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Despite the Mizo people's modernity, gerontocracy, their leaders forego with the dignity of greater leaders. The applicability of the structure is seen in the social science aspects.
Laldenga, the MNF President and Lalnunmawia, the Vice-President, were arrested while secretly returning from a diplomatic mission in Pakistan. The charges against them were of a seditious nature. Laldenga confessed before the investigative police officer that he was on a political mission and that he had struck a military deal with the Pakistani authorities. There were also certain incriminating documents with them. Laldenga and his deputy were lodged in the Silchar jail. As the charges against Laldenga were of a serious nature he could not come out of the prison easily despite the legal and political pressures of his friends, upon the government. He contrived a trick to dupe kind-hearted and credulous B.P. Chaliha. Laldenga wrote a letter from jail to the Chief Minister. In the letter he skilfully minced his words. He wrote: "the programmes and politics of MNF are not anti-state and we should not take a course of action which is against the Constitution of India". This was an assurance and he appealed, "by releasing us from detention give us an opportunity to play a constructive role in the development of our district".\(^1\) Laldenga managed the jailor of Silchar jail so that the letter did reach the Chief Minister. The jailor, a petty office of the Assam Government, was very much impressed by the suave western manner and fluent English speech of Laldenga and did his best to help him. Chaliha was also impressed by the fervent appeal of Laldenga and decided to set him free then and there. However, he discussed the matter with Mainul Haque Choudhury, the Agriculture Minister, (later on Commerce Minister, Government of India, under Mrs Indira Gandhi) who was a resident of Silchar. Mainul Haque had been a successful criminal lawyer and advised Chaliha to preserve the letter and brought it to the notice of the Advocate General of Assam. The Public Prosecutor, Silchar, Cachar, was also intimated. Personally,

Mainul Haque did not favour the idea of releasing Laldenga; he wanted the law to take its own course. He was against political interference when the charges against Laldenga were of high treason. This was also the view of Pakruddin Ali Ahmed, the most powerful man in the Assam Cabinet (later on the President of India). But gullible Chaliha took the fatal decision to weaken his political opponent, the Mizo Union, who in conjunction with the APHLC, the Khasi and Jaintia party, made his position uneasy in the Assam Legislature. The prisoners were freed. Chaliha jumped from frying pan to fire.

On the issue of Laldenga’s release, Pakruddin Ali Ahmed’s relation with the Chief Minister got strained. In Chaliha’s absence or illness Ali Ahmed had to discharge the function of the Chief Minister and, in fact, he was the de facto Chief Minister. In the period following the border debacle with the Chinese (1962), the national press was very critical about the working of the Muslim ministers. Ali Ahmed, was aware of that. So, as an experienced administrator and a lawyer he wanted to be cautious on this issue. Intelligence reports against Laldenga was almost voluminous. Moreover, at Zainabawk, Laldenga and Lalnumawia were arrested but the Defence Secretary, Sainghaka, escaped the vigilance dragnet of the BSF and evaded arrest. The police also found in their possession incriminating documents firmly establishing the strong MNF nexus with Pakistan. Unable to counter the strong arguments, Chaliha said that Laldenga had been known to him for long and he would not betray him. This was purely a subjective assessment of a purely objective situation. Thus, an inept politician played his petty game. The Mizo militants got encouraged enough to go on a rampage of their own, killing and extorting without let or hindrance. It needs to be stressed that the Army was not a light switch in the Chief Minister’s bedroom to be put on or off at will, nor could he evade responsibility to posterity for his foolish action. Contrary to the set norms of governance he had pledged the whole nation to the ransom of a dangerously ambitious secessionist leader. If Laldenga was anti-national, Chaliha’s inept handling of the situation was not in the interest of the nation either. A politically wise Chief Minister would have nipped the MNF insurgency in the bud.

**Rebellion**

**Renewed Activities of Laldenga**

However, that is only one side of the picture, the other being the luck factor. Laldenga had always been very lucky in his political and diplomatic ventures. Lady luck smiled on him and he along with Lalnumawia reached Aizawl; on the way the Mizo villagers welcomed him. At Aizawl, a large number of people at a public meeting offered him a hero’s welcome. The speakers dwelt upon the courage and determination of the MNF President and they also extolled Laldenga’s virtues. Laldenga, the MNF President, already ministerial in appearance and manner and flanked by a full flush of celebrities, roused an exultant audience with a glowing vision of ‘national future’ under his leadership. In the Church congregations also the Mizos welcomed the release of Laldenga. In the camp of Mizo Union, however, there was the dark shadow. They knew Laldenga well, much better than Chaliha and waited for the moment when there would be the end of the honeymoon of the two diametrically opposite and mentally different political bed partners. And they were right. Poor Mizo Union! The party had its long track record of familiarity with the Congress and its innocuous demand for autonomous state was of much lighter weightage than the MNF demand of sovereign Mizo and the Assamese Congressmen, incensed at the severance of Naga Hills from Assam, reacted sharply, to Mizo Union move and to appease that narrow section Chaliha chose to destroy the MU with the help of dangerously anti-national MNF. A Government elected by the people is fairly and squarely responsible for the maintenance of law and order. But Congress legislatures miserably failed to provide good governments. This inexorable fate of Congress politics in coming years gave rise to Bhindranwale style Khalistani terrorism. Laldenga was to a great extent the creation of Congress politics, especially of the magnanimous B.P. Chaliha’s spineless policies involving double standards.

Within a few days of his return to Aizawl Laldenga sent a team of 21 young men to Pakistan for training and to lift arms and ammunition from the Pakistani authorities. Fresh batches were sent in quick succession for training (November 1964-March 1965). Pakistan supplied a considerable amount of ammunition including light machine
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guns and stenguns. The MNF mustered on this side of the Indian border a huge amount of ammunition which could sustain the functioning of a regular company. In the border villages of South Mizoram the trained personnel trained the Mizo volunteers in arms and explosives. Even at the outskirts of Aizawl town the young Mizos received such training. Clever Laldenga maintained link with the gullible Chief Minister over the phonogram and assured him of his services to finish the Mizo Union, the enemy of the Congress and concocted stories of how the MNF volunteers had been working to that effect. Accordingly, Chaliha instructed the Home Department not to disturb the activities of MNF. Clever Laldenga had been laughing up his sleeve.

The MNF volunteers who underwent military training in Pakistan imparted the same to the MNF volunteers in various places in Mizo Hills district. The arms were also distributed to the villagers for use in times of necessity. "The possession of arms and the military training conducted in villages were open secret". All these indicate the appalling state of the Assam administration in the vitally important district situated on the international border, just on the eve of the MNF revolt. But the Assam Intelligence Department was not dead, it sent the reports to Shillong as usual but in vain. The highest executive of the state (Chief Minister), completely outwitted by crafty Laldenga, dismissed the police reports as exaggerated.

The MNF volunteers had been organized into three categories. The Mizo National Army (MNA) that is the regular armed force of the Sovereign Government of Mizoram; the Mizo National Volunteers (MNV), the volunteers who had completed the military training and had been waiting for involvement in the MBA, and the volunteers (both men and women) armed but not trained militarily. "Quite a large number of ex-service men (of Indian Army) were enrolled in Mizo National Army and Mizo National Volunteers. The member of the disbanded Second Battalion of Assam Regiment played a key role in the MNA and MNV."

Laldenga since his release from the Silchar jail did not personally cross the Indian border but sent several MNA battalions to the Pakistani hide-outs, most important of

2. *International Dimensions of Mizo Insurgency*, pp. 73-74.
Despite the armed conflict in the region, the activities of the MNF were fraught with controversy and challenges. The MNF, led by Laldenga, was heavily armed and well-trained, which allowed them to sustain the functioning of a regular company. The Mizo National Army (MNA) and its volunteers were instrumental in maintaining a strong presence at the Indian border, in South Mizoram, and in the villages near Aizawl town. The training of the volunteers, led by the gullible Chief Minister, was marked by the procurement and provision of arms and explosives. 

Laldenga and his MNF volunteers embarked on a path of violence, particularly in the villages, where the MNF maintained an open secret. The MNF’s military training, conducted in various places in Mizoram, was distributed among the villagers, and the possession of arms was a key aspect. The MNF was not only a military force but also a political entity, with the MNF leaders playing a significant role in the political landscape of Mizoram.

The MNF volunteers were organized into three categories: the Mizo National Army (MNA), the Mizo National Volunteers (MNV), and the MNF itself. The MNF’s military training and involvement in the MNA were extensive, with the MNF volunteers being armed and trained for military service. The MNF’s military operations were well-coordinated, with the MNF’s military training and involvement in the MNA being extensive.

Laldenga’s release from Silchar jail did not cross the Indian border, but several MNF battalions were sent to Pakistani hideouts, most important of them were under the leadership of Sapzoa, Sabavdia, and Tunkhawpun. The MNF also established its powerful foreign department at Dhaka under the leadership of Lalithanglian Philips to maintain diplomatic ties with China, Muslim countries of South-East Asia, USA and UNO. The foreign department of MNF worked through the good offices of Pakistan and the Chinese embassy of Dhaka. Some foreign Christian missionaries of East Pakistan also came forward to assist the MNF in their diplomatic mission. They were already in touch with the NNC of Phizo. The CIA in Calcutta and Dhaka took active interest in the MNF. The most interesting thing, however, to note is that the British Government maintained a strict neutrality on MNF matters despite the repeated attempts of the MNF’s friends, both Indian and foreign, to secure British sympathy in the MNF’s bid for Mizo independence. Notwithstanding the damaging instances of the colonial past, the British Government for its firm commitment to constitutionalism and aversion to bloody revolutions, did not support the MNF insurgency. The attitude of Burma in this respect had been predictably hostile to the outlawed MNF Government. The Chinese aggression on India, the diplomatic insolence of CPR and Pakistan, and after all, her past experience of insurgency of the Christian tribes made Burma follow a practical line of politics. All these prompted the angry MNF to embark upon a military misadventure Dikna under the leadership of its Vice-President against Burma. Despite the unexpected opposition from Burma and the coldness of UK the success of MNF foreign department had been remarkable. It established contacts with many countries of South-East Asia, Europe and America. Its achievement had been all the more important as the MNF diplomacy was successful in internationalizing the Mizo problem to discredit India abroad. This was no mean achievement for a brand new outfit with impoverished funds and no known foreign contact-base in Europe or America except, however, for the Christian missionaries whose love for the cause of Mizo independence was hollow. The net result of internationalizing the MNF issue had been naught from the viewpoint of political considerations, notwithstanding the tacit support of Pakistan and China; none the less international dimension of the issue howsoever weak and vague, had its propaganda value.
down their dwelling houses, and the khyongs. The rivalry between the Christian Mizos and Buddhist Chakmas is a long standing one and on the issue of insurgency it assumed a communal colour.

The MNF activists attacked Chawngte, Chimluang and Kolasib posts and captured them. At Vairengte, the MNF armed men at dead of night (March 1966) entered into the houses of the non-Mizos and served ‘quit notice’. However, they did not use any violence on them. Serving ‘quit notice’ is a common phenomenon prevalent among the tribals in the North-East. It had its origin in Nagaland. The Nagas served ‘quit notice’ to extort money. Thus the ‘quit notice’ lost its seriousness. This is also issued by one tribe against another tribe. Vairengte, is almost on the Cachar (Assam) border and is a big village only. The non-Mizos are poor tea shopowners, transport workers and labourers, etc. They had no money to offer. However, they left the place. Along with them left many non-Mizo tribals (Reangs, etc) from the adjoining villages. Some affluent Mizos who were supporters of Mizo Union also left Mizo Hills and took shelter in Cachar especially in Silchar. The Mizo capitalist Pachhunga accommodated many such refugees in his Pachhunga Buildings at Banipara, Silchar. Few thousand refugees mostly Bengalees and Nepalese trekked to the borders of Assam. The Government of Assam set up a few temporary camps for the refugees.3

Thus within few hours, thanks to the careful planning and brilliant organization of Laldenga, the whole of the Mizo Hills district covering 7,000 square miles from Champhai to Demagiri, from the borders of Burma to the frontiers of Bangladesh lay under the feet of the MNF Chief, Laldenga. The fall of Mizo Hills at the hands of the MNF rebels (seven battalions) and the consequent collapse of administration of Assam is an epoch-making event in the administrative history of India since the time of the fall of Bomdila during the Sino-Indian conflict.

Aizawl town for few hours passed under the control of the MNF and even in the Deputy Commissioner’s office the flag of the “Independent Mizoram Government” had been flying high; the Indian tricolour was, however, still atop the flag stand of the Assam Rifles headquarters. The Assam Rifles

3. Cachar District Record, 6-8 March 1966.
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The A.R. is a military police with an intelligence wing attached to it. Unfortunately, the A.R. intelligence failed to detect the presence of a rat in the net and it was indeed, providence which averted the calamity. The incident also demonstrated the unique organizing ability of Laldenga to infiltrate into the very bastion of the armed forces. The episode further highlights the foresight of the British officer J. Edgar who was against entrusting to the Mizos the defence of Lushai Hills.

Red Signal of the Government

On 1 March 1966, the Commissioner of the Cachar Mizo Hills Division, Inspector General of Police of Assam Rifles and a Brigadier from the Armed forces made an air dash to Aizawl. They informed the Assam Government of the serious condition prevailing in the Mizo Hills district. The Government of Assam immediately declared (2 March 1966) the Mizo Hills as a disturbed area invoking the Assam Disturbed Areas Act. The Army began their march from Silchar to Aizawl on 3 March 1966. The MNF volunteers felled trees on the Aizawl-Silchar Road and destroyed some culverts. Silchar-Aizawl Road was not a national highway then. It was an ordinary hilly road under the control of Assam Government. Indian security forces cleared the roadblocks from the road (175 km)

3. Cachar District Record, 6-8 March 1966.

and reached Aizawl on 6 March 1966. The troops were also airlifted. The Air Force also began operations in the MNF hide-outs in the jungles especially near the international border areas. On 6 March the Army took position in Aizawl town, cleared off the MNFs to alleviate the fears of the civilians. When the army was advancing through the Silchar-Aizawl Road, the MNA guerrillas ambuscaded them and in some cases put obstructions on the advancing column. In the skirmishes some of the security men were killed. However, the MNA guerrillas were on the run as there had been regular reinforcement of the troops from Silchar cantonment. Silchar since the days of Lord Mayo (1869-74) had been the headquarters of Second Assam Battalion of the Assam Rifles but after the Sino-Indian conflict Arunachal, near Silchar, became the headquarters of the southern Assam circle of the Armed Forces. The Coombhigram (Silchar) airport also has a regular unit of the Air Force.

They failed to withstand the brunt of counterattack of the armed forces (code-named 'Operation Security') so the MNA guerrillas got scattered all over the countryside and took shelter in the dense forest. They had not enough food and rations to sustain a prolonged insurrection. Naturally, they harassed the poor villagers and in many cases they looted the food articles. The victims were usually the sympathizers of Mizo Union, namely the resident Nepalese, Reangs, Tipras and non-Mizo tribes. The MNA got desperate. Taking advantage of the distance, they mounted offensive at Lungleh and Champhai. The Assam Rifles post at Champhai was razed to the ground and a general massacre was committed on the Assam Rifles jawans at Lungleh post. The Border Security Force posts which were scattered all over the East Pakistan border had also to face the serious challenge from the MNA. The MNA took full advantage of the lack of communications. They snapped the telephone and telegraph lines, burnt the government buildings and damaged the already dilapidated roads. The Assam Public Works Department being corrupt had misused the road development fund and neglected the roads. The MNA took full advantage of it.

Once in 1963 after the Chinese debacle, Chalhla visited Aizawl and rebuked the officers for the bad road condition in the Mizo Hills. The officers of the PWD complained of

Rebellion

shortage of funds and said that with such meagre funds the Silchar-Aizawl Road could not be metalled. To this Chalhla replied that the funds he had sanctioned for the roads in Mizo Hills, could cover the roads with gold, not merely with tar. Fortunately for the government, the rebellion broke out on 28 February and not in May or June. Politically, Laldeng's timing was right but it was out of tune with the topography. He was a southerner, a resident of South Mizo and was not aware of the heavy rainfall of North Mizo Hills.

MNF Sued for Peace

The massive army movement, rapid mobilization of the armed forces and the lightning advance of the army dragnet unnerved the MNF. There was a hurried consultation (7 March 66) and Lalnunnawia, the Vice-President of the MNF Government, sent a letter to the Deputy Commissioner of Mizo Hills proposing peace. The MNF proposal was summarily rejected and orders were issued to arrest Lalnunnawia, the rebel, on charges of declaring war against the government, unless he and his associates surrendered unconditionally.

