Mizo Union. As a reaction to this, the Mizo Union submitted a memorandum to the Superintendent, which read in English thus:

"We had already submitted to you on 6.11.46 that this conference is not qualified to represent the people. What we want is, if the conference is deemed to represent the people of Mizo, the representatives of the commoners must be doubled to the representatives of the chiefs. If this is not complied with, we cannot participate in the meeting merely to be overruled." 31

With its memorandum, the Mizo Union boycotted the District Conference, which then became inactive. When the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee, popularly known as the Bordoloi Commission visited Lushai Hills in 1948, it co-opted the two Mizo Union leaders - Kowtinkhuma from North Lushai Hills and Chi Spprowuga from South Lushai Hills.

(30) Memorandum to the Govt, of India, by Mizo National Council, Aizawl, 1965.

These two leaders and other influential personalities met the commission. A common trend observed in the suggestions of different groups was that the Mizo needed some kind of special protection and guidance. They were also unanimous in their demand for autonomous Status.

In July, 1947, L.L.Peters replaced Macdonald as the first Superintendent of Independent India. At this time, political consciousness among the Mizos, harbored by the Mizo Union was developing very fast. The Mizo Union welcomed him with high expectations. Looking at the situation and apprehension of the Mizos as to what their political future would be, Mr.L.L.Peters invited some 50 prominent personalities of Aizwal for a meeting. One of the resolutions of this meeting was "to request the Governor of Assam to inform them in writing whether the Lushais could be permitted to join either Pakistan or Burma or that the Mizos should be given the right of secession from India". In his reply under Notice No.7629-30-G of 2.9.1946, the Governor of Assam notified that:

(1) There can be no question of the Lushais leaving the Indian Union as in law, the lushai country (through) being an included Areas was already part of Assam.

(2) That the Lushais must remain with the Indian Union and cannot join either Pakistan or Burma.

(3) That in view of the constitutional status stated alone, the question of opting out after 9 or 10 years does not arise.\textsuperscript{[32]}

\textsuperscript{[32]} Letter No. 7629-30-G/2-9-1946, from the office of the Governor of Assam.
Pro-chief attitude of the British administration:

As regard to the local Administration, Mr. L.L. Peters formed District Advisor Council as a replacement of Macdonald’s District Conference. At first Mr. Peters did not openly show his favours to the Chiefs. But in course of time, he prone to be corrupt and an ardent safeguard for the chiefs. Most of the veteran Mizo politicians of those days termed Mr. Peters the corrupt and the source of mal-practices in the administration. It is said that in order to get a plot of land for the house site or the other, one had to offer him a cock, or eggs or fish or testicles and hump of an ox which were his favourite dishes or had to please his wife. This kind of bribe could be only afforded by chiefs and very few rich families. As a result, he steadily favoured the chiefs and safeguarded their interests. It is also said that once he toured for the first time from Aizwal, before reaching Lunglei, he had received a thul (basket" full of eggs, as bribes from the chiefs of various villages he visited. It seems that Mr. Peter did nothing to improve the wide gap between the chiefs and the commoners, rather, he purposely favoured the chiefs. Administrative set up remained unchanged, with commoners to their discontentment. This was greatly resented by the Mizo Union. It is a sad thing to mention here that, the Mizos had high hopes for ending their miseries under corrupt local administrator of the Lushai Hills. But their hopes for help from Indian leaders remained unfulfilled. This had a deep adverse effect on the Mizo attitude towards the free India.
Civil Disobedience Movement:

The Lushai educated youth wanted to have their own elected representatives in the government. The Mizo Union was originally constituted to check illegal extractions by the chiefs and protect the villagers from exploitation. The Chief’s Council, consisting of, representatives of the chiefs and nominees of the Superintendent, set in process measures to counter the activities of the Mizo Union. The party retaliated by launching a movement to boycott the chiefs altogether. It started as a peaceful non-violent movement in 1948. The villagers were instructed by the Mizo Union workers not to carry out the orders of the chiefs or pay them any taxes. But very soon, violence broke out and Government also got involved on the ground that it was supporting the authority of the chiefs. The people were urged to defy the authority of the Government as well as the chiefs and join together in a full scale Civil Disobedience Movement.