On the same date, 7 March 1966, Mrs Indira Gandhi paid a visit to Guwahati to take stock of the situation. Next day the Minister of State for Home Affairs made a statement about the developments in Mizo Hills in the Parliament.5

The armed caravan marched to Lungleh from Aizawl (7 March 1966) following the Aizawl-Lungleh Road, and to Champhai through the Aizawl-Champhai Road. The security men reached Lungleh early in the morning on 13 March 1966 and took the position. The MNA which had been controlling the fortress fled without offering any resistance. The same army column reached Demagiri on 14 March and freed the town from the rebels. The eastern column reached Champhai on 17 March and rebuilt the destroyed fortress.

By 25 March, 1966 the whole of Mizo Hills was cleared off the rebels. The MNF activists, about 7,000 in number, either took shelter in the forests or escaped to Burma or Pakistan. Many of them lost their lives in the encounter. The Air Force also strafed valleys to flush out the rebels from their hideouts. By 25 March 1966 all the military posts and the posts

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of the BSF were restored to their original positions. First phase of the Rebellion was over. Laldenga's pipedream of sovereign independent Mizoram received a severe jolt. By 25 March 1966 Indian Army had lost one commissioned officer, five junior commissioned officers and 192 jawans. The actual number of casualties of the MNF was not known but it must have exceeded that of the Indian security forces. The property destroyed was worth crores of rupees. Chaliha said in the Assam Assembly (6 April 1966): "while determined organized attacks on any significant scale have not been reported, yet intimidation, threats, sniping, ambushes and other activities indicate that the lawless elements are still active in many parts of the Mizo district."

Immediate Causes of MNF Rebellion

Who was responsible for the Mizo Rebellion of 1966? In analysing the causes of the rapid rise of Hitler on the eve of World War II, Winston Churchill lays the blame on the British policy of appeasement. Both England and France appeased Hitler to secure petty economic gains. Hitler in the Munich Agreement promised no further territorial expansion but breaking his promise he continued his policy of aggrandisement and ultimately engulfed the world in a war of unprecedented dimensions. Kind-hearted Neville Chamberlain was deceived by Hitler. He was disgusted and disheartened and was obligated to submit to the grossest insolence and humiliation. B.P. Chaliha's dealings with Laldenga had been compared, and perhaps justly, with the dealings of Chamberlain with Hitler. In a state like Britain where democracy is so closely associated with efficiency, Chamberlain had no other alternative but to resign. In India the political functioning is on a different footing. Chamberlain was the Lord Chancellor and the petty economic gains of Britain blurred his vision. Like the kind British lawyer, Chaliha was also a kind-hearted Vaisnava committed to the idea of rapid economic development and ignored the anti-national activities of MNF throughout 1963, 1964, and 1965. And that was the most critical period of Assam's history immediately after the Chinese debacle. B.R. Medhi, the predecessor the Chaliha, following a chauvinistic policy

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But Chaliha in search of a political solution to a political problem ignored the routine formalities of the day-to-day administration. He did not pay any heed to the timely warnings of the local officials of Alizawl and Lungleh which had the misfortune to witness the MNF subversive activities in their administrative jurisdictions. He ignored the sound advice of the Mizo Union leaders (there was no love lost between the Congress and MU) who knew Laldenga and his MNF men intimately. Chaliha considered himself the legal heir to the liberalism of Nehru and was determined to solve the Mizo problem by his good offices in direct violation of administrative propriety. In absolving Natarajan, the Deputy Commissioner, Mizo Hills district of the responsibility of the administrative failure Chaliha accepted the entire burden on his own shoulders and made a pathetic speech in the Assam Assembly (5 March 1966) that he believed Laldenga and Lalanmunwia's promise. He further said that the MNF President and Vice-President assured him in writing that they would not resort to anti-national activities in future and regretted very much their visit to Pakistan without any valid permit. Laldenga and Lalanmunwia duped Chaliha by saying that they went to Pakistan to visit their relatives and their purpose in visiting Pakistan was not political at all. Chaliha further said that Laldenga was a former member of All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) and how could he be violent? Moreover, the MNF in clear terms assured the Assam Government of cooperation in matters of economic development of Mizo Hills. To Chaliha economic development of the Mizos was the crux of the Mizo problem so he sought a political solution ignoring the formalities of the practical aspects of administration and discarding the much needed and indispensable police action. There was absolute majority of the Congress party in the House so, Chaliha did not face much difficulty but clearly there was disgruntlement among the members. They doubted the sagacity of Chaliha's move. A state is after all a political institution run according to certain established rules and not a religious institution where forgiveness is divine and mercy a heavenly quality. In day-to-day affairs of the state there are no dearth of instances where clever people pass off their misdemeanour as concern for human rights.

During the freedom struggle Chaliha had the bad experience of the conduct of the policemen. As a gentleman he hated the police, because the latter inherited the legacy of harassing the innocent people from the Raj. So, he was averse to police measures against Laldenga ignoring the concrete evidences of anti-national activities.

Laldenga immediately after his release from the Silchar jail wrote a letter to the President of Indonesia seeking his cooperation in the MNF struggle for Mizo independence against India. In his letter he stated that the Mizo chiefs had been the supreme rulers of the Mizo Hills even during the British Regime! There was not only misstatements of historical facts in the letter but he also implicated Pandit Nehru saying that the Indian Prime Minister did not recognize the eastern frontier tribes as Indians. According to him, India’s top leader and spokesperson late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru released a press statement on 9 August 1946 and stated: “The tribal areas are defined as being those along the frontiers of India, which are neither part of India, nor of Burma, nor of an Indian State, nor of any foreign power.” Obviously, Laldenga put his own words into the mouth of Nehru. Anybody having any knowledge of Nehru’s beautiful style of writing can easily decipher the bluff. Moreover, there is no such record. The MNF leader was aware of the fact that Nehru was dead and he could use the bluff to his own advantage.

In his letter Laldenga appealed to the Mongoloid sentiments of the Indonesian President also. But the most important aspect of the whole episode was that Laldenga, who assured Chaliha that he would not indulge in any anti-national activities in future, had no scruples in doing so before the ink of his signature had dried up. He was very much repentant and regretted his visit to Pakistan without valid legal document but revisited it soon! In politics the norms of morality have little place yet the political leaders follow a minimum standard of ethics. But Laldenga had no such norms. He was not ashamed of the perfidy; to him guilt was a wasteful emotion. He knew where to draw the line. True, he had deceived the Indian statesmen by his political chicanery more than once in his career but he could not deceive his own men who knew him very closely.

In any case a copy of that dangerous seditious letter (to the President of Indonesia) was confiscated by the police in a surprise raid on an MNF hide-out. There were other incriminating documents too. These letters and documents were handed over to the Assam Government by the border police. But all those evidences submitted by police were brushed aside as rubbish by the Chief Minister of Assam! He was seeking a political solution from a political leader who suffered from personality flaws and was not fully integrated into Indian culture and Indian civilization. The MNF Rebellion 1966 was the outcome of apathy and foolishness of the confused political philosophy of a Chief Minister who failed miserably to deal with an unscrupulously shrewd disturber of peace and that too at a very unfavourable moment when the greater part of eastern India including Assam, immediately after the Chinese aggression, was resorting to violent reactions. Forces of destabilization were in progress at the instigation of the Chinese propaganda machine. He absolved the local administration and accepted the entire responsibility of political failure. That, indeed indicated his pious magnanimity and glorification of the politics of value but at the same time it registered his defeat at hands of a cunning and ambitious tribal leader to whom end justified the means. Throughout his life the MNF chief never hesitated to adopt Machiavellian tactics to hoodwink his opponents to achieve his aims because he thought as a rebel leader he had his fair quota of freedom and responsibility. As a favourite child of the goddess of luck he succeeded in many cases but not always. However, the inevitable had happened. The whole North-East was plunged into darkness.

Was Laldenga a Pakistani too? It is reality very difficult to reply in affirmative. Historical judgements are rarely correct if made too early. This is more so in the case of Laldenga. Laldenga took shelter in Pakistan, used Pakistani territory as the MNF base, received Pakistani guns to use against the Indians, and used the good offices of the Pakistani leaders to get in touch with China. Pakistan was also the base of his arms deals with the foreign nations. All these were established facts. The timings of MNF outbursts were all calculated, notwithstanding Laldenga’s obsession with the Tashkent Agreement, to suit the Pakistani design to harass India. NNC Chief, Phizo like Laldenga had also intimate connections with Pakistan but Phizo was less Machiavellian than the MNF leader and less pretentious, and finally he was
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Laldenga was a favourite of the Military Junta of Pakistan. But the Pakistani authorities destroyed all the secret documents before the fall of Dhaka in December 1971. Even Laldenga in haste managed to escape from Dhaka to Karachi and then to Islamabad. In the absence of written records nobody can say that he was in the payroll of the Pakistani Junta. The subversive activities of the MNF guerrillas, their sophisticated equipments, arms and ammunition were mostly from Pakistan. The Pakistan Army not only provided training to the MNF guerrillas but also chased the Indian Border Security Force inside the Indian territory; in some cases during encounters the MNF fought against the Mukti Bahini (Liberation Force). Immediately before the Indo-Pak conflict 1965-66, the Kashmiri terrorists infiltrated along with the masked Pakistani soldiers into India to cause subversion. During this period the MNF guerrillas on the eastern border of India, equipped with Pakistani arms played a similar role. This was, however, the part of the Pakistani scheme of invading and destabilizing the Indian frontiers strictly in accordance with their military necessities. The anti-Indian stance of the Pakistani Military Junta and Z.A. Bhutto were known historical facts and the Pakistani authorities conveniently used the MNF to suit their own purpose. In short, Pakistan before the Indo-Pak conflict 1965 waged a proxy war in the North-East with the help of MNF and NNC.

Chinese involvement in the border politics of India was a part of CPR’s global diplomacy and a handy game of foreign department. The Burmese, Indian, Vietnamese, Russian and Mongolian insurgents received regular military assistance from China and also the backing of its powerful propaganda. During the counter-insurgency measures by the Government of India, Peking Radio frequently interfered in the internal affairs of India and magnified out of proportion the stray cases of the cruelties of Indian security men, perpetrated upon the innocent Mizos. The MNF returnees, including some former MNF ‘cabinet ministers’ disclosed before the Mizoram Peace Mission (1975) how Pakistani aircraft took them to China and how they were treated by the Chinese authorities. Laihtangljana was the first MNF ‘Ambassador’ to Peking; Laldenga, Zoramthanga, and Dem Kozialk, also visited China. But those MNF dignitaries except for Zoramthanga and few others, deserted Laldenga realizing fully that China was using them as the handy tools and had no real sympathy for their cause. So, they surrendered in response to an earnest appeal of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In fact, the MNF ‘Ambassador’ Laihtangljana Philips, before Laldenga met the Chinese officials, was able to generate understanding between CPR and MNF but the Chinese in no uncertain terms pointed out to Laldenga during his first visit to Peking that China would by no means give political recognition to ‘Sovereign Mizoram’. Gone was the jauntiness and self-confidence of Laldenga. Moreover, the CPR agreed to supply arms to the MNF through the medium of Pakistan to which the latter objected as that would cast aspersions upon Pakistan’s role after the Shimla Accord. The lacklustre attitude of the Chinese officials was the outcome of the secret report that MNF, despite its leaders’ professed revolutionary zeal, was a reactionary political outfit steeped in the missionary culture and the primary aim of Laldenga was to extract as much assistance as he could from the enemies of India. China was sure that indoctrinated by the American and British missionaries the Mizos of MNF brand could not be trusted to further the Chinese political aims in India. Shrewd Laldenga got scent of it after he came back from his second visit to China (1970) probably through his American friends in Dhaka where CIA had a strong base and with whom he maintained regular contact. 

Thus Laldenga deliberately made a halt to his Chinese political voyage.

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approach was crystal clear to the MNF leaders. The glamorous political philosophy of Mao Zedong and the charisma of Laldenga could not bind the MNF activists long in their journey on an uncertain future.

The MNF hierarchy could use the Pakistani aircraft but the rank and file of MNF had not that opportunity. They made contact with China through Nagaland and Burma. The NNA had already contact with the Chinese, so, the MNF took their help as per agreement with the Federal Government of Nagaland. China gifted many automatic weapons to the MNF and also provided training in the Shan territories of Burma. Till today, the Chinese are assisting the PLA of Manipur, NSCN of Nagaland and ULFA of Assam in their guerrilla activities. These subversive military activities of China were the part of the Chinese expansionism.

The propaganda machine of MNF was very active in maligning India. Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistani relationships were not good. Therefore, the Chinese and Pakistan invectives against the Government of India had little effect on the public opinion of the world; however, the Sino-Pak propaganda added international dimension to Mizo problem. But the support the MNF received from Michael Scott and other leading British and American citizens moved the Amnesty International to take interest in the affairs of the oppressed Mizos and Friendship Society of the Mizos was set up in USA.

Lainnumwawia’s Escape

Lainnumwawia, the Vice-President of the MNF was a moderate among the radicals and probably the most sober element in the organization. As Professor Bury has observed that Brasidas, the general in the Peloponnesian war, was a Spartan by mistake; so was Lainnumwawia an MNF by mistake. The burden of leadership fell on him after Laldenga’s exit from Aizawl on 2 March, 1966. Lainnumwawia’s conditional ceasefire notice failed to produce the desired effect. With the arrival of the armed forces from Silchar on 6 March the position of MNF became shaky. Lainnumwawia had to go underground but his arrest was imminent so he escaped to Burma. Lainnumwawia expected the assistance of the Burmese communist leaders Tun and Ghosal. The political ties of Burma with India had always been cordial so the MNF failed to make much headway in this respect. But Chinese help seemed very much essential to Lainnumwawia. He prepared the blueprint of Dikna, a military venture, against the Burmese. Dikna was a kind of guerrilla warfare. Dikna consisted of fully equipped armed band of 1,000 under Sangkhawia and Sapbawia. The civil officer to the column was Bualiranga. The aim of the expedition was to march to China through Burma. In 1968 the Dikna was launched and the column proceeded up to Upper Chindwin after a secret journey of three months but had to come back under forced circumstances. The principal aim of Dikna was to establish direct contact with China through land route but it failed; the failure of the expedition adversely affected the prospect of MNF.

The Vice-President was under great financial strain. When Laldenga, escaped to Pakistan, he had with him the MNF funds. Lainnumwawia had to function with the leftovers. Naturally, the MNF had to extort money from the businessmen and non-Mizos living in the Mizo Hills. For easy money some of the activists resorted to drug trafficking and smuggling. But all these were not Lainnumwawia’s cup of tea. The brunt of the ‘Operation Security’ had been severe and the anti-insurgency measures of the Government pushed the MNF to the wall; Lainnumwawia till then had been fighting with his back to the wall, impoverished of equipments and money. His repeated appeals to Laldenga for supply of funds met with a feeble response. Under the circumstances the MNF was forced to shift the headquarters from India to Pakistan (1968). Lainnumwawia too, like Laldenga, had to take shelter in Pakistan, however, occasionally, coming back to India.

The relationship between the President and the Vice-President had never seemed strained in view of the outward cordiality but beneath the calm exterior there lay a strong current of discord between the two. Laldenga and his family left Mizo Hills for a safe sanctuary in Pakistan leaving behind the innocent Mizos to face the rampage of the security forces. He was not by the side of the masses to share their woes. This made a section of the MNF, let alone the oppressed Mizos, angry with the chief. Though Lainnumwawia never supported disaffection of the MNFs and always extolled the virtues of Laldenga, in the core of his heart, he hated the selfishness
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of Laldenga. Lalnunmawia, also hated his autocratic functioning. The obscurantist stand taken by Laldenga towards China made Lalnunmawia critical. He unlike Laldenga, was not a religious fanatic and perceived politics with an open mind. An old follower of H.K. Bawichhuaka, the Mizo revolutionary socialist, Lalnunmawia had a deep respect for the principles of socialism, and rightly or wrongly believed that Chinese help in the MNF mission was indispensable. In case the Pakistani line failed the Chinese line was to be kept open. His ideas however, underwent a dramatic change after the fall of Dhaka when he advocated negotiation with the authorities of Central Government, at the risk of his life.

Lalnunmawia belonged to a deadly insurgent organization where qualities of heart had no room and softness was strikingly risky. He was aware of that but had the confidence that his boys would not harm him. He belonged to the vanishing tribe of politicians who prize the human factor above comprehensive theoretical models. But to the diehard MNFs who engineered his murder, Lalnunmawia was a doomed hero sighing and suffering silently, trapped in his self-destructive games of deception.

Laldenga and Lalnunmawia escaped to foreign countries, followed by the other ministers of the so called MNF Government. Many of the MNF guerrillas were killed, their arms seized, and their hide-outs razed to the ground. Deserted by the leaders, the rank and file were thoroughly demoralized. They were also suffering from the want of provisions and funds. Occasionally, they resorted to dacoity and murder. The leadership passed into the hands of the new entrants. There was a communication gap between the top leadership and the rank and file.