The Lushai Hills District, bordering both Burma and East Pakistan, was of great strategic importance. It was imperative that a solution should be found to avert a breakdown of law and order. The last superintendent of the Lushai Hills appointed in 1947 was L.L.Peters, a staunch British officer with long experience of work in the hill areas but quite out of tune with the new generation of hill leaders then emerging. His prescription was "Bring out the troops, shoot to kill, and lock up the Mizo Union leaders." His wife, however, was said to be a very humane and understanding woman, who was greatly liked by the people. Superintendent Peters was strongly opposed to the idea of any talks at Government level with the Mizo Union leaders.
After independence, an Advisory Council was elected in Lushai Hills to advise the Superintendent, and the Mizo Union got all the seats in that Council except two, won by the UMFD. The Mizo Union came into conflict with Supdt.L.L.Peters who was openly siding with the chiefs.

The Mizo Union which claimed to represent the Mizo people especially the commoners submitted various complaints regarding the defects in the administration set up by the District Superintendent. But they never got proper attention and reply from the Superintendent. Therefore, the Mizo Union leaders felt necessary to put pressure on the authority so that they would be listened to and that their status in the society would be recognized. They regarded Mr.L.L.Peters as the source of all their grievances. To worsen the situation, Mr.Peters issued an order, copies of which were given only to the chiefs, that any subject who "misbehave" must be reported to the Superintendent by the local chiefs that the culprits would be punished. The vague order gave good chance to the chief to accuse Mizo Union Activists of his village of "misbehaving" who had by now openly opposed his authority. With this encouraging order in their pockets, the local chief sent many Mizo Union activists even for minor reasons. Pu. R.Thumlira, the final President of Mizo Union, said that whenever the victims of this administration were presented before the court, what the District Judge would always ask was "Are You a member of Mizo Union?" He further stated that on many occasions, the seriousness of a person's case depend upon whether he was member of Mizo Union or not. In late October, 1948, a meeting of the leaders of Mizo Union head quarters, Aizwal and Aizwal District Working Committee members was convened. Without even consulting their rural units and sub-headquarters at lunglei, the meeting resolved that;
"in order to bring the ruling of partial judgements to an end and bring right ruling to Mizoram, the meeting demanded, for the sake of true judgement, the transfer of the main obstacle Mr. L. L. Peters from Mizoram. If that was not accomplished, the only way for the people is "Non-violence, Non-cooperation with the Government".

They left the detailed programmes for their implementation to the leaders of the Headquarters. After much thinking and deliberations, the Mizo Union leaders at Aizwal fixed the 27th December, 1948 as a deadline for the transfer of Superintendent, Mr. L. L. Peters. If the government took to action, then the Mizo Union would launch the Non-cooperation movement from 28th December, 1948. The leaders of the Headquarters prepared a notification called "Mizo Union Thupuan No.31/38 of 1.12.1948", in which they clearly outlined the various accumulated grievances of the commoners. It stressed that-

"since sometime back, the Mizo Union members have been ill treated by the officials from top to bottom, in matters of judgement, we never received proper attention....We are being falsely accused just because we are trying to improve the lot of common man within the framework of laws for which we are unlawfully punished....We are forced to go for Kuli much more frequent than others and if reported, whatever might be the cause, we are promptly locked up (Hajat) without any clarification from our end; we are punished just because we are not willing to double the bamboo planks for the chiefs walls....So we feel that our system of law is favouritism and that there is no way for the Mizo Union members to get true judgement... we can not bear this... any more. As the superintendent Mr. L. L. Peters is mainly responsible for our sufferings, we have asked the Assam Government to take him away from our land before December 27th 1948. If he is not taken away as demanded, the Mizo Union will start non-cooperation movement from 2th December 1948, against the superintendent and the chiefs. To show our non-cooperation -

(1) We will not submit or clarify any case to Mr. Peter and his officials. This does not mean that we are going to take judgements to our hands, but no one could stop any amicable settlements between the contending parties.