Maras and the Chakmas Assisting the Government

Border Road Traffic Force replaced the Assam Public Works Department. New roads were constructed on war footing. Inaccessible parts of the Mizo Hills were made accessible. Within three years there had been rapid development of roads and bridges. Road networks covered almost all parts of the Mizo Hills. Army movement became easier. The MNF snapped the telegraph lines. There had been
great improvement of telecommunication lines also. Aizawl centre of the All India Radio was commissioned and improved.

There had been careful planning of mopping up operations to flush out the rebels from their hide-outs. Many of the rebels often took shelter in the house of the local Mizos. Due to local sentiments they were given shelter. Sometimes they used force. The Pawi Lakhers on the borders of Burma and Pakistan did not support the MNF Rebellion. The leaders of the Mara Freedom Party who were influential in the Pawi Lakher region of the Mizo Hills antagonized the MNF. The latter, on the other hand, took revenge by burning the Mara villages and killing the innocent men of their tribe. The Maras in the past were no less bloodthirsty than the Lushais but now they had no arms like the MNF. However the MNF oppression was a blessing in disguise. They were disunited and fighting against the Pawis. They narrowed down their differences of clannish equations and stepped up their unity to withstand the MNF onslaught. They came forward to cooperate with the local administration in detecting the rebels.

The Chakmas were concentrated near the township of Demagiri and Bara Pansari on the border of East Pakistan. The enmity between the Chakmas and the Mizos is a long standing one. The Chakmas are Buddhists, with a civilized past. The Mizos are mostly Christians with a barbaric past. The Chakmas were pro-Indian from the beginning, and they disliked the inclusion of their country in Pakistan. The Chakma freedom fighters had been fighting against the authorities of Pakistan but a substantial number of Mizos had been anti-Indian in outlook since Independence (1947). The customs, manners and traditions of the Chakmas are akin to those of the Bengalees or Assamese. They ungrudgingly use the Bengali and Hindi languages in their pursuit of knowledge. Their schools are Bengali medium schools like the Tipras in Tripura. Naturally, they did not help the MNF rather they cooperated with the Indian security forces in their operation. The MNF burnt their villages, killed Chakma men and women and looted their property. They also destroyed their Khyangs (temples). but soon they (Chakmas) overcame the initial difficulties, gathered strength to combat the enemies to protect themselves from depredations; the military posts were established at different places.
In antagonizing the Chakmas and the Pawl-Lakhers, the MNF made a mistake. The MNF manifesto which expressly declared its intention of improving the lot of hill men of Mizo Hills lost its validity by the cadres' overt action of oppressing the fellow hill tribes. It had its after-effects. The Kukies and Hmars of Manipur and Cachar (Assam), who took active part in the initial stages of the rebellion got alienated from the MNF. Even the Mizos living in the Jampui Hills of Tripura, who helped Laidenga with men and money were also disillusioned by the narrow chauvinism of MNF. The unification of Mizos, certainly a sentimental issue to the Mizos of each and every denomination, soon ceased to be an apolitical issue in Manipur, Assam and Tripura. T. Gougn, an important leader of the Mizos of Manipur, became the Minister of the Government of Manipur but he never fought the election on the issue of 'Greater Mizoram' of MNF. He ultimately became the President of the Zomi National Congress (ZNC) and the sworn enemy of MNF. The Tripura Mizos, enjoying the benefits of District Council, created certain problems for the Chief Commissioner of Tripura, by demanding more concessions but were not eager to get merger of Tripura territories with the Mizo Hills. Politically, they remained content with the Tripura administration. The Cachar Kukies and Hmars who are a cognate race of the Mizo tribe are more democratic than the Lushals. In the past they lived in the central and northern hills of Mizoram but they were forcibly ejected by the Lushai chiefs. In spite of the religious affiliations (all are Christians) the Kukies and Hmars differ from the Mizos mentally. Hmars Peoples Convention was formed to fight for the rights of the Hmar minority. Moreover, the Hmars and Cachar Kukies living in the Cachar plains became so accustomed with the plains people in their trade and agriculture that they hated the anti-Indian attitude of the MNF. Undoubtedly, they had a hidden love for the Mizo fighting men but they were not willing to give up their present avocations, hearth and home for the promised land of paradise of the MNF. The Mizos of Cachar are the best pineapple growers in India and well-to-do. But, unlike the Mizos of Mizo Hills, they are a stationary tribe. The MNF activists committed raids upon the Bengali dominated villages of Cachar which the Cachar Kukies did not like as that affected their own security.

Rebellion

Role of the Missionaries

The Queen's Proclamation of 1858, assured the Indians of religious freedom and of no encroachment upon their faith, and, in fact, the new British administration after the Mutiny kept a reasonable distance from the aggressive Christian missionaries. The European experience of the time, regarding the role of Church, was not a happy one and, in fact, Bismarck in Germany had to wage a war against this in his Kulturkampf. The newly-inducted educated civil servants of the Crown were aware of the dangers of Church politics. There was a perceptible difference in approach between the Company's officers and the Crown's civil servants. The administration in India since 1858 followed more or less a secular line in the regulated districts. But the administration of Burma was something different from India. Moreover, only half of Burma was annexed by then. The hill areas of Burma and Assam were incorporated late into the British dominion and their administrative set-up was different from that of the rest of India known as the regulated districts and princely states. Taking advantage of the special provisions of the administration of the non-regulated areas, the Christian missionaries, to perpetuate their preeminent position, extended their stranglehold in these inaccessible regions inhabited by the savages far off from the centres of civilization. The American Baptist missionaries, in fact, did more harm than good to the Karens, Kachins in Burma and Nagas in Burma and India. Despite the splendid records of the Church in the field of primary education and social service, the clergy suffered from all the evils of fundamentalist approach. They taught the tribals to consider themselves as Karen Christians and not as Burmese nationals. They also taught the Nagas and the Mizos the same lesson that they must strictly adhere to the Naga or Mizo culture to the exclusion of all the synthesizing influence that had brought about the evolution of the composite culture. There was no denying the fact that British administration was among the most important of all the cementing forces to integrate those diverse elements into the main currents of the political life; but those half-educated narrow evangelists, by their selfish interest and reactionary outlook arrested the progress of those forces of integration. Alexander Mackenzie, the Chief Commissioner of Bengal...
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The private Christian missionaries, Savidge and Lorrain had to leave Aizawl to make room for the Welsh Mission. When the Government of India decided to start school in Lushai Hills district the decision was in favour of Bengali medium. This decision was nothing unusual. The Lushai Kukles of Tripura were taught in the Bengali language and the Tripura Raja, rightly or wrongly, claimed jurisdiction over the Lushai Hills before its incorporation into the British dominion. The Tripuris being the tribals had accepted Bengali medium by then and had been competing with the Bengali boys. The Chittagong Hills Tracts district which was created from the territories of the hill tribes of Burma and Lushai Hills in 1856 where the Chakmas, Mong, Bohmongg resided, and which was the contiguous district of Lushai Hills also accepted Bengali as the medium of education and language in the court. The same was the case with the Mizo Kukles living in Cachar (Assam), the foothills of Lushai Hills. Even the Manipuris, and the Kukles (the relatives of the Mizos) also, did not oppose Bengali. Savidge and Lorrain, as such, had no objection to the introduction of

Bengali. Very few educated Mizos of that time who received education either at Silchar, Sylhet, Tripura or Chittagong, before the annexation of the Lushai Hills, had to read Bengali. Mention may be made in this connection, that Bankamput, the nephew of powerful Sukplial (Aizawl fame) and the grandson of illustrious Mizo chief Laihukla, an ex-student of Sylhet Government School was a minor Bengali poet. Similarly, Lal Ray, a Hmar chief of Cachar (Assam) was a man of letters and wrote Bengali essays and stories in Prawasti, the most celebrated Bengali monthly magazine of that time. The process of assimilation of the Mizos had its beginning in the second half of the last century. In fact, the missionaries of Silchar and Sylhet worked hard in translating the Bible into the tribal languages in the line of Bengali Bible, much earlier than what the missionaries of Welsh Mission did a few decades later from Aizawl. Rev Jones, the chief priest of Welsh Mission at Aizawl, disfavoured the idea of the introduction of Bengali language in the Lushai Hills district, and he brought it to the notice of Shakespear, the Superintendent who was all in all in the Lushai Hills.

Jones was of the opinion that as Lushais were savage tribes of diverse clans, they had no common language of their own; nor did they have any script, unlike the Karens of Burma. The American Baptists, however, destroyed the Karen script as it bore the influence of Devnagari scripts of India. Jones considered the use of Lushai dialect, Duliem, for the integration of all the Lushai clans into one Lushai nation. Quoting exhaustively from John Edgar, the former Deputy Commissioner, Cachar and an authority on Lushais, he said that the mighty Salo chiefs absorbed the other clans into their social fold by applying necessary force. Duliem acted as the catalytic agent in the process of social transformation. Jones was in favour of continuing the past practices. As majority of the chiefs in the Durbar were Salo there would be no difficulty in introducing the Lushai (Duliem) language.

The formula of Jones was that Duliem should be substantially improved, following the English syntax and that Roman script be used instead of Bengali. Welsh Mission in improving the Lushai language compiled the Lushai Primer using the method of transliteration adopted by Messrs Savidge and Lorrain in giving a written shape to the Lushai language. Thus the modern Lushai (Mizo) language is the handwork
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9. S. Chatterjee, Mizoram under British Rule, pp. 198-200.
of the missionaries. Modern Assamese language, of Jorhat missionaries from where Jones had come, paved the path of Assamization, a very important force of the nation forming process but it assumes narrowness when too much emphasis is laid on it. Modern Mizo nationality is not free from it.

But the real cause of objecting to the introduction of Bengali script or language had been political and cultural. Jones saw the Hinduization of the primitive tribes as the direct consequence of the Bengali language. The transformation of the Dimaschas, Manipurs, Tripurs, Jaintias, etc., into Hinduized tribes according to Jones, had destroyed their ethnic hill-identity. For the preservation of the ethnicity of the Mizo, like the Nagas, entry of Bengali language into the Lushai Hills had to be barred. The last and the most important cause of opposing the Bengali script was absolutely political. Bengal, at the close of the 19th century and at the beginning of the present century, was the hotbed of anti-British political activities. The political issues before and after the partition of Bengal in 1905 considerably stirred the whole of British India and its influence was felt in the foothills of the Lushai country. The introduction of Bengali script had likewise been abandoned in Khasi Hills, and so was also opposed in Lushai country. The last argument compelled Shakespeare to comply with the request of the Welsh Mission.

Beneath all these argument lay the actual motive for opposing Bengali and that was purely evangelical. In the plains of India where Hinduism had its strong cultural hold the missionaries failed miserably in their primary object of converting the poor people to the fold of the Church. The half educated churchmen or over-zealous educated Christian priests like Alexander Duff, because of their insulance and unfounded racial pride, failed to cope with the erudition and pragmatic approach of the Hindu religious leaders. They had to face stiff opposition from the established Hindu orders also and were afraid of that. The North Cachar Hills, like the Lushai Hills, were also an ‘excluded area’ under the Government of India Acts 1919, 1935, but the missionaries failed to win the hearts of the Hindu Dimaschas living there. The experience of the Welsh Mission at Sadia frontier was similar. The tribes refused to accept the gospel of Christ. The

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Lushai Hills was, like the Naga Hills, the fertile ground to spread the gospel unhampered by competition from the heathens. The location of the Chin Lushai country and Naga Hills was unique and the servants of the Church, living under the protective ring of Inner Line, by placating and local administration assumed almost the monopoly of contractual right of doing good to the Mizo: The local administration had no objection in agreeing with the views of the Church as the Governor had not been spending anything for the development of the tribes. The Church not only had the army of priests to attend to the spiritual needs of the hill men but also had fat moneybags enriched by lavish donations from the affluent West.

But the irony of the whole missionary enterprise is that the Church which strongly advocated the sustenance of the ethnic identity of the Mizos actually destroyed it once for all. The primitive tribes uprooted from their traditional moorings were pushed high with the speed of a rocket to the unknown domain of Christianity; a sanctuary which they could not understand, an asylum for highly developed communities having the basic mental infrastructure. The exposure of the tribal people to heavy doses of unknown foreign teachings proved highly disruptive to their social mores and cultural values, and the clever foreign missionaries used their private licences as a front for beaming Western programmes inimical to our national interest. Because of inaccessibility of the hilly tract and the defects of administrative system all these misdeeds eluded the eyes of the public. The process had been continuing unchecked with the overt support of the docile local administration, till the arrival of Antony Gilchrist McCall, the energetic wartime Superintendent of the Lushai Hills district. With the exception of Thomas Herbert Lewin and John Shakespeare, McCall was probably the best Superintendent who considered the general well-being of the Mizo.\footnote{S. Chatterjee, Mizoism Encyclopaedia, pp. 602-604.} He was the only Superintendent with a liberal frame of mind and much needed modern outlook. He disliked the mindless ways of the Church in destroying the indigenous Mizo culture and recommended its revival. But much water had flown down the Boinu to the Bay of Bengal since the days of Shakespeare (1895). The war time hero A.G. McCall
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Making of Mizoram

could not withstand the onslaught of the missionaries who had their right men to influence not only the Governor of Assam but also the rulers in Delhi and in London. The exigencies of the war, when advancing Japan had been at the doorstep of Assam, led the Government of India at the request of the War Office to requisition the services of McCall from distant Africa to protect India’s eastern frontier. But, notwithstanding his remarkable achievement during the worst time of the war years, he had to unceremoniously leave the Lushai Hills the moment Japanese retreat began, making room for an imperialist Superintendent A.R.H. McDonald to restore the administration to its original line.

Both McCall and McDonald were highlanders with bravado but McCall, unlike his successor, was polite and as a thoroughbred soldier, he was never arrogant about his administrative post. McDonald, an experienced officer of steel frame however, could not forget his preeminent position as a ruler and always kept at a distance from his subjects. Moreover, he was shrewd and was nourished under the imperialist ideas of Robert Neil Reid, the celebrated wartime Governor of Assam who was notoriously infamous for his repressive policies towards Indian nationalism. Crosswate or Burney or Mackenzie were officers of imperialist mould but never attempted to go against the basic policies of administration or ever tried to cross the limit of their jurisdictions. Reid on the other hand instead of executing the policies of His Majesty’s Government assumed the right to frame the policies of the Crown. This departure seriously disturbed the general course of governance of the country, consequently, affecting the future historical trend. Long before he formulated the Crown Colony Scheme, he cherished some fond ideas to liberate the Christian tribes of Assam and Burma from the control of India and Burma. But the political issue of the hill areas remaining within India are not related merely to the matters of policy or execution and an executive’s unwarranted zeal for policy making was not at all desirable. But, on the other hand, it was characterized by scandalous revelations of misdemeanour at the top echelons of the administrative management of the Indo-Burmese frontiers.

The unholy alliances of imperialism with fundamentalism are the facts of history and despite the change in the attitude of the administration towards the close of the British rule in India, the evil impact of the entente was there and in vulnerable areas the priests in collusion with the fragile executive sowed the seeds of separatism to arrest the growth of Indian nationalism.

McDonald, although rude, was a strong personality. The missionaries were not unaware of that. They placated him. The new political party Mizo Union owes its origin to young Mizo Association, a surrogate of the Church, and the Church in Mizo Hills before Independence had been one, indivisible whole. The formation of the new party had the fortune to receive the blessings of McDonald, as the Indian National Congress had received from Lord Dufferin at the time of its birth. But Imperialist McDonald watched with horror the influence of Indian nationalism on that body. The Mizo Union guarded the interest of the Mizo tribes along with that of India. Naturally, the clash began. McDonald knew well that the reactionary clergy was not happy with the new party’s call for India’s outlook. But the public opinion against the chiefs was high. So a split was engineered by the administration through the priests although they remained behind the scenes. Far off from the centre stage.

An educated teacher of the Alzawi Government School, L.B. Thanga, whose ambition in life had been for a career in the government service rather than for a politician’s uncertain career submitted the plan of transfer of Lushai Hills from India to Burma. It was also a pet proposal of Reid, who had been working hard at that time along with Coupland on the feasibility of introducing his Crown Colony Scheme to the British Parliament with the help of the Tories. The rise of UMFO as a dominant party was to go a long way in realizing the dream of Reid. It is interesting to note that L.B. Thanga, who founded the party to complete the transfer of Mizo Hills from Assam (India) to Burma and remained its president for a couple of months, instead of migrating to Burma, the paradise, preferred to remain in Assam and joined the Assam Civil Service. The clever Government did not waste time or take risk and induced the angry man to a cosmopolitan of the administration of Assam. McDonald had his last laugh. Was that a laughter of joy or a roar of wrath? It requires another Aristophanes to dramatize it. Neither Thanga nor
of the administration towards the close of the British rule in India, the evil impact of the entente was there and in vulnerable areas the priests in collusion with the fragile executive sowed the seeds of separatism to arrest the growth of Indian nationalism.