(2) We will not obey the orders and parwana of Mr. Peters and his officials.
We will no longer pay 'Sachhiah', 'Buhchhun' and others to the rural chiefs, and we will no longer build the Chief's houses."

The notification clearly shows that this non-cooperation was only against the mal-administration of Mr. Peters and his officials, not against India or Assam government. [33]

Before releasing the 'Mizo Union Thupuan', the Mizo Union President Mr. R. Thanhliira sent a memorandum to the government of Assam, stating all their grievance and complaints on 24.11.1948. The Mizo Union Head quarters deputed Mr. R. Thanhliira and Mr. Hrangaia to pursue the memorandum. The deputation met Shri N.K. Rustomji ICS, Advisor to the Governor of Assam who told them that the Governor was unhappy with their programme of non-cooperation. He tried to convince the Mizo leaders to withdraw their decision. They were further told that the government would not tolerate such kind of movement. The District administration reacted by arresting the Mizo Union leaders - H. Vanthuama, General Secretary and Lalbuaiia, Treasury, on 4th December, 1948. The same day the Mizo press at Kulikomau which printed the Mizo Union Thupuan was closed. Mr. R. Thanhliira was arrested in Shillong but was released on bail. On his return, he was again arrested by the police at Zarkawl on 21st December, 1948, before he reached home. Other seven leaders of the Mizo Union were arrested the next day.

Those arrested were -

H.Khuma (Bara Borar), Chawnghunaia, V.Rosiama (both from Kulikawn) Vanchilanga, D.K.Kawnga (both from Mission Veng) Hrangaia (Thakthing Veng) Ch.Chhunga (Saron Veng).

The government of Assam did not take any steps to improve the situation and the Mizo Union's deadline 27th December, 1948 passed. On 28th December, 1948, as an implementation of their programme, the jailed Mizo Union leaders started fasting to show that they meant business in their movement. The next day on 29th December, 1948, the Mizo Union at Aizwal organized a big procession. Starting from the Southern part of the town, the Mizo Union activist shouted slogans - "Go home Peters" etc.

The procession marched towards Aizwal jail in the heart of the town demanding the release of their leaders. Before the procession could reach them, the Mizo Union leaders were charged with Assam maintainence of Public order Act 1947 Sec 2(1) by which they were to remain in jail for 6 months without trial. At the same time, they were hurriedly transported to other jails in the plains, and the superintendent sent police to disperse the procession.\(^{34}\)

When they came to know that their leaders were already shifted, the procession dispersed in dismay. In Aizwal, the movement was directed against Superintendent and government officials. The Lushai clerks, who acted as the main local agent of the government did not enjoy much reputation in the public and hence they were not target of the Movement.

\(^{34}\) Weekly Reports from the Superintendent of Lushai Hills - 30.12.1948, Aizawl.
There was total failure of law and order in the whole District for a few days. To show their non-cooperation with the government, the Mizo Union members stopped payment of government dues, *Fatbang, Sachhiah*, and also refused to build the chief's houses. In Aizwal, the public was strongly against *phutluih kuli* and 'Personal Residence Surcharge'.

Though not consulted in the decision making for the movement, the Mizo Union sub-head quarters at lunglei organized a procession of the same kind. All pamphlets and instructions they had received from Aizwal were seized by the Police. With great difficulty and lathi charges, the lunglei police could at last disperse the procession.