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An educated teacher of the Aizawl Government School, L.B. Thanga, whose ambition in life had been for a career in the government service rather than for a politician's uncertain career submitted the plan of transfer of Lushai Hills from India to Burma. It was also a pet proposal of Reid, who had been working hard at that time along with Coupland on the feasibility of introducing his Crown Colony Scheme to the British Parliament with the help of the Tories. The rise of UMFO as a dominant party was to go a long way in realizing the dream of Reid. It is interesting to note that L.B. Thanga who founded the party to complete the transfer of Mizo Hills from Assam (India) to Burma and remained its president for a couple of months, instead of migrating to Burma, the paradise, preferred to remain in damn Assam and joined the Assam Civil Service. The clever Government did not waste time or take risk and inducted the angry man to a cosy post of the administration of Assam, McDonald had his last laugh. Was that a laughter of joy or a roar of wrath? It requires another Aristophanes to dramatize it. Neither Thanga nor
McDonald is to be blamed for that, for the floodgates of opportunism and corruption were wide opened after Independence in the new political set-up. Lalmawia, the energetic leader of UMFO, also had to be accommodated by the Congress rulers in a big way as he had much higher aspirations than a petty service careerist.

McDonald had to leave the Lushai Hills under painful circumstances. Notwithstanding his personality and administrative acumen, his tactlessness, intemperate language and arrogance led to his downfall. His exit from Aizawl was no less inglorious than that of his predecessor McCall; only difference was that McCall was not the favourite of the Church whereas McDonald was. With the exit of McDonald, his favourite UMFO degenerated into a debating forum of disgruntled political amateurs. The recall of Peter, the successor of McDonald, ended the imperialist tradition of British rulers working in alliance with the missionaries. Independence brought in a new era in Mizoram, notwithstanding the political nuisance created by Peter. The new era saddled the missionaries with new responsibilities as the protective umbrella of the administration vanished overnight. The Indian Constitution, however, along with the promise of Nehruvian secularism, revived the sagging morale of the missionaries who regained their lost position and began to direct the politics of the Mizos. It was no wonder that McCall having seen the overbearing influence of Church once commented that the Mizos needed no politics but a political leader.

The Church uprooting the tribals from their traditional moorings indoctrinated them with an infertile political culture forcibly taking away the critical faculty in them. Doctrines close the mind to reason and prevent freedom of thought. This led to social lag in Mizo society.

Looking back at the political angle, the missionaries of the Indo-Burmese eastern border were conservative, pan-Christian zealots armed with special privileges and work permits. In their zeal for proselytization they did not face the slightest competition, let alone opposition which they had to experience in the more advanced plains of British India. In the new political set-up of independent India and Burma the missionaries, aware of their past, became afraid of their new political masters who were not Christians and whom they had earlier derisively called heathens. They had the misgivings that India and Burma would retaliate against them for their sordid past, or at least would drastically curtail their age-old manipulative privileges. With the ulterior motive of retaining the pre-eminent position which was mainly political they instigated the simple non-political tribal minorities to rise in rebellion. The foreign Christian missionaries, as they lived in a closed society failed to realize the importance of the resurgent nationalism of South-East Asia after World War II. The Karen and Kachin rebellions of Burma were the outcome of the political separatism of these tribes. These uprisings had the backing of the local presbyters and the church bigwigs. The Naga rebellion of the Naga National Council was also not free from the missionary influence. When MNF was born it adopted the protection of Christianity as one of its aims. But the moot question is who was going to crush Christianity? More so, what had religion to do with a political party? After all, the other political party, the Mizo Union was not opposed to Christianity. The ruling Congress party had no antipathy to the Christians. Neither at the all India level, was there any powerful political party like Bharatiya Janata Party then, for the Christians to fear. An analysis of the class-character of the MNF leaders reveals their close association with the clergy. In the ultimate political analysis the Presbyterian Church was the supporter of the MNF creed, and among village presbyters especially in south Mizo Hills, the pastors and the lower clergy openly supported the insurgency in its early period. That was also the case with the Baptists. But the churches in Mizo Hills had their close links with the churches of Silchar, Shillong, Guwahati and Jorhat. In fact, the springboard of the Church in the North-East had been Shillong. The higher clergy did not support the insurgency and considered that the movement would bring untold miseries to the innocent Mizos. The minority psychology since Independence has been to support the ruling party and also the government. In Mizo Hills district, the Congress party was non-existent but the 'Operation Security' with all its fury was active since 6 March 1966 and its impact was felt by the village elders of the Church. The lower clergy and also the laity appealed to the higher clergy to come to rescue them in times of their distress. But as
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expected the hierarchy instructed them to exercise restraint. Presbyterian Church, however, agreed to mediate between the underground MNF and the security forces. Despite the hold of the Church over the Mizos, some young MNF activists expressed their displeasure over the presbyters' role. On 8 September 1966, when the counter-insurgency measures had almost throttled the movement in Mizo Hills district and the armed forces had been preparing for a large offensive in the coming winter, the Presbyterians and the Baptists issued a joint appeal to the Mizos to keep themselves away from violence. This attitude led to the formation of peace committee along the lines of Naga Hills which helped in the restoration of peace. But the lower clergy in the villages could not give up so easily their old belief in MNF insurgency. MNF was an ultra-radical party which owed its origin to Mizo Cultural Society, a by-product of the Church. The clerical support to MNF ultimately led the Mizo masses to come forward to extend their support to Peoples Conference, as T. Sallo, its leader, was up in arms against the oppression of the Mizos by the security men. In short, the Church factor was an important factor in determining the course of the insurgency in Mizoram. The Church with its well-knit organization, huge foreign donation and feedback of anti-national ideas played a negative role which undermined the process of reconstruction. The Government of Burma had to face the same in the past and India faced the virulence of religious politics in Kashmir and Punjab in the near future.

Troubles in East Pakistan

The MNF pinned hopes on the support of Pakistan. But the internal affairs of that country were unsettled. After the Indo-Pak conflict (1965-66) Field Marshal Ayub Khan had to go. The Military Junta under Yahya Khan followed the same anti-Indian policy. Z.A. Bhutto remained at the helm of the Foreign Affairs for a long time. Laldenga had a good personal rapport with Bhutto. But the latter lost his popularity in East Pakistan. The East Pakistanis believed that the Agartala conspiracy case in which Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was implicated by the Military Junta was the handiwork of Bhutto. They were tired of the oppressive rule of Pakistan's dictators. In the general election Pakistan's People Party of

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Bhutto secured a majority in West Pakistan but the Awami League of Mujibur Rahman secured the majority in East Pakistan. In the whole of Pakistan, if the theory of majority was to be applied, Mujibur Rahman was to become the Prime Minister. But Bhutto's love for power was a known fact and he created obstacles before the Awami League leader. Pakistan was plunged into political chaos. Islamabad found it extremely difficult to control East Pakistan. The nationalist forces of the Bangladeshis took a new turn. In spite of Laldenga's good relationship with the Pakistani leaders, the MNF rank and file in exile had witnessed the antipathy of the local people to the army rule. They visualized the fall of Pakistan in Bangladesh. Laldenga and his family took shelter in Pakistan while the MNF which was banking upon the moral and military support from that country remained ill at ease.

Regrouping of Mizo Villages

After the Mizo Rebellion of 1966, there had been a de facto transfer of administration of the Mizo district from Assam to the Central Government. The administration took rigid steps to curb the insurgency. The MNF was banned. The Assam Disturbed Areas Act gave wide powers to the civil and military officers to destroy arms dumps, fortified position shelters, training camps for armed volunteers. A large number of Administrative Officers (A O) were posted in the villages to redress the grievances of the people. Curfew was imposed throughout the district. Sale, production and import of guns into Mizo Hills district was prohibited, the gun licence holders were directed to deposit their guns with the Government. Restrictions were also imposed upon torchlights, jungle boots, typewriters and Khaki and olive green clothes.

Field Marshal Maneckshaw had been on the Burma front during World War II. He witnessed the success of the regrouping of villages in Malay peninsula while curbing the insurgency. The army suggested to the administration the same formula. The security men pushed back the MNF volunteers but they would occasionally appear at the dead of the night from their hide-outs to loot the property of the villagers and to terrorize them. When the security men would
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arrive they would escape to the jungles. In those days there were no roads in the interior of Mizo Hills. The MNF activists would climb down from their hide-outs and demand from the villagers volunteers, supply of free labour and accommodation under pain of cruel reprisals. The rebels would collect information about the movement of the security forces. Thus, the MNF guerrillas conveniently ambushed the army in their march. Moreover, it was not feasible to provide guards to all the interior villages, numbering about 1,000.

Professor Tarlok Singh, the member of Planning Commission, recommended greater allocation of funds for the economic uplift of Mizo Hills district. B.P.Chaliha, the Chief Minister of Assam was highly influenced by Tarlok Singh's economic strategy. When Laldenga was in Silchar jail in 1963-64 Tarlok Singh visited Mizo Hills and talked to Chaliha in Shillong. Immediately before the Mizo Rebellion Tarlok Singh visited Mizo Hills again (January 1966) to make an on-the-spot enquiry of the development schemes. He found that there were very small *punjees* (villages) in distant places in the interior of the hills. As small plots are uneconomic agriculture holdings, so are the small villages scattered in distant places on the slopes and hilltops. On economic grounds he recommended the reconstitution of the small villages into a larger unit. Thus regrouping of villages became necessary to push up the village economy of the Mizo people. Field Marshal Manekshaw's suggestion, was however, based on military considerations as well. If the villages were shifted on the roadside and regrouped into bigger units, they could be provided with the best possible military assistance. The population of the Mizos (excluding the Maras, Pawis, Chakmas, Reangs, etc) in the Mizo Hills was not a considerable one so shifting of population did not pose a problem. Thus, the scheme of regrouping of villages was accepted and implemented to contain the MNF insurgency and also to speed up the economic development.

The remote and almost inaccessible Mizo Hills which shot into the limelight by an uprising on the night of 28 February 1966, might set a new pattern in tribal life for the four other hill districts of Assam. It seemed to be a promising likelihood as employment opportunities appeared on the tribal horizon with the better economic prospects following the launching of 'Operation Security' (Third Phase) by the
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"The green garbed hills now echo to the march of feet and the road of jeeps and trucks as hundreds of Mizo families move into their new safer homes along the 150 mile long Virangte-Lungleh road under Operation Security.

"Nearly 40000 people have been moved out of the outlying villages in the Mizo Hills District, where they were exposed to occasional surprise attacks by the Mizo National Front rebels. They have been regrouped in 14 new townships — seven of them south of Aizawl and seven north of it — where they will live in peace and security and carry on their usual vocations unhampered by the marauders.

"Operation Security, which was launched under the overall direction of Lt-Gen S.H.F.J. Manekshaw, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, will conclude in mid-February when a total of 50,000 Mizo tribesmen will be resettled in 18 new townships in a 10 mile safety zone on either side of the Virengi-Lungleh road that snakes through the high hills of the district."11

The response from the Mizos who had been migrating from the villages sprawled over 4,000 square miles — nearly half of the total area of the Mizo Hills district, had been magnificent according to the Security Force commander-in-chief of the Operation. Not a single case of forcible evacuation or shooting had been reported. What was more, the village leaders and even the priests had been cooperating with the army, the commander said. The 14 new completed townships consisted of an independent hut for each family as also schools, children's parks, churches, small hospitals and dispensaries, waterpoints and community toilets. Typical of the new settlements was the village of Durtlang, seven miles north of Aizawl, where 1,000 Mizos have been placed in their new dwellings alongside 1,250 old residents.

The township was provided with two new schools which had 300 children on their rolls, a small four-bed hospital in tents and a dispensary manned by the army doctor, a ration stall where incoming families received free foodgrains, a fair price shop which sold tooth goods and panaspalti, and a water tank from where the housewives drew their daily

requirements of water twice a day.

"A beautiful, well-maintained Church an old one stands out on a hilltop nearby. Here the old and the young spend a good part of their Sunday in prayer and hymn singing. The Mizos, most of whom are Christians, are a very religious minded tribe and love their Church more than anything else."^12

Women assembled outside the ration stall and filled their baskets with foodgrains and tea. Each adult and child received a weekly quota of four kilos of rice, flour, pulses, tea, sugar and multivitamin tablets. This was in addition to the paddy stocks brought by the tribes from their old villages. The ration cards were issued to the migrants which entitled them to free ration for six weeks. The village councils in all those areas were consulted prior to the beginning of 'Operation Security'. No wonder, a majority of the councillors cooperated with the authorities when they were convinced that the operation was in their own interests and that their religious customs would be fully respected. In Zamabawk, four miles south of Aizawl, 1,500 Mizos were rehabilitated. The Mizos never received medical attention before the army doctors came in. It was evident from the large number of cases of dysentery and malnutrition in Zamabawk. In fact, all the migrants were given smallpox vaccination and inoculated against cholera and typhoid when they arrived in the new settlement. The 'Operation Security' was the brainchild of Lieutenant-General Manekshaw in November 1966 when he masterminded the entire strategy.

"No advance publicity was given to the Operation because it was feared that such a step would encourage the MNF gangs to create a nuisance in the villages. Although the back of the rebels had been broken......; and they had been driven to distant part of the district, occasional harassment of peaceful Mizos in outlying areas continued. In these circumstances the army authorities thought it better to launch Operation Security swiftly and without publicity."^13

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12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
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the vicinity. The next step was to choose strategic hill-points skewering the selected townships where the troops would be deployed to eliminate any possible future attack by rebel gangs. Thought was also given to new openings for the tribes. The Mizos would turn out to be better farmers when they were introduced to better agricultural techniques and provided with good quality of seeds. They also could be encouraged to take an interest in cottage industries. The army also envisaged new careers for the tribes by putting them to work on border roads.

"Pakistan, the knowledgeable among the Mizos say, had been instrumental in stirring up the trouble and creating unrest here by liberally supplying arms to the Mizo National Front."\(^{14}\)

Meanwhile, the Mizo problem received adequate attention from the press and the public especially in Assam. The Chief Minister, B.P. Chaliha, made a lengthy statement in the Assam Assembly on 1 April 1967 (Shillong). He said that 50,000 people in 18 regrouped or progressive protected villages (PPV) had been settling down by then, being assured of protection, food supplies, education and medical facilities. Securing that district’s border with Pakistan had become an important consideration and the road from Langleh to Demagiri was, therefore, being improved, Chaliha emphasized that military operations as well as extension of civil administration had been progressing quite satisfactorily in the given conditions of terrain and geography and the resources that the country was able to spare for the purpose in the face of so many other demands. The Chief Minister was, however, of opinion, "a full sense of security and normalcy has yet to return to the area."\(^{15}\)

He further continued: "Our forces are waging and will continue to wage a relentless campaign and the rebel will not be given any respite till he realizes his folly and lays down his arms.

"Almost daily there are contacts with hostiles in one place or another, and many of their hideouts have been located and destroyed. A large number of their supply dumps

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid. 7

\(^{15}\) The Statesman, Calcutta, 2 April 1967.
in thick jungles was also unearthed and liquidated..."16

The Chief Minister pointed out that the things had been made worse by the sinister and reprehensible role of Pakistan. He said:

"According to information available, large bands of hostiles are still crossing and recrossing the border with Pakistan in which country they have established bases for both operation and training."

Chalilha made it clear that the hostiles had also tried to cross into Burma but that country had turned down all overtures on the part of the MNF to gain bases and support.

The statement of Chalilha unmistakably pointed out an accusing finger at Pakistan for supporting the insurgency in India but the military government of Burma did not help the MNF for two reasons. Rangoon's relationship with Delhi had been more or less cordial and Rangoon feared a border clash with CPR. Moreover, the internal constraints compelled the military authorities of Rangoon to refrain from tolerating insurgent outfits on the soil of Burma. The sad memory of Burmese insurgency had been fresh in their minds. The movement in Burma gave a big jolt to the unity and integrity of the country and forced the Army to step into the corridors of administration replacing the civil authorities. G.L. Nanda, the Home Minister of India, took effective measures in dealing with the demarcation of boundaries between the two countries. Moreover, after the Chinese debacle (1962) and Indo-Pak conflict India was left with no other option but to maintain a friendly relation with Burma. The policy of spurning the MNF overtures by the authorities of Rangoon was an exercise in utility in recognition of India's political necessity. India was grateful to Burma.

Refusal of the Burmese authorities to help Laldenga’s insurgents directly hit the management of the rebel organization. Laldenga belonged to South Mizoram and had good connections with the Mizos inside the Pakistan border and he was lucky enough to receive all possible assistance from the Pakillan authorities who were instigating terrorism in India to satisfy their political grudge. But the failure of MNF to establish hide-outs and training camps in Burma

16. Ibid.

seriously affected the guerrilla strategy of Laldenga. In desperation he laid the blame on Lahnunmawia, the Vice-President, who had a larger contact-base among the Mizos of Upper Burma ousting eastern Mizoram. That was the beginning of the rift in the rebel organization which resulted in chain reactions in future. On the other side of the picture, Pakistan's assistance to Indian insurgency proved counter-productive in the long run. The East Bengalies, who had been groaning under the oppressive rule of West Pakistan and had been occasionally protesting, ultimately rose into rebellion resulting in the dismemberment of Pakistan. That inevitability they had failed to anticipate. But when it came, the authorities of Islamabad had to accept it as the price of their own follies.

Meanwhile, the second phase of regrouping of villages along the Mizo Hills-Tripura, Mizo Hills-East Pakistan and portions of Mizo Hills - Burma borders had been completed by the Indian Army (14 November 1969). It also incorporated areas adjacent to the Silchar-Champai, Lungleh-Demagiri, Lungleh-Lawngtlai roads and some parts of the eastern part of the district.17 The total population involved was 127,988 from 326 villages. But the actual number of people moved was 54,838. Taking into consideration the 48,000 persons involved in the first regrouping in January-February 1967, more than one third of the total population of 328,000 of the district had been regrouped.

The villages regrouped had been divided into 57 centres each with an average population of 2,500. The centres were carefully selected with all the modern facilities. Sufficient time was given to the villagers to harvest their Jhum cultivation and shift their belongings including cattle and poultry. Each of the PPV was provided with a security post. The people were provided with jobs like road-building and portage. The Assam Government provided a rehabilitation loan of Rs 400 per family. In spite of the bad weather the Air Force had dropped 95 per cent of the estimated ration supplies. Services cooperatives had also been set up and the charges for transportation and storage of the cooperatives and the fair price shops were borne by the government which amounted to a substantial sum.

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Chailha made it clear that the hostiles had also tried to cross into Burma but that country had turned down all overtures on the part of the MNF to gain bases and support.

The statement of Chailha unmistakably pointed out an accusing finger at Pakistan for supporting the insurgency in India but the military government of Burma did not help the MNF for two reasons. Rangoon's relationship with Delhi had been more or less cordial and Rangoon feared a border clash with CPR. Moreover, the internal constraints compelled the military authorities of Rangoon to refrain from tolerating insurgent outfits on the soil of Burma. The sad memory of Burmese Insurgency had been fresh in their minds. The movement in Burma gave a big jolt to the unity and integrity of the country and forced the Army to step into the corridors of administration replacing the civil authorities. G.L. Nanda, the Home Minister of India, took effective measures in dealing with the demarcation of boundaries between the two countries. Moreover, after the Chinese debacle (1962) and Indo-Pak conflict India was left with no other option but to maintain a friendly relation with Burma. The policy of spurning the MNF overtures by the authorities of Rangoon was an exercise inutility in recognition of India's political necessity. India was grateful to Burma.

Refusal of the Burmese authorities to help Laldenga's insurgents directly hit the management of the rebel organization. Laldenga belonged to South Mizoram and had good connections with the Mizos inside the Pakistan border and he was lucky enough to receive all possible assistance from the Pakistani authorities who were instigating terrorism in India to satisfy their political grudge. But the failure of MNF to establish hide-outs and training camps in Burma seriously affected the guerrilla strategy of Laldenga. In desperation he laid the blame on Lalumnumwia, the Vice-President, who had a larger contact-base among the Mizos of Upper Burma outlying eastern Mizoram. That was the beginning of the rift in the rebel organization which resulted in chain reactions in future. On the other side of the picture, Pakistan's assistance to Indian insurgency proved counter-productive in the long run. The East Bengalees, who had been groaning under the oppressive rule of West Pakistan and had been occasionally protesting, ultimately rose into rebellion resulting in the dismemberment of Pakistan. That inevitability they had failed to anticipate. But when it came, the authorities of Islamabad had to accept it as the price of their own follies.

Meanwhile, the second phase of regrouping of villages along the Mizo Hills-Tripura, Mizo Hills-East Pakistan and portions of Mizo Hills - Burma borders had been completed by the Indian Army (14 November 1969). It also incorporated areas adjacent to the Silchar-Champai, Lunglei-Demagiri, Lunglei-Lawngtalai roads and some portions of the eastern part of the district.17 The total population involved was 127,968 from 326 villages. But the actual number of people moved was 54,838. Taking into consideration the 48,000 persons involved in the first regrouping in January-February 1967, more than one third of the total population of 328,000 of the district had been regrouped.

The villages regrouped had been divided into 57 centres each with an average population of 2,500. The centres were carefully selected with all the modern facilities. Sufficient time was given to the villagers to harvest their Jhum cultivation and shift their belongings including cattle and poultry. Each of the PPV was provided with a security post. The people were provided with jobs like road-building and porterage. The Assam Government provided a rehabilitation loan of Rs 400 per family. In spite of the bad weather the Air Force had dropped 95 per cent of the estimated ration supplies. Services cooperatives had also been set up and the charges for transportation and storage of the cooperatives and the fair price shops were borne by the government which amounted to a substantial sum.


16. Ibid.
People had been encouraged to go in for improved type of vegetable cultivation and seeds were distributed among the villagers. Experts on soil conservation and animal husbandry had also been posted there to give quick help and advice. Nearly 150,000 people had been inoculated against contagious diseases, limited postal facilities had also been made available.

Never before and nowhere in India, had such a gigantic task of rehabilitation of villagers at an enormous cost, ever been undertaken so neatly and methodically. As everything was done under the supervision of the army and its highly imaginative and sympathetic Lieutenant General, there was no scope of waste or corruption. As the whole business was free from corruption there was no voice of complaint. There had been some occasional instances of disruption of the army’s work by the marauding MNF bands but the villagers who realized where their interests lay cooperated with the security men. The regrouping of villages brought a total change in the lifestyle as well as in the social order of the Mizos. The largesse of the Central Government helped set up new economic units spread over the whole Mizo Hills district. The wheel of economic progress had a brilliant start. The Lushai Hills Chiefship Act was already abolished and the gerontocracy that had been tottering under the pressure of modernism had to acquiesce in its logical end, making room for the urban democracy of affluent type. The reconstruction of the Mizo society on a rational basis with the market forces of economy on the march, completed the task of civilized a primitive tribe which 70 years of British and Indian administration had failed to complete. Neither Lewin, nor Edgar, nor Shakespeare can bear comparison with Lieutenant General Manekshaw, so far as the contributions of transforming the Mizoos into a modern community are concerned. Indeed, by all considerations, it is Manekshaw, the compassionate military officer who is the real founder of modern Mizoram. Different committees recommended substantial economic aid to the Mizo people but the concrete plan came from the pen of a soldier who also had the opportunity to implement the onerous task entrusted to him.

The PPV of Mizo Hills district laid the foundation of modern Mizoram. In all parts of the globe urbanization is the consequence of industrialization. In India, the process of urbanization also followed the same path but in Mizoram it is the other way round. Industries, small or large scale, followed the urban centres which had been set up in a neatly planned manner beforehand. Naturally, urbanization in Mizoram had been free from many faults that are associated with this process elsewhere. However, in Mizoram it was not an unmixed blessing. It had its evil ramifications, economic, social, and political which the Mizos and the allied tribes had to face in the near future. The immediate beneficiaries of the economic reconstruction had been the Mizos, especially the Mizoos of northern Mizo Hills near the Alizawl belt, to the exclusion of the Maras (Lakhir), Paws, Chakmas, Reangs and other minor tribes who deliberately chose to remain aloof from the Mizo Rebellion of 1966. The Pawls and the Lakhir were also the sons of the soil like the Mizos and also Christian in their faith, but did not support the MNF insurgency nor were they willing to accept Laldenga as their undisputed leader. The undue favour showered upon the Mizos naturally led to mixed reaction among the Maras and Lakhir. No wonder, some of their leaders lamented that their neglect was the price of their being remaining peaceful and loyal to the government. They openly aired their grievances and threatened that if the government was amenable only to the language of violence they would not hesitate to respond to it. The government realized its mistake and increased the budgetary allotment to augment the speed of development in the Mara and Pawl regions of South Mizo Hills. However, the allotments were proportionately much lower than the ones for the Mizos in the PPV. Moreover, the new allotments for those backward areas were not properly utilized in the absence of a regular infrastructure and efficient machinery of management (Army). Thus, this discrimination resulted in regional economic imbalance of Mizoram which precipitated political resentment. The worst evil was, however, the rise of a neo-rich class among the Mizos who soon captured the political apparatus of Mizoram, a small state with a sparse population, and reduced other political factors to insignificance. Formerly, the Mizos represented the social paramounty of the Sailo chiefs in their gerontocratic order but now the nouveau riche’s dominance became an accomplished fact of social life. In spite of all their

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failings, the Sailo chiefs were not upstarts and had their moorings in their tradition. But this new class, in their insatiable lust for money, drifted from their old order and advocated a social system which was far removed from the old values the tribal quom once took pride in.

Mizo Rebellion of 1966 seriously affected the life and society of the Buddhist Chakmas of South Mizo Hills. The Chakmas had been more advanced and comparatively more civilized than the Mizos before Independence. They were loyal to the government and did not support the secessionist move of Laldenga. They were also opposed to the anti-Indian bias of the radical Mizos who looked upon Pakistan as their saviour. When the MNF rebellion broke out, the loyal Chakmas at great personal risk volunteered to assist the Indian armed forces in suppressing the rebellion. For this the armed hostiles took revenge upon them. Almost the entire population of Chakma Buddhists inhabiting the areas bordering East Pakistan had been rendered destitute by the Mizo hostiles. It was alleged that 39 Chakmas had been killed and 48 Chakma villages burnt down by Mizo hostiles since the rebellion broke out. Resettlement and rehabilitation of the oppressed Chakmas were taken up by the administration but the Chakmas, unlike the Mizo, were not fortunate enough to receive the largesse. The Chakmas of Mizoram are however, less enterprising than the Christian tribes and are sadly indolent. Thus, in the speed of development both economic or social, they lagged much behind the Mizos. Even in the field of education where there was the phenomenal improvement in Mizoram, the rate of progress among the Chakmas had been nominal. In the programme of economic reconstruction, funds undoubtedly play a very vital role but then money is not everything; man behind the money is the determining factor in economic progress and in this respect the Mizos were more advanced than the Chakmas. However, the Maras and Pawis are no less enterprising than the Mizos but their economic backwardness was the consequence of the wrong planning of the government. In any case the regrouping of Mizo villages created the problem of minorities in Mizoram which was non-existent before that grand scheme.

The regrouping of villagers into urban centres made the new generation hanker for the town living and as Aizawl provided better facilities of modern life, it expanded
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Immediate Results of the Insurgency

The wide range of powers vested in the security men...
under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act and Defence of India Rule made them nearly absolute. The rights of the civilians were drastically curbed and moreover these wide powers had the natural tendency to be abused. However, the MNF rebels faced opposition from all sides and the decadent insurgency was curbed to a great extent by the end of 1968.

The rebellion had its own effects. It was followed by a crop failure of that year. In 1967 there was famine again. The intensity of the famine was, however, not like that of 1959. The relief measures were carried out by the government and also by the political parties. The President of the Mizoram District Congress, Phu Dengthlam, came to Silchar and purchased rice from Silchar to be distributed to the famine-affected people of Mizoram. Cachar was also under famine condition. Because of the Indo-Pak conflict and severe flood in 1966-67, there was acute food shortage in Assam. The famine relief made both the people of Cachar (Assam) and Mizoram poorer. Many of the MNF activists laid down their arms to surrender. They were granted general amnesty by the order of the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi. Among those who surrendered and returned to normal avocation of life was Phu Lalthanhlawa, one time bodyguard and Assistant General Secretary of Laldenga and a young man of promise. Those returnees abjured violence and swore to abide by the Constitution of India. They wanted to join the political parties like Congress. As MNF was the bitter enemy of the Mizo Union, the leaders of the Mizo Union were not willing to accept them because of their secessionist past. However, Phu Dengthlam, the Congress President was willing to accept them. The matter was left to the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee. A Convention of the Cachar-Mizo Convention was held on 26-28 October 1968 at Silchar under the Presidentship of Sadique Ali, the General Secretary, AICC.18 On 27 October a very important resolution was passed which opened the doors of the Congress party to the MNF returnees. This resolution was approved by the AICC. Young Lalthanhlawa, thus, became a member of the Congress party and ultimately led the destiny of the Mizo people as Chief Minister. Induction of Lalthanhlawa rejuvenated the Congress which was a new one in Mizoram. Later on Mizoram

Rebellion

Union got merged with the Congress and Lalthanhlawa, as General Secretary of the party, played a very vital role in this respect.

Impact of Turmoil in East Pakistan on MNF

A careful study of the chronology of events in Pakistan on the eve of emergence of Bangladesh reveals how ghastly fighting was going on in East Pakistan between the democratic forces of liberalism and the military dictatorship, between the power-mongers and the people and the enemies of the people. And the MNF, which professed to be the champion of the oppressed people in India, had shamelessly colluding with the enemies of the people, the reactionary forces that had trampled human rights. The rank and file of Laldenga's guerrilla in East Pakistan, despite all the restrictions imposed on them by the supremo, had the opportunity to witness the spontaneous nature of the uprising and also the brutalities of the Pakistani authorities. Those junior partners of Laldenga, many of them disgusted with the Pakistani barbarity, wanted to come back home to MNF's ideological bankruptcy, wanted to lead a normal life, surrender to the Government of India and lead a normal life. They had enough experience. But they could not come out so easily. They plotted against Laldenga, the supreme leader and forsook him in 1969.

Laldenga's intelligence wing was watchful enough to sense the disaffection and on investigation it was found that 14 members of the MNA were engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow Laldenga. That was indeed a desperate plan to which the boys at filled with dangerous consequences. Of the 14 boys at least half of them were sick as they could not withstand the hard life in the desolate forest devoid of proper medical facilities. The other boys suffered from homesickness. In any case, a substantial number of the boys in the barrack case suffered from a sense of frustration as their initial euphoria over the revolution was over and they also discovered the inner contradiction of the MNF philosophy. All these thundered out the orders to shoot them for their failure and they issue was placed before the military executive and they were decided to court martial the guilty boys on charges of.
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Impulsive Laldenga lost his balance of mind in rage and thundered out the orders to shoot them for their failings. The issue was placed before the military executive and they decided to court martial the guilty boys on charges of
sedition and gross violation of discipline. The helpless boys, deadly scared, were awaiting death in confinement. The news reached Mizoram. The members of Young Mizo Women's Association and the Mothers Association were very much pained at the cruel development. The news caused a flutter in the women's circle in Mizoram. Even Mrs Leidenga who always led a secluded life in the household of the MNF supremo was perturbed. The benevolent churchman, Reverend Zairema, was moved. He devised means to free the boys from the clutches of death. He managed their escape to India. Zairema asserted his influence upon the MNF hierarchy and suggested to them to adopt a new strategy to the boys who were sick or homesick. Laldenga accepted the suggestion and allowed the boys of such category to “return home but with empty hands.” By empty hands he meant that in case of the success of MNF revolution and establishment of the sovereign government of the MNF in Mizoram those returnees would get no benefit for their past services to and for their association with the rebellion. Laldenga had to evolve that formula for the retention of the unity of his outfit. Those boys ‘released’ from the MNF ‘jail’ sadly entered Mizoram and surrendered to the security forces seeking amnesty. They returned to the normal avocations.

The episode is important as it foreboded the future events which were to affect the MNF. The incident indicated the pragmatism of Laldenga, his murderous wrath notwithstanding. That pragmatism largely helped Laldenga in the ups and downs of his political career. The episode also indicated the overbearing influence of the Church in all walks of Mizo national life.