Rural units of Mizo Union in villages followed their leaders in the town. As they did not get proper guidance, the Mizo Union activists at once attacked the houses of their chiefs, *Upas*, the Ramhuals who still retained their positions even after repeated requests by their head quarter's leaders. Not only the houses, the commoners also destroyed their gardens. These village administrators were the main targets of the movement in villages as was the District administration in the town. However, no human casualty at the hands of the Mizo Union activists were reported. In villages, the personality and sense of values of the individual chief greatly determined the intensity of the movement. A kind chief received radical actions from his villagers. It should be noted here that Aizwal town had no chief and thus anti-chief movements concentrated in rural areas. However, the villagers received full support and encouragement from their leaders in the town.\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) From the Superintendent, Lushai Hills No-11487 - 8-g of 1.1.1949.
In retaliation, the Superintendent deployed whatever force he could gather - the Police and the Assam Rifles under his subordinate officials. These deployments visited each and every village, arresting and beating publicly the Mizo Union activists. The local chief received these deployments with open arms and furnished all necessary information. The forces, wherever they went, demanded from the villagers, rice, poultry etc.

They seized fire arms and Mizo Union party documents. In some villages, they assembled the Mizo members and ordered them to withdraw their membership from the party. If the members refused, they were beaten before the public, many of whom received casualties and could not continue their cultivation. Among those beaten, the middle-aged men were in majority rather than energetic youths. Many of them were sent to Aizwal till there was no more space in Aizwal jail. Many of them were fined on various charges. The amounts of fines varied from Rs.30/-, Rs.40/-, Rs.70/-, Rs.100/-, Rs.200/-, Rs.300/-, which were huge amounts for the time.[36]

The ill treatment and unscrupulous partiality by the officials, made the Mizo Union members, both in town and villages, deeply loyal to their party. This clearly revealed that commoners had developed a strong sense of political conviction and that they had become strongly against the local government. Therefore, they presented a firm united stand against the local autocracy.[37]

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[37] An account of the movement available in N.Rustomji, Enhanced Frontiers, OUP, Delhi.
Aftermath of the Non-cooperation movement:

To have a spot verification of the political situation and to seek ways by which the Mizo problems could be solved, Shri. M.K. Rustomji ICS, Advisor to the Governor of Assam arrived at Aizwal on 21.1.99. He summoned one of the Mizo Union leaders, Mr. R. Dengthuama who was jailed only the night before. The two had discussions on the issue. It was believed by other Mizo Union leaders that apparently Mr. R. Dengthuama was convinced by Shri. Rustomji to call off the movement. Nari Rustomji reported the situation prevailing in Aijal and surrounding areas in those days.

"On Arrival at Aijal, I found the atmosphere disturbingly tense. My staying as the Superintendent's guest did not make things easier for me, as it gave the impression that I would be biased at the very outset against the Mizo Union. There was some justification in this apprehension, as the first interviews arranged by the Superintendent were with the members of the Lushai Chiefs council. It was then that I met for the first time, Pu Lalsailova, Chief of Kelsih and President of the Chiefs Council. He was a charming man, ever smiling and kindly, the epitome of old world courtesy and we soon became friends. The Chiefs urged the most drastic measures against the Mizo Union leaders, a considerable number of whom had already been put in the lock up by the over-zealous Superintendent. The public, complained the Chiefs, were being misled by the Mizo Union. They were stoning the houses of Chiefs and threatening to murder. The administration in the district was on the verge of collapse and the authorities must at once intervene, to protect the lives and properties of the Chiefs, who had served for generations, as the bulwarks of the Government. I met, in due course, the Mizo Union leaders and held protracted discussion with them, both singly and as a body to thrash out a formula, to resolve their grievances against the Chiefs. The Mizo Union leaders were poles apart from the Chiefs and their old world ways. They stormed and ranted from morning till evening, threatening devastation if their demands were not fulfilled (Pu Vanthuama and Pu Thanlira were the two leaders conspicuous in that meeting)". I (Nari Rustomji)