The Church since the days of Mizo Union in the forties of the present century, had kept itself aloof from the affairs of day-to-day politics but in times of dire need never shirked off responsibilities. But the real service in this respect, was offered by the taciturn and obsessively non-controversial gentleman and evangelist leader Reverend Zairema, a true apostle of peace. He did not consider his duties over with his pulpit lectures on the message of love as enunciated in the gospel but was ready to risk his life and embarked upon a risky venture, penetrating deep into the inner circle of the Dagger Brigade to secure the release of the unfortunate young Mizo boys. His role, indeed, had been a glorious one almost unparalleled in the history of Mizoram. Full of compassion and love, the high priest, throughout the prolonged insurgency, rose to the occasion whenever the situation so demanded. Living in the last decade of the 20th century and basking in the warm glow of the Age of Reason the people of present-day Mizoram can hardly be expected to understand the difficulties which, despite his formidable network of contact, Zairema had to face in the grave political uncertainties of the sixties. The Bishop was a towering figure for generations of priests who looked to him for the standards he set in his work. His name will go down in the pages of history as a champion of peace, who sincerely attempted to and succeeded in restoring the social order whenever it went off the rails. Of about dozens of names intrinsically connected with the Mizo socio-political history of modern times, the name of Zairema outshines almost the majority of them. The role of the women’s organizations of Mizoram in this high drama leading to the providential escape of the MNF convicts had also been glorious. Those organizations took effective steps for the welfare of their sons. This tradition still continues. The high drama that was enacted in the deep forest of East Pakistan also indicated the chink in the shining armour of Laldenga. The MNF boys were restive and many of them, forsaking their old belief in insurgency, demonstrated their willingness to respond to the alluring appeal of Mrs Gandhi's general amnesty. Laldenga realized that among his dedicated troops there were certain Trojan horses and henceforth he would have to fight with them politically since they would go to any length to undermine the organization's top leadership and discipline so as to neutralize its political influence and correspondingly increase the organization’s power over the party. There were few surrogates of the Congress in his band, whom he had undermined earlier but the above episode demonstrated their strength and also the number. About 14 persons were detected and convicted but there were a considerable number of their followers in the there were a considerable number of their followers in the party. There were few surrogates of the Congress in his band, whom he had undermined earlier but the above episode demonstrated their strength and also the number. About 14 persons were detected and convicted but Number. About 14 persons were detected and convicted but

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the Mizo youth who swelled the ranks of MNF, in total ignorance of the unbearable hardship of jungle life hounded by the security men. They were living on the razor's edge. More disturbing had been Laldenga's compromise of his grandiloquent ideology. His had been the plous mission of struggle for the right of self-determination but the MNF leadership had been wilfully colluding with the Pakistani forces who were suppressing the Bengalees fighting for self-determination. This contradiction of the MNF philosophy which by itself became self-deceptive, disenchanted the young cadres except for the hard-core elements whose anti-Indian approach was almost pathological. Laldenga, an intelligent leader became aware of the new development and drew up the battle lines accordingly. The struggle between need and principle which characterized the political career of Laldenga had its real beginning in the dense forest of East Pakistan. Ironically enough when the political edifice of Pakistani tyranny had been crumbling like a house of cards on the Gangetic delta, Laldenga was under enormous mental strain.

Laldenga was not a leader to be disheartened so easily. He used his personal charm to convince his comrades-in-arms about their ultimate success and painted a rosy picture of independence of Mizoram soon. In his speeches he often quoted the maxims of Mao Zedong. Political power emits from the barrel of the gun, was his favourite quotation. During the national struggle of the Bangalees, the Chinese supported the Pakistani military authorities. When Bangladesh achieved her independence, China refused to recognize the new state in the UNO. During the war of Bangladesh liberation, the Pakistani Military Junta wanted to use the Naga, and Kuki rebels as their advance guards to carry on subversive activities on the Indian soil before the Pakistan Army could lead their columns to India. During World War II, the Japanese Army utilized the services of the Burmese, the Chins and the Thais. According to the Indian Intelligence report at Marpara, in East Pakistan near the border of the Mizo Hills and Arakan of Burma, the Chinese set up a huge military camp of about 1,050 rebels from Naga Hills, Mizo Hills and Manipur. The camp was under the secret supervision and control of the Chinese and Pakistani military officials who imparted training in the guerrilla activities and supplied sophisticated automatic weapons to those rebels. The presence of the Chinese officials and their direct assistance boosted the sagging morale of the MNF activists. Laldenga often portrayed China as the defender of India. By the close of the year 1969 about 150 MNF guerrillas under the instructions of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) sneaked into India armed with Chinese and Pakistani arms to carry on subversive activities like sabotaging roads, blowing up the bridges and ambushing the army convoys. Most of those guerrillas were either killed in the encounter or captured by the security men and they disclosed the grand plan of Pakistani invasion of India. India's relationship with Pakistan in those years was extremely better. Since March 1971, the evacuees from East Pakistan were entering into India in thousands. Local administrations in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and West Bengal were under severe strain as they had to supervise the relief work of the millions of evacuees. The Chinese and the Pakistani officials in East Pakistan took advantage of the situation and sent batches of MNF rebels to India to harass the Indian Government. During this period Laldenga set up his Arakan base with the Burmese Communist leaders. This Burma hide-out helped the MNF enormously after the fall of Dhaka.

Tripura had been militarily the most vulnerable area. During the Indo-Pak conflict 1965, there had been persistent attempts by the Pakistani military machine to threaten the border of Agartala. Now the opportunity came during the war of 1971. The MNF guerrillas crossed Bangladesh's liberation, 1970-71. The MNF guerrillas crossed the border of the Sajik range and entered into the border villages of Tripura with automatic weapons and perpetrated raids killing men and looting money (2 July 1970). On 15 August 1970, the MNF insurgents disturbed the Independence Day celebration at Alizawal and Salia. But all these incidents were taken for granted as political nuisance and they failed to create any impression.

Fall of Dhaka and Escape of Laldenga

The genocide committed by the Pakistani Military Junta in Bangladesh since 25 March 1971 shocked the public opinion of the world. Mujibur Rahman and his Awami
military officials who imparted training in the guerrilla activities and supplied sophisticated automatic weapons to those rebels. The presence of the Chinese officials and their direct assistance boosted the sagging morale of the MNF activists. Laldenga often portrayed China as the defeater of India. By the close of the year 1969 about 150 MNF guerrillas under the instructions of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) sneaked into India armed with Chinese and Pakistani arms to carry on subversive activities like sabotaging roads, blowing up the bridges and ambushing the army convoys. Most of those guerrillas were either killed in the encounter or captured by the security men and they disclosed the grand plan of Pakistani invasion of India. India's relationship with Pakistan in those years was extremely bitter. Since March 1971, the evacuees from East Pakistan were entering into India in thousands. Local administrations in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and West Bengal were under severe strain as they had to supervise the relief work of the millions of evacuees. The Chinese and the Pakistani officials in East Pakistan took advantage of the situation and sent batches of MNF rebels to India to harass the Indian Government. During this period Laldenga set up his Arakan base with the Burmese Communist leaders. This Burma hide-out helped the MNF enormously after the fall of Dhaka.

Tripura had been militarily the most vulnerable area. During the Indo-Pak conflict 1965, there had been persistent attempts by the Pakistani military machine to threaten Agartala. Now the opportunity came during the war of Bangladesh's liberation, 1970-71. The MNF guerrillas crossed the Sajik range and entered into the border villages of Tripura with automatic weapons and perpetrated raids killing men and looting money (2 July 1970). On 15 August 1970, the MNF insurgents disturbed the Independence Day celebration at Aizawl and Saiha. But all these incidents were taken for granted as political nuisance and they failed to create any impression.

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League declared Independence. Mujib was arrested and kept confined in jail near Karachi and had been awaiting his execution. On human and military considerations Indian intervention became necessary in East Pakistan. Pakistan had to surrender. Bangladesh became a sovereign republic. Before the fall of Dhaka, the military leaders left East Pakistan for West Pakistan. Those who took to flight were fortunate enough, considering the gravity of the situation. Thus, began another chapter in the colourful career of the MNF supremo. The fall of East Pakistan in spite of Chinese moral support was a bolt from the blue to Laldenga. His political calculations went all astray. He was confused rather dazed. Laldenga possessed a great acumen for political analysis and was a shrewd and far-sighted leader but he was unable to foresee the coming events, the impending doom. He was a patriot (may be misguided) who took to arms with a view to assert the so-called right of self-determination of his clansmen whom he wrongly considered a separate nation. The right of self-determination has its limits too, and it does not extend to each and any ethnic group. But ironically he had to act as an agent of the Pakistani authorities who were mercilessly oppressing the Bangladeshis fighting for the right of self-determination. Standing on the threshold of transition, he failed to see the political change that was in the offing. To a leader of his calibre this bankruptcy of thought was, indeed, regrettable. His flight saved his life but not his reputation. He left his comrades to their fate in the dense jungle of Bangladesh. His comrades had cooperated with the Pakistan authorities and acted as their agents to oppress the Bangladeshis nationals during their freedom struggle. How would the new government treat them? What were they to do under the changed circumstances? They had no guide. Their supremo had taken to flight. The image of Laldenga suffered heavily in their eyes. Laldenga himself, being an emotional and impulsive person, felt lonely in his self-imposed exile in West Pakistan but saw no light in the abyss.

Laldenga Escapes to London

General Niazii, of the Pakistani armed forces, surrendered before Lieutenant General J.S. Arora on 16 December 1971.20

Before the official surrender the defeat of Pakistan was a foregone conclusion. Laldenga accordingly withdrew the money from the banks and amassed all the amount under his personal control beforehand. Immediately after the formal surrender of Pakistan, Laldenga issued the order of evacuation of the MNF headquarters of Rooma and instructed the MNF guerrillas to proceed towards Arakan, the western province of lower Burma. The MNF also received the order from the District Magistrate of CHT to wind up their Rooma base forthwith and to leave the country. The MNF men left their base and advanced through the upstreams of the river Tatkwang. At Parua village near the international border ensued an encounter between the MNF and the Mukti Bahini. The MNF, however, after defeating the Mukti Bahini, made their headway towards Parva in Arakan. In that dense and inaccessible forest the MNF set up their new hide-out. But the impoverished Arakan hide-out was not sufficient to accommodate all the MNF men. Moreover, all of them could not proceed to Arakan because of political and geographical difficulties. The relationship between the MNF, the old allies of Pakistan, with the new Bangladesh regime was not at all good. The MNF surrounded by insurmountable difficulties was forced to surrender before the officials of Dandwp on military post of the Indian Army. On 25 December 1971, on Christmas Day, 356 MNF activists singing the Christmas carol followed by Lalmunawala, the celebrated Vice-President, laid down their arms. This was the first batch and several batches followed them. The spirit of independence that so long enthralled the MNF youth collapsed with the fall of Dhaka and increasingly the MNF began to swell the ranks of Arakan. The fate of the MNF in Mizo Hills and Bangladesh Arakan. The fate of the MNF in Mizo Hills and Bangladesh was pathetic, sandwiched as they were between the rudderless ship floating on the wild seas they were bereft...
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of the leader and provisions. In short there was total chaos in the MNF camp.

Like Laldenga, Phizo was also a lonely person in his self-imposed exile. Another tribal leader who followed the footsteps of Laldenga fleeing his country to West Pakistan was the Chakma chief, Raja Tridib Ray, a former cabinet minister of East Pakistan. The Chakmas of the Chittagong Hill Tract, although Buddhist by faith, are Tibeto-Mongoloid tribes like the Mizos and who were quite unjustly placed under Pakistan by Radcliffe’s Award. They too had been fighting against the Pakistani authorities for their right of autonomy. But the Raja committed the worst political mistake in throwing his lot with the Pakistani authorities even during the crisis of East Pakistan’s history. But his mother Dowager Princess Binita Ray supported the liberation struggle of the Awami League of Mujibur Rahman and subsequently headed the Tribal Rehabilitation Department of Bangladesh with the rank of the Cabinet Minister of Mujibur Rahman. The three tribal leaders of the North-East who took political refuge in Pakistan after the fall of Dhaka were frustrated lonely political figures. Those leaders forsaken by their own men, were also ignored and occasionally ill-treated by the Pakistani Government as it was passing through a grave political crisis after the breaking up of Pakistan. In their wretched political solitude, they often met in their forlorn abodes. They could not recover from the shock of the grim disaster of the Pakistani defeat and its implications on the future of Naga, Mizo and Chakma militancy. Of the triumvirate, Ray the indolent became resigned to his lot; the Mizo leader, the most dynamic of all, was ill at ease in his forced rest dolce far niente and became restive but Indomitable Phizo prepared a plan of leaving West Pakistan for London which he carried out soon. The idea appealed to Laldenga. There were many friends in London to espouse the cause of the Nagas and the Mizos. After all, the Naga and Mizo problems were the creations of the past British administration. The memory of McDonald and Peter flashed before the eyes of Laldenga. However, he pinned hope on the assistance of Michael Scott, the missionary of Kohima Peace Settlement fame.

Rebellion

Fall of Dhaka and its Impact

The fall of Dhaka brought relief to the authorities of Rangoon. Sino-Pak entente and the Pakistani subversiveness in Lower Burma especially in Arakan had been the chronic feature. Burma was a multiracial state comprising the turbulent savage tribes and the anti-national Rohnigyas who had links with Pakistan’s communal forces. Burma till 1937 was under Indian administration and during the last phase of the national movement in India a Rohnigya delegation demanded a few Arakanese townships and a part of Arakan to be included into Pakistan and they came to India to meet Jinnah who, however, did not receive them. But Pakistani supporters were there in Arakan in large numbers. Rohnigya Liberation Front, a terrorist outfit, worked in league with the communist party of Burma. The MNF maintained contact with them. Burma disliked all these and took precautionary measures. Burma during the her period of isolationism measures. Burma during the her period of isolationism measures. Burma during the her period of isolationism measures. Burma during the her period of isolationism measures. Burma during the her period of isolationism measures. Burma during the her period of isolationism measures.
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Why Rangoon allowed Laldenga's short stay in Burma and his departure from the country with a huge amount of currency in violation of the rules seemed to be a mysterious question considering the close Indo-Burmese relationship. None the less, the whole episode indicates the dash and drive of Pakistan foreign office in contrast with that of India, and the diplomatic skill of Laldenga as well. Even after the
departure of Laldenga the MNF retained its impoverished hide-outs in Arakan and the authorities of Rangoon connived at their subversive activities. One possible explanation might be that New Delhi incurred the displeasure of Rangoon for providing asylum to U.Nu, and for allowing his daughter's regular broadcast from the AIR exhorting the people of Burma for the restoration of democracy. The four years of MNF sojourn in Burma, till Mujibur Rahman was assassinated (1975), had been the darkest period of its venture characterized by erratic, cynically irresponsible and brutal functioning. The popularity of MNF was at its nadir and at least twice there had been open revolts against Laldenga. Arakan phase of the MNF saw the rise of ambitious Bliakchhunga and his able lieutenant, ferocious Lahleia. This development was an inevitable fallout of political extremism. The whole system of MNF was caught in a diabolical crossfire.

The fall of Dhaka accelerated the collapse of the Yahya regime. Bhutto was successful in his conspiracy to secure power. He became the President but at a tremendous political cost namely disintegration of Pakistan. He was compelled by world public opinion to release Mujib Rahman from the jail. Mujib came back to Dhaka and headed the Bangladesh Government. Awami League and Mujib were indebted to Indira Gandhi for her unstinted support to the cause of Bangladesh liberation. The relationship between India and Bangladesh was cordial and Bangladesh Government instructed the Indian tribal insurgents to vacate Bangladesh immediately or to face the consequences. The MNF headquarters at Rooma had to wind up. A large number of cadres surrendered to the Indian security men still there was a bloodthirsty trigger happy section who did not surrender and had carried on the guerrilla activities on the wing since March 1971. In the absence of Laldenga, Chhgunta discharged the function of President of MNF. But he was not a man of calibre. As there was no coordination between the civil and military wings, the MNF functionaries had to work anyhow to give a new lease of life to a dying organization. The civil wing became more or less defunct.

Mizo Hills got Separated from Assam

The emergence of Bangladesh and the vital role Mrs Indira Gandhi played in the tortuous course of Indo-Pak conflict made her a very popular leader in India and she was also recognized as an astute politician by the dominant powers of the world. Throughout the Indo-Pak conflict Chinese belligerency against India was at its height but Burma in spite of her difficult geographical location and consequent danger from the Chinese dragon did not antagonize India, rather supported the Indian stand. Mrs Gandhi in appreciation of the kind and sincere attitude of Burma adopted all measures to improve the Indo-Burmese relations. The improved ties put a check upon subversive activities of the MNF, NNC (NSCN), etc on the Burmese soil. There was an understanding between Rangoon and New Delhi. Mrs Gandhi also realized that to counter the anti-Delhi. Mrs Gandhi also realized that to counter the anti-
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Delhi. Mrs Gandhi also realized that to counter the anti-
Indian propaganda of the CPR and to consolidate the gains
of the war she must be magnanimous. After the emergence
of Bangladesh, when the Mizo and Naga insurgencies, were
on the wane, she issued a fresh appeal to the misguided MNF
youths to abjure violence and return to the mainstream of
national life to respect the Constitution. She promised them
amnesty and proper rehabilitation and further, rapid
economic development of the Mizo Hills. Mrs Gandhi declared
Mizoram as Union Territory on 21 January 1972. The annual
budgetary allocation was increased from eight crores of
rupees to 31 crores of rupees. The best attribute of power is
magnanimity and being the most powerful person she became
generous towards the MNF rebels who had sided with
Pakistan against India. She forgave their past conduct as she
wanted to solve the MNF insurgency politically. Her aim was
restoration of peace in Mizoram to accelerate the pace of
economic development and gradual assimilation of the Mizons
into the fold of Indian nationalism.

The peace overtures of Mrs Gandhi appealed to the
Mizos. The declaration of Mizoram as Union Territory satisfied
their political aspirations. They had earlier boycotted the
election but now they participated in it. In the 33-member
Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of Mizoram, 30
were elected members and the three were nominated. Ch.
Chhuang, the leader of the Mizo Union, became the Chief
Minister. S.P. Mukherjee was appointed the Lieutenant-
Governor of the Union Territory. In the village council
elections the Congress captured 85 per cent of the total
seats. The new government had a nice beginning.

A peace body following the Nagaland Peace Council known as Mizoram Peace Council was formed in Aizawl with Reverend Zairema as the President and Lalthanhawla as the Secretary. There were seven members in it, of these only two were from the Church. Rev Zairema was a man of integrity and piety and he sincerely endeavoured to bring peace in troubled Mizoram. T. Sello had been an army officer (Brigadier) and a doyen of the great Sello clan which ruled Mizo Hills once. He relinquished his service to serve the Mizos. When he was appointed as a member of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, he was able to see the oppression by the security men of the innocent Mizos. He formed his Human Right Committee (HRC). He had correspondence with the Amnesty International regarding the army oppression. But the HRC of T. Sello had been functioning more or less like a political party unlike Rev Zairema’s Peace Council. The HRC ultimately turned into Peoples Conference, a whole time political party. MNF had been the traditional enemy of Mizos. They opposed Chhenga’s Government and did all they could to harass his administration.

**Merger of Mizo Union with Congress Party**

Assam Pradesh Congress established its district unit in Mizoram in 1967, the first President being H. Rang Chhua. Soon Dengthuama became the President. But the Congress was faction-ridden as the relationship between the two leaders was never cordial. According to the resolution of Cachar-Mizo Congress Convention (October 1968), the MNF returnees were accepted as Congress members. Thus, there was a considerable change in the Congress membership.

About 80 percent of the new entrants into the Congress party were the MNF returnees. For the stability of the Government, Chhenga had to depend upon the Congress. The Congress on the other hand demanded the merger of the Mizo Union with it. Mizo Union, before the formation of the Congress in Mizoram, had been an associate party of the Congress. After the creation of the Union Territory of Mizoram, the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. Lalthanhawla was elected as its President. The Mizo Union being a regional party depended on the Centre for its policies and funds and preferred to join the Congress. The All India Congress Committee on 13-14 November 1973 approved of the merger move and with the blessings of Mrs Gandhi, Mizo Union and Mizoram Pradesh Congress merged into one body. It was known as Mizoram Pradesh Congress (24 February 1974).

Lalthanhawla was elected as the President of the reconstituted Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee and Saprawnga, the Vice-President. A section of the old Congress men as well as that of the Mizo Union were not happy with the merger. Moreover, Mrs Gandhi's expectations were belied. The merger could not bring peace in Mizoram. By this time Laldenga arrived in London and was able to establish contacts with MNF in Mizoram. He was totally against the Government of Chhenga and instructed his colleagues to harass Chhenga in all possible manner.

**Rebellion**

Since 1971 the morale of the MNF had broken down; 1,000 MNF men, comprising two-thirds of the total, surrendered. The formation of Union Territory and huge flow of central money to Aizawl made the Mizo people, now a votary of consumerism, eager to participate in the reconstruction of new Mizoram. The moderate elements in the faction-ridden MNF, fed up with murders and revenges, desired peace and wanted to start a dialogue with the Prime Minister. But Indira Gandhi was not B.P. Chaliha. She was magnanimous when necessary but did not go against the established procedure of the administration. Moreover, she had the political intuition to enter deep into issues. But New Delhi in November 1973 to have a political dialogue. New Delhi was not willing to give the rebels a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader a
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Murder of Lalmumawia

Since 1971 the morale of the MNF had broken down; 1,000 MNF men, comprising two-thirds of the total, surrendered. The formation of Union Territory and huge flow of central money to Aizawl made the Mizo people, now a votary of consumerism, eager to participate in the reconstruction of new Mizoram. The moderate elements in the faction-ridden MNF, fed up with murders and revenges, desired peace and wanted to start a dialogue with the Prime Minister. But Indira Gandhi was not B.P. Chaliha. She was magnanimous when necessary but did not go against the established procedure of the administration. Moreover, she had the political intuition to enter deep into issues. Malsawmna, a very powerful MNF activist went to Delhi in November 1973 to have a political dialogue. But New Delhi made it clear that dialogue could start only on terms of unconditional surrender of MNF. It was exactly the repetition of the stipulations laid down by the Deputy Commissioner. Mizo Hills district, on 7 March 1966 to Lalmumawia when the Indian Army restored civil life in Aizawl after the MNF P’sbellion. New Delhi was not willing to give the rebels a special political status. This would give Laldenga as leader of a disintegrating outfit, some leverage. The latter was already out of his mind as the majority of the old MNF activists had surrendered or were waiting in the line. Only
the new recruits turning to brigandage and adventure were opposed to the restoration of peace. But their number in 1973 were barely 300, of which about 50 were in Burma and about 100 were spread over in Manipur, Naga Hills and Tripura to avoid arrest. An honourable settlement of the MNF problem was also the desire of well-meaning Lalanmawia, the Vice-President of the ‘MNF Government’. As an experienced leader he had read the writing on the wall and acted as a go-between in the peace move. Resoluteness, grit and singleness of mind, the hallmarks of Lalanmawia’s career were once again in evidence when he refused to heed the warnings of the well-wishers about his freedom of action. But this elderly leader was murdered in a hospital at night while attending to his ailing wife. Mrs Lalanmawia was an ordinary housewife of humble nature and a sweet disposition. She was already weakened by ailments; when she discovered the dead body of her husband lying in a pool of blood with his throat slit open, she let out a scream and then swooned in horror. The nurses and other staff members of the hospital were terrified beyond reason and the authorities found it extremely difficult to shift the dead body to the mortuary. But the tears of new widows always had some kind of an effect on mass psychology of the Mizos; especially when the woman was the wife of the Vice-President endowed with the halo of the mother (anu) of the organization, who refused to believe that her boys had killed her husband. Mass emotion had swerved decisively against the MNF.

The gruesome murder of the most bold and beautiful was a part of the strategy of selective killing to keep up the tempo of the dying MNF movement. But the aim of the murder was not fulfilled as the unvanquished spirit of Lalanmawia persisted.

Soon seven young Mizo boys of Durtlang, a suburb of Aizawl, were also kidnapped and killed brutally to strike terror into the minds of the peace-loving Mizos. Selective killing yielded the desired result but at a terrible cost of unpopularity. Regarding the dastardly murder of Lalanmawia the blame was put on Laldenga. But in the absence of a concrete evidence one should desist from making any comment, let alone pointing an accusing finger at him.
Peace Move by the MNF Rank

Lianzuula, the General Secretary of MNF, at the beginning of the year 1973 led a delegation for negotiation with the union officials in Delhi but the informal discussions did not proceed. To prove his sincerity Lianzuula in April 1973 submitted a list of 13 important MNF officials including himself, willing to surrender to the government. But he demanded a political status and recognition for MNF. His move was also not successful. Dem Kosia a very active and trustworthy officer of the MNF military wing whose original home was in Manipur was sent to Peking by the Pakistani authorities (before Bangladesh Independence).\(^{21}\) CPR sent him to Vietnam to have a first hand knowledge of the guerrilla warfare. But Dem was struck by the woes and miseries of the common people of Vietnam ravaged by the prolonged insurgency. He saw there small girls soliciting customers, a symbol of a decadent social order. This was too much for him. He decided to bid a farewell to arms and return to normal life. All these peace attempts by important MNF functionaries and one-time trusted lieutenants of the supremo, were characterized by Laldenga from his London residence as second betrayal (first being in 1969). He was determined to frustrate the peace moves. He depended upon the new recruits and the hawks of the army wing of MNF. He pinned hopes on General Biakchhunga. New Delhi was flooded with letters stating that no one other than Laldenga, the MNF Chief, had any *locus standi* to start a dialogue with the Indian Government and that Laldenga, being the head of the 'Independent MNF Government', disapproved of any such illegal talk. General Biakchhunga from his hide-out issued threats that any MNF official daring to indulge in such 'unconstitutional' activities would be liquidated. However, these threats failed to yield the desired effect. There was direct contact between Laldenga and Biakchhunga. All these political gimmicks were necessary to prove that MNF was not merely an army of a 'war lord' but a strong political organization with a disciplined working apparatus having international support.

Meanwhile, there had been a substantial progress of

Naga peace talks. M. Aram, the Secretary of Nagaland Peace Council, worked hard in this respect and convinced Delhi of the desirability of starting a dialogue with Z.A. Phizo. Both Phizo and Laldenga were neighbours and the progress of Naga Peace talks had its effect upon Laldenga. He was not ready to give up his legitimate leadership. He could not be blamed for that, because Mizo National Front minus Laldenga was like the Prince of Denmark without Hamlet. The MNF was brought to the limelight by his persistent endeavours and careful planning. He committed many mistakes and even forsook the rank and file at times yet he was the leader, the supremo of the organization, and theoretically still the head of the so-called ‘Independent Mizoram’. So, he instructed his men in Mizoram to subvert the formal dialogue of the moderate MNF leaders and others with the government officials in Delhi. Those MNF members who had already surrendered abjuring violence and seeking settlement within the framework of the Indian Constitution as citizens of India, were termed as betrayers of the ‘Mizo nation’ by Laldenga.

Pathetic Law and Order Situation

It has already been pointed out that the Mizo Union’s merger with the Congress party yielded no tangible political result. The Mizo Union was a regional party with distinct aristocratic frame and was totally opposed to the chauvinism of MNF. It was an associate of All India Congress Party or the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee. But those Congressmen had a broader national outlook. But the Mizoram Pradesh Congress, before the Mizo Union merged into it, had been largely a party of the MNF returnees who had resumed normal life in different stages. Their aim had been to harvest economic gains under the protective umbrella of the Congress. Many of them were self-seekers. They had neither the education nor social status like the Mizo Union leaders. The old Mizo Union members detested them and were against Ch.Chhunga’s change in the policy. They disliked the merger and called themselves as ‘no changers’. However, Chhunga being the Chief Minister and a powerful man had his lobby of pro-changers. But he was in difficulty. He had to face the challenge from within; he could not consolidate properly. Though he was the first Chief Minister of Mizoram with vast funds at his disposal he could not function, rather did not function as was expected from him. There was little progress in the peace move as the extremist MNF members began their hostilities by perpetrating raids and by selective killings. The outlawed MNF set up a parallel administration in Aizawl. They levied taxes and collected donations, and even the Government officials obeyed their instructions. Both the Mizo and non-Mizo residents accepted their writ as the de facto rulers. The position was exactly what it was in the Salween district of Burma (Karen land) during the first regime of U.Nu jut before the army takeover.

In the election of 1972, the Mizo Union was successful but Congress had the required number of seats in the Assembly; in the village council election Congress was, however, brilliantly successful. So, Chhunga to save his losing party agreed to the merger proposal and expected assistance from the government. But Congress became a burden on him. The weakness of the Chhunga Government became well known. The MNF continued their depredations. A number of new members were recruited. The then Home Minister, Dixit, was disgusted with the Mizo Government. It was its first serious administration. The MNF had been receiving the active support from the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Burma (Red Flag) having base in Arakan. The MNF in Arakan in the neighbourhood of Mizoram. The MNF received a fresh supply of Chinese arms and ammunition and revamped their headquarters in the Arakan Hills. In 1974, U.Nu the deposed Prime Minister of Burma along with the other members of his family escaped to India and took political asylum there. U.Nu had been the family friend of the Nehrus so he was received by Mrs Gandhi but this hospitality angered the military rulers of Burma. Burmese authorities took a keen interest in the trans-Indian borders where the Indian insurgents carried on their clandestine activities. China seized the opportunity to fish in the troubled waters.
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The displeasure of the Government of India was communicated to the Union Territory. Chhunga took special measures to check the insurgency in Mizoram under the guidance of security men. He was successful to a great extent. Violent incidents receded considerably and 293 hostiles were arrested, 12 light machine-guns were also recovered. But the harsh treatment by the security men antagonized the common Mizos. T. Sailo with his Human Rights Committee came forward to assist them. Chhunga became unpopular while T. Sailo almost turned into a hero. The tough measures also engineered the anti-Indian feelings among the common Mizos.

G.S. Arya, the police chief of Mizoram (The Inspector General of Police), was a very sincere officer and took stern measures against the lawless elements. He was in the hit list of ‘Major’ Kachhunga and ‘Captain’ Lallehia of MNF. Arya convened a meeting of the top police officers in the conference room of the IG on 13 January 1975 to review the law and order situation in Mizoram. L.B. Sewa, the DIG and K. Panchapakesan, the S P Special Branch, were discussing at the conference table when a jeep-load of MNF rebels led by Lallehia entered into the conference room, shot all the three officers from a point blank range with their Chinese made automatic pistols. They escaped without resistance. This gruesome murder shocked the whole country. B. Reddy, the Home Minister, airdashed to Aizawl. Angry Reddy made the sarcastic query, “if the Mizoram wanted to be a closed community?”

Crisis in Chhunga Ministry

The incident indicated the vulnerability of the security at the top. As no non-Mizo was posted on guard in the headquarters of the police, the incident took place. It was the climax of the strategy of the selective killing of the MNF and infiltration of the MNF in the government service. The Chhunga administration was discredited beyond repair. The administration was revamped. Surendra Nath, the IGP of Kashmir, was sent to Aizawl as the Chief Secretary of Mizoram. Lallehia, theprime suspect in the murder case, was soon killed by Captain Lal of the security force in McDonald Hills, Aizawl when the rebel leader was coming back from the house of his mistress in the night. However, Lallehia became a martyr and the youth of Aizawl paid handsome tribute to his memory.22

As the Chhunga ministry got discredited, the popularity of T. Sailo had grown. He became the saviour of the Mizos. On 3 March 1975, curfew was imposed in Aizawl.

Rev Zairema, the President of the Mizoram Peace Committee, tried his best in his peace effort to restore calm. A Peace Mission arrived at Aizawl on 9 May 1975 under the leadership of M. Aram with the message of peace. This mission had the backing of the Government of India. It met a cross section of the people, the army and civil officers, and the political parties. Zairema and Lalthanhawla helped the team. The Peace Mission recommended the dialogue of the government with Laldenga for the restoration of peace in Mizoram. On 19 May 1975, emergency was proclaimed in India. The whole nation was under the heavy strain of emergency and no one had the leisure to look afresh at the problem of Mizoram. The Mizo problem lost its former importance.

On 18 October 1975, to make his position comfortable Ch. Chhunga dropped two of his ministers, Vivanga (Education) and Khuma (Finance). In spite of the wide range of powers the Chief Minister had during the Emergency, Chhunga failed to recover his lost position. The Congressmen made him unpopular.

Meanwhile, the MNF which lost its popularity among the masses resorted to communalism and appealed in the name of the Church. It was, indeed, a grand strategy. To the Mizos, who were recently converted to Christianity, the hold of the Church is very great. Formerly, the Mizo Union used to receive the support of the Church. The MNF was declared unlawful (6 August 1975) but under the patronage of the Church it could avoid the Emergency excesses. Both Chhunga and Chibber (the Lieutenant-Governor) claimed an improvement in the situation; 208 rebels were captured, two were killed and 257 weapons were seized.

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Changes in Global Politics

Again there were significant changes in the global politics. Mujibur Rahman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, was murdered on 15 August 1975 and a military regime ushered in Bangladesh. The MNF guerrillas returned to their old hide-outs in Bangladesh. The Tripura National Volunteer Force, a new terrorist outfit, also joined and received training from the MNF. The Chinese had been creating border troubles in Mongolia, Vietnam, Thailand and Burma. Burma patched up her differences with China by ceding some villages of Kachin areas to China. Chinese military machine and espionage re-entered into the hills and forests of Burma. The immediate frontiers of Burma became a safe haven for the narcotic dealers of the Golden Triangle. The Prevention of Narcotics And Drugs department (PND) of the USA in collaboration with the authorities of Rangoon conducted several armed raids in this area. All these made Mrs Gandhi worried. She knew very well that the frustrated terrorists often fall a prey to the smugglers’ kingpins. The easy money from narcotics and drugs are often used by the insurgents for the purchase of costly arms. Moreover, the social and moral effects of drug smuggling would prove disastrous to the innocent Mizos who were just on the threshold of their new civilized life. Before Independence (1947) there had been excessive use of tobacco in Mizo society and the vice of zu (alcohol) was rampant. The English did not eradicate those vices to perpetuate their rule. A huge sum of money was pumped into Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, etc., for the rapid economic development and there were circulations of massive number of currency notes. So, there lay the dangers (Mrs Gandhi was not wrong. A few years after her death Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram became AIDS infested areas). Mrs Gandhi as mother of the nation evaluated the Mizo problem in a broader perspective and sent feelers to Laldenga in his London suburb.