"set off valiantly with my naval escort, a gay band of young men with guitars slung across their shoulders and lustily singing all the way, as only Lushais know. We met, as we proceeded, parties of political prisoners, firmly handcuffed, who had been called up by the Superintendent from Lungleh, the southern division, to meet me at Aijal (Aizwal). Pu Dengthuama, among them I remember especially, as we have often reminisced in later days of our first strange meeting on a jungle track. When
we reached our destination it was night and we camped in the finely preserved house of the old chief. It was rumored that many of the villagers had left their homes and fled to the forest for fear that we had come to arrest them. I soon had messengers sent out, to reassure the villagers that I had come to hear their grievances and not to punish them, and that I should be happy to meet them at their convenience, next morning. In my party was young Pu Lallianzuala, an earnest Seventh Day Adventist Evangelist. He had brought with him a case full of Missionary literature, and no sooner had we reached the camp than he sped to the village in the night and set about enrolling new entrants to the faith. Also accompanying me was Rina Sailo, sone of Pu Lalsailova, President of the Chief’s council. Rina had been recently appointed to the newly formed frontier service and I had called him up from Naga Hills, where he was posted, to lend me a helping hand. We spent the evening, chatting with the chief and hearing from him the heroic exploits of his grand father, who after years of bitter fighting, had come to an honorable settlement with the British, in token of which they had presented him with a giant size silver cup, shaped like a sports trophy and handsomely inscribed, which the present chief displayed before us, with ancestral pride. [38]

"The Next morning, we held meetings among the villagers and explained that the Government was determined to take all steps to ensure that the people were not exploited. Their problems could best be settled by peaceful discussions and not by acts of violence directed against the Chiefs. By the time we returned to Aijal, the tension had already considerably lessened, to the extent that even the fire eating Superintendent agreed to my proposal to release the Mizo Union leaders from jail and start off again on a clean slate. Everybody was happy and the sundry rival parties organized a grand joint farewell for me, as I left Aijal for Shillong."

"My visit to the Mizo District gave me confidence in myself, as this was the first occasion on which I had been called upon to bear sole responsibility in a situation of extreme crisis in the tribal areas. I had broken all the rules, I had taken decisions against the advice of the experts in hill administration - and the experts themselves were surprised at the successful outcome. The Mizo civil disobedience movement of 1948 was called off, and a climate had been created for a happy settlement." [39]


(39) Ibid.
The next day, Shri.Rustomji left for Shillong with a light heart and at the same time, Mr.R.Dengthuama was released on bail. Before he left the prison, the other jailed Mizo Union leaders fervently requested Mr.R.Dengthuama not to make any agreement with the superintendent until and unless their leaders were released from the plains. In spite of his friends requests and much against the wishes of the party activists, Mr.R.Dengthuama made a compromise with the superintendent. He even did not consult the Mizo Union leaders at the head quarters, lunglei. Mr.Dengthuama issued "Mizo Union Thupuan" , Aizwal, dated 21.1.1949, under the seal of General Head quarters, Aizwal, whereby he called off the non-cooperation movement. The notification stated that Mr.L.L.Peters, during his tenure of office, promised to recommend for the release of the Mizo Union leaders from plains, to return all the fines imposed during the movement, and to lift all the restriction imposed upon the Mizo Union activists because of the movement etc. Mr.R.Dengthuama urged the local units to report to the superintendent or the sub-divisional officers, that they had stopped the movement. He also informed the units that the sooner the movement stopped, the more likely Mizoram would function as District council administration.\(^{[40]}\)

As the notification was issued under the seal of the General Headquarters, Aizwal, all the Mizo Union units in the district obediently called off the move notification contained. The prompt release of the Mizo union leaders appeared to be sincere gesture on the part of the Superintendent of his promises.

\(^{[40]}\) R.Thanlira, op.cit.
However, the administrative set remained unchanged and thus there were various factors towards the discontent of the politically conscious Mizo Union leaders. In years to come, the Mizo Union remained the main pioneer of Mizo autonomous movements, till its merger with the congress in 1974.

It may be pointed out that although the leaders of the Mizo Union party called the movement as "non-violence-non-cooperation", its characteristics and trends appeared to be a kind of civil disobedience. Even some of the Mizo Union leaders like Mr.R.Thanhliga, President and Mr.H.Vanthuama, General Secretary of the party during the movement do not deny the civil disobedience character of the movement. Both of them said that the movement could also be called "Civil Disobedience Movement". This may be justified by non-payment of taxes and government dues, disobedience to the government by refusing to do government obligations were fully carried out by the Mizo union activists which indeed were the characteristics of civil disobedience. Pu lalhuaia said that they were very much influenced by the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. This statement is supported by the "Mizo Union Thupuan No. 31/38 of 1.12.1948 2(Z)" that there must not be any kind of violence in their movement. [41]

**Impact of the non-cooperation movement on the Mizos:**

The movement which involved more than 80% of the total population of Lushai hills had deep significance in the political consciousness of the Mizo. First, it made known to the people of other states who the Mizos were and what type of people they are.

(41) Mizo Union Thupuan No-31/38 of 1.12.1948.
Second, the movement gave a strong sense of solidarity and spirit of unity among the Mizos. Third, it taught the Mizo people the value of endurance and perseverance. Fourth, the movement enlightened the political consciousness out of the general masses and trained the Mizo people for their future political development. Fifth, the movement truly testified the sincere loyalty of the party members to the union and their selfless sacrifices for the general welfare of the Mizo people. As a whole, it may be right to say to the credit of the Mizo Union that its leaders were sobre, realistic and far-sighted. They were always ready to sacrifice their personal interest for the cause of the public.

When one look back to the various achievements of the Mizo Union and their selfless sacrifices, the movement they organized, petitions and memorandums they have submitted to the Government of Assam for the upliftment of the Mizo people, it may not be wrong to call those early Mizo Union leaders "Patriots" for the Mizo.  

Under this backdrop, it is interesting to note that, the newly formed "United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO), which was opposing the Mizo Union and championing the cause of the chiefs, was not looked upon with much favor by the Government, as there were indications that it was working for the break away of the Lushai Hills District from the Indian Union and for linking the district with the Chin Hills of Burma.

Introduction of the Constitution and the Provision of the Sixth Schedule:

In response to the resolution of the disobedience movement, the Government of Assam formed an Advisory Council before Constitution of the District Council. The recommendations of the "North East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly", known as the "Bordoloi Committee", was incorporated in Part 'A' of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.[43] The Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union formed in the South-Eastern part of the district got the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council. Later the Sixth Schedule (Articles 244(2) and 275(1) of the Constitution of India) containing provisions for the administration of Tribal areas was extended to the erstwhile Lushai Hills District of Assam which was given the status of an autonomous District. Consequent on this the Mizo District Council was inaugurated on 25th April, 1952. Within this District, a Regional Council called the Pawi Lakher Regional Council was formed on 23rd April, 1953 for certain Southern parts of the district. The District and the Regional Council consisted mostly of elected members and a limited number of nominated members.

Important Enactment by the Government of Assam and the District Council:

The new District Council passed the Lushai Hill Act No. 11 (Reduction of Fathang), 1953[44]. The rate of Fathang was reduced and it was now paid to the District Council after abolition of the chieftainship.


(44) Ibid
Other taxes like Sachhiah, Thirdensga, Khuachihhiah, and Chichhiah were completely withdrawn. In 1954, two important legislations were enacted, facilitated by the friendly atmosphere between the Mizo Union Party and the Congress Ministry in Assam. The first was the acquisition of the chiefs rights, which came into force on April 1, 1954. The second one was Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act of 1954.

The "Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act 1954, came into force from April 1, 1954 in the area under the jurisdiction of Lushai District Council and from April 15,1954, in the Pawi-Lakher Region. The rights and interests of 259 Lushai chiefs and 50 Pawis-Lakher chiefs were now vested in the government. The administration of the land under these chiefs was also handed over to the District and Regional councils respectively and the Mizo chiefs wrongly put the blame for it on the Mizo Union Party.

By an Act of the Parliament, called the "Lushai Hills District (change of name) Act No.18 of 1954, the name of the "Lushai District" was changed to "Mizo District", with effect from April 29, 1954. The term "Lushai"gradually disappeared from Mizo District. Since the name of the "Lushais" has been changed to "Mizos" from April 1954 onwards, henceforth the people of the district are referred to as "Mizos" instead of "Lushais", and "Aijal" is spelt as "Aizawl" as per the wishes of the Mizos.

By another enactment, The Mizo District (Inheritance of Property) Act No.1 of 1956, the Mizo women were given the right of inheritance.

Structural Reforms:

The post of the superintendent had been abolished and the whole area was placed under the Deputy Commissioner and the Chief Executive Members of the District and Regional Council. As mentioned earlier, the Mizo Union, holding the reins of the District Council
Administration, abolished the special privileges of the Lushai chiefs and their elders. However, all the chiefs were compensated in cash for the loss of their power and tribute. Since the voice of the people was very strong, the chiefs had no choice but to accept their fate calmly and be content with the compensation given to them. Some of the chiefs utilized the money received wisely, but majority of them squandered it and left a trail of misery for their dependents.\[45\]

**The Powers of the District and Regional Councils:**

The District Council and the Regional Council were given powers to make laws with respect to:\[46\]

(a) Allotment, occupation or use, or the setting apart of land other than any land which is reserved for rest of the purposes of agriculture, or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes or for any other purpose likely to promote the interests of the inhabitants of any village or town. Provided that nothing in such laws shall prevent the compulsory acquisition of any land, whether occupied or unoccupied for public purposes by the Government of the State concerned in accordance with the law for the time being in force authorizing such acquisition.

(b) Management of any forest not being a reserved forest.

(c) Social customs.

(d) Regulation of *Jhuming*.

(e) They have also powers to assess and collect land revenue and to impose taxes.

\[45\] Ibid.

\[46\] Ibid.
(f) Any other matter relating to town or village administration, public health and sanitation.

(g) Administration of Justice.

(h) Powers to establish Primary School and to launch self help schemes and development work.

The District council being an elected body, a new power structure emerged where the hereditary chieftainship had no place and a strong anti-chief body came to power. It was therefore, an important land mark in the history of Mizo power relations. Following the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971, the erstwhile Mizo district was converted into the Union Territory of Mizoram, a new political unit consisting of three districts, viz., Aizawl District with Headquarters at Aizawl, Lunglei with Headquarters at Lunglei, and Chhimtuipui district with Headquarters at Saiha. The Mizo District council ceased to exist. Only in the Southern district of Chhimtuipui three councils, viz., Pawi District Council, Lakher District Council, and Chakma District Council were formed to cater to the needs of those areas. In the entire Union Territory excluding these three District Councils, village councils were setup for matters relating to village administration including village police and public health and sanitation. These village councils are also mainly elected bodies. Thus the introduction of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India paved the way for, and consolidated a democratic power and authority structure.[47]

As a consequence of the abolition of the chieftainship by the enactment of the 
Acquisition of Chiefs Right, by the Government of Assam, the chiefs whose administration 
of land being handed over to district and regional councils, were compensated for the loss 
of their power and tribute. Since the voice of the people were very strong, the chiefs had no 
choice but to accept their fate, and be content with the compensation given to them. The 
abolition of the institution of chieftainship was simultaneous and in line with the abolition 
of Zamindari system in the rest of India.