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Rebellion

as his trusted general Blakchhunga who was in Burma, was not in favour of a peace negotiation under the cover of the Chhunga administration. Moreover, Laldenga had himself opposed the earlier peace moves with savage ferocity. But the time was changing fast and his options were extremely limited so he agreed to peace negotiation. On 24 January 1976, he reached New Delhi and on 6 February 1976, the MNF leaders signed the peace document with the middle-level officials of Home Department of the Government of India. The document was kept secret till 1 July 1976. Laldenga recognized Mizoram as a part of Indian Territory and agreed to come to a solution within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Laldenga also agreed to surrender the arms within a fixed time-frame. The Central Government instructed the Lieutenant-Governor of Mizoram to stop security operations against the rebels. But crafty Laldenga on 6 July retracted what he had said and repudiated the agreement. The whole episode, the manifestation of personal psychodrama, demonstrated the political hypocrisy and caprice of the MNF chief. He had deliberately executed a political fraud.

Notes

1. The contents of Laldenga’s letter to the President of Indonesia are as follows: “India rules over us by establishing her puppet regime for a period of almost two decades for the implementation of her expansionist programme and this dirty scene is seen not only in our case but also in the case of the Nagas, Kashmir and States of the Himalayan Kingdoms.………..During several years of close contact and association with India we have not been able to feel at home with Indian or in India, nor have we been able to feel that our joys and sorrows have really ever been shared by India. We do not, therefore, feel Indian. “I therefore appeal to the candid world and to the developing nations deploring domination of the just cause of my people and deliver them from this Indian rule. Also I earnestly appeal to your country men to extend their helping hands towards the freedom fighters of Mizoram and to give support in politics and in material
for the realization of their just demands."
The letter was addressed to President Sukarno of Indonesia on 20 January 1966 by Laldenga in the
capacity of the 'President of the Sovereign Government of
Mizoram' from Alzawl, when inept Chaliha had no inkling
of Laldenga's dubious double dealing. The credit, however,
goes to Laldenga who not only mesmerized Chaliha and
the bogus local administration but also the Delhi officials
(except however, Lt General Jasjit Singh Arora) who
made frequent visits to Mizoram during that period.
Laldenga had the rare ability to keep everything secret.

2. The hilly stream Chambal passes through Madhya
Pradesh. On her shores in the ravines live the fierce
bandits who are a terror to the state police of Uttar
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bandits. The dacoits and the dacoits are the products
of the socio-economic system of the Chambal Valley.
These dacoits like those of the Shan States of Upper
Burma had long been an administrative problem since
the days of the East India Company. In the sixties
Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the disciple of Gandhi, made
his historic peace march to the Chambal ravines with
the message of love and peace. The dacoits responded to his
call and the Government of India also authorized Bhaveji
to conduct delicate negotiations with the outlaws.
Bhaveji's mission met with limited success. The dacoits
are still there but their virulence has come down to a
perceptible level. The Kapchhunga and Lallehia
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Rebellion

The murder of Lalunumawia, the Vice-President and the massacre of the Durtlang boys were also the consequences of this political rift in MNF. The MNF insurgency with all its ferocity had been the outcome, like the dacoities of Chambal Valley, of so many historical factors. All credit should go to Mrs Indira Gandhi and especially to Rajiv Gandhi who had the breadth of heart and open mind to come to a settlement with the MNF supremo, ignoring strong public pressure.

3. The historic battle of Plassey was fought (23 June 1757) in the famous mango grove on the western bank of Ganges between the forces of East India Company under Robert Clive and the forces of Nawab of Bengal, Siraj ud-daula. The English were victorious. The battle laid the foundations of the British Empire in India. Mughal Emperor granted Diuwalli (1765) to the East India Company and thus Chittagong, Sylhet and Tripura districts bordering Mizo Hills came under the control of the company. This led to British interference in the affairs of the Mizos. By the Treaty of Yandabo 1826 (at the conclusion of the First Anglo-Burmese War) Cachar, Manipur, Jaintia, Assam and Lower Burma were incorporated into the British dominion. The annexation of Cachar compelled the British administration to take an active interest in the Mizo affairs and the Mizo Hills was thus annexed. During the Sepoy Mutiny 1857, a rumour was afloat that the British rule was to last for a century only and the time had come to drive out the English. On the eve of the MNF revolt in 1966, similar rumours, were spread that the Indian rule was to lapse in Mizoram.

4. H.K. Bawichhuaka, the father of socialism in Mizoram and one of the founders of Mizo Commoners Party is a respected figure in Mizo political history. He fought against Bati system (slavery) and advocated social reform. He was educated and a personal friend of Rochhunga Pudivate, the President of Hmar National Convention. Bawichhuaka was the first to conceive the idea of ‘Greater Mizoram’. He visited Manipur in 1938 but was put behind the bars and served the jail term for nine months there. Because of his socialist leanings he had some secret connections with the communist leaders of
Assam and Manipur. During the war years he was lodged in Aizawl jail for two months and then extradited to Cachar (Assam) where he lived for another six months, (at Lakhipur Hmar dominated area) as an internee. Here he came in contact with the Manipuri communist leader of Cachar, Irabat Singh. The Cachar communists also contacted him. He had connections with Jai Prakash Narain and Ram Manohar Lohia. He appeared before the Bardoloi Committee and got his evidence recorded. He demanded autonomy but within the framework of the Constitution. He had no love for secessionism. He opposed the MNF and its leader Laldenga. He was a man of principle and espoused the cause of the poor and downtrodden. Dedicated Bawichhhuaka had been an important link with the mainstream of Indian political life during the worst years of political terrorism in Mizoram. His name will go down in the pages of history as a man of vision.

Special mention may be made in this connection that Bawichhuaka was possibly the only political leader of the older generation who read carefully the political literature and was influenced by the socialist thought. He earnestly believed that the poverty of the Mizos could only be solved by adopting socialist means. The Mizo commoners are deeply religious people and as such they are not followers of socialism. The sacrifice and convictions of Bawichhuaka attracted admiration of his people but not their following. His ideas were far advanced of the people of his age and community.

Despite his love for the idea of 'Greater Mizoram' and complete autonomy for the Mizos, Bawichhuaka hated narrow chauvinism and disliked the reactionary regionalism of his tribesmen. In 1965 Bawichhuaka at Churachandpur (Manipur) presided over the meeting of Zomi Unification but cautioned the delegates about the possible danger of such a move especially of the economic consequences. Laldenga was present in the meeting and opposed Bawichhuaka. During the worst days of MNF terrorism he had the courage openly to denounce Laldenga's method. Unfortunately, the bureaucrats in South Block because of their allergy towards the socialists did not take much notice of him or his views.
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5. Brasidas was the famous Spartan general who distinguished himself during the close of the Peloponnesian War. He saved Megara from falling into the hands of Athens. He captured Amphipolis in Thrace. He defeated the Athenian general Cleon but was killed in the action.

6. Otto Von Bismarck the famous Chancellor of Prussia, later on united Germany, had been “the arbiter of European politics” (1848-1890). He was the architect of the unification of Germany, presided over the Congress of Berlin, 1879, and was the principal figure in overwhelming Austria and France. Bismarck, a master diplomat, was the founder of Triple Alliance which was largely responsible for the outbreak of World War I; Bismarck was the symbol of German genius. Bismarck’s war against the Catholics formed an important chapter of his domestic policy. This is known as Kultur Kampf or battle for civilization. During the German military ventures against Austria and France, the German Catholics in violation of the norms of national allegiance harboured extraterritorial loyalty to the Pope of Rome, who was the supporter of Austria and France and who had challenged Bismarck’s authority to interfere in the affairs of the Catholic faith. Kultur Kampf continued for long and ultimately there was a compromise between the two warring camps during the tenure of Pope Leo XIII.

The German missionaries were aggressively conservative and there were quite a number of them working in Assam.

7. Laldenga’s letter to Chaliha: Laldenga and Lalnunmawia were arrested by the police when they were coming from East Pakistan. They were lodged in the Silchar jail. Laldenga got tired of prison life and wrote his famous letter to B.P. Chaliha, the Chief Minister of Assam. The contents of the letter are as follows:

“As our motive may, in the circumstances have been liable to be misunderstood and considered as against the interests of Indian Union, we wish to state that the programmes and politics of Mizo National Front are not anti-state and we should not take a course of action which is against the Constitution of India.”
"We hope, sir, that you will accept this statement and assurance and, by releasing us from detention, give us an opportunity to play a constructive role in the development of our district. And I hope I could impress upon you that I and my party are very much interested in the development programme of the Mizo Hills district."

The wording of the letter was very carefully drafted to impress Chaliha. But the crafty MNF chief was not at all serious about his assurances.

Regarding his escape from Mizoram to Pakistan immediately after his declaration of independence on 28 Feb 1966 he made a statement to the press on 30 December 1984 (Illustrated Weekly of India, Bombay).

"It was March 1, 1966. We were all charged with emotion. We had all seen what had happened. It was a new thing to us — the sound of guns. The next day we went underground from Aizawl town. David, my eldest son, was then ten years old and the youngest was just two. You can imagine what must have been in my mind when I left family behind. Of course we all believed that the country was calling, we have to sacrifice our family and need be our own life."

Here also Laldenga very carefully minced his words. By the sound of guns he meant the sound of the heavy cannon shots of the Indian army. But Indian security forces had started its operations from Silchar on 3 March 1966 and reached Aizawl town, clearing the roadblocks caused by the rebels, on 6 March 1966. So, how could he hear the sound of the guns on 1 March 1966, the day he revolted? Certainly he did not mean the sound of the A K 47 automatic rifles of the MNF secured from the Chinese through the mediation of Pakistan and which the MNF cadres had been using since midnight to loot the Aizawl Treasury and other government offices. After all, the MNF chief was not a coward to go underground on simply hearing the gunfire of his own men. Real truth is that the MNF strategy of revolt was carefully chalked out and all the details, from roadblockade in the hilly roads, to snapping of telecommunications and storming of the military posts all over Mizo Hills simultaneously, were executed very meticulously. The sending of the

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letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Mizo Hills, by the Vice-President of the MNF on 6 March 1966 and Laldenga's escape bid to Pakistan were all preplanned. Not that he suddenly disappeared under the compelling circumstances. It is also not true that he left his family behind. Here also he misinformed the press. His family escaped to Pakistan along with him.

Not very unreasonably the officers of India Government during the peace negotiation looked upon Laldenga with distrust and suspicion and had to be careful about his motives.

8. MNF-China Connections: Laldenga's grandfather migrated to Burma when he was young and Laldenga had some experience about the way of life in Burma. This made him adventurous from boyhood. During his service careers in Assam Regiment he came in contact with some soldiers who admired China. But Laldenga, because of his orthodox religious past never took any special interest in China even when he became a full time politician under the banner of MNF. However, separatism was the basis of MNF political philosophy and Laldenga knew very well that the assistance of Pakistan and Burma would be necessary in his future military adventure against India. Pakistan was India's enemy and hence he took her support for granted. But China was not in his political calculation. The Sino-Indian conflict, however, changed the whole political environment of the North-East. China had a fond hope that the appearance of People's Army on the Himalayan frontiers would lead to internal political revolution in India at least in eastern India. This did not happen as the people there were matured enough to understand the sinister move of CPR. However, the Chinese debacle fostered destabilization of the North-East. The forces of separatism received impetus from it. China was the friend of Pakistan and Laldenga naturally considered her as the friend of MNF too. The MNF maintained relations with China through the good offices of Pakistan. B.K. Roy Burman in his Demographic and Socio-economic Profiles writes that MNF-Chinese relations took place in Dhaka through the Chinese consulate there. CPR took active interest in MNF from the very beginning of the MNF Revolt in 1966.
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In 1968 the enterprise Dikna headed by 'Brigadier General' R. Sang Kavia advanced to China through the Upper Burmese forests. But Dikna was not successful. The MNF underground government's foreign department sent Lalthangliana Phillips, who in the capacity of an 'Ambassador' met the Chinese Consul in Dhaka (June 1968). Laldenga soon visited Peking with the kind assistance of Pakistan. The CPR officials agreed to supply arms and ammunition through Pakistan and extended moral support to the MNF cause. Thus, the first mission of Laldenga to China was successful; the next mission to China was headed by Phillips. CPR agreed to train the MNF in sophisticated arms and explosives and to supply ammunition in large quantities. In 1970 Laldenga accompanied by Lalmithanga met Zhou Enlai, the Prime Minister of CPR, at Peking. China released huge amounts of ammunition to MNF through Pakistan. But the fall of Dhaka and emergence of Bangladesh disrupted the Chinese arms supply to MNF.

According to Sh. Lalthangliana, Laldenga took the assistance of CIA in Dhaka to establish contact with China. Laldenga's hobnobbing with China was not to the liking of the Americans. The missionaries who had been a powerful prop of MNF at home also disliked the MNF-Chinese link. Laldenga got scent of it. But the MNF had few options. The emergence of Bangladesh totally upset the MNF calculations. The MNF barracks were shifted to Arakan jungles and Laldenga left for Karachi. For their sustenance, the MNF leaders maintained their links with China. Dem Koziaik, the MNF adviser, left Arakan hideouts (27 November 1972) for China and after a gruelling one-year trek reached the Chinese border city of Khumning. He received substantial ammunition from China.

CPR's attitude towards MNF had always been cautious. Peking was direct in communicating to the emissary of Laldenga that China would not recognize MNF Sovereign Government, violating international norms. All these were not to the liking of Laldenga or Zoramthanga yet they remained close to CPR as they had no other alternative. But Laldenga decided to cut off the Chinese link. Pakistan Government lost its earlier interest in MNF

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after the emergence of Bangladesh. But intelligent Z.A. Bhutto decided to extend a helping hand to Laldenga as MNF would disturb the peace of India. Bhutto was still smarting under the defeat at the hands of the Indians. The fall of Bhutto and the rise of Zia ul Haq again changed the course of MNF diplomacy. Laldenga and his family were not well treated and Pakistan declared Laldenga as a person non grata. Laldenga had commendable political attributes; he immediately contacted the Indian Intelligence and was secretly flown to Kabul and from Kabul to Geneva. There had been a war of attrition between the Pakistan Inter Services Intelligence wing and Indian Intelligence Department for some time on this issue. Laldenga since his miraculous escape from Pakistan came under the complete control of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

The MNF in Arakan and later on in Bangladesh (since the assassination of Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh antagonized India and welcomed the MNF rebels to their old hide-outs) continued their link with CPR but a section of the MNF who were known as followers of Laldenga were against taking Chinese help. But powerful Biakchhunga faction (Blue Faction) was in favour of it. The Blue Faction and its another radical branch under Kapchhunga established a reign of terror in Aizawl. In short, the Chinese issue was the primary cause of the MNF split in 1979.

9. Field Marshal S.F.H.J. Maneckshaw, the former chief of Indian Army, is regarded as the finest soldier of recent times. Before he became the Army Chief he was the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command. During his tenure as the Army Chief, Pakistan armed forces submitted to the Indian Army in 1971.

During the MNF Rebellion when security forces faced difficulty in flushing out the rebels from the Mizo villages he submitted his famous scheme of regrouping of villages. Accordingly, the PPVs came into existence. He is rightly called the father of urbanization in Mizoram. The scheme of Maneckshaw has worked a sea change in the socio-economic set-up of the Mizos.

10. Support base of MNF among the different Mizo sub-tribes:
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10. Support base of MNF among the different Mizo sub-tribes:
The support-base of the MNF activists among the southern clans of Mizo Hills had been very strong: the Pawis and Maras, however, did not support the MNA. The Chakmas were against the MNF’s anti-national activities. The cause of strong support by the southerners was mainly geographical — the close proximity of Pakistan. The Lushais of Jampui Hills in Tripura, supplied the MNF activists with money and shelter but did not actively take part in the MNF’s military ventures. Although the Hmars of the north had their different organization (HPC) they supported the MNF on the expressed promise from Laldenga that their demands would be within the purview of the MNF objectives. The young Zomis of Manipur actively assisted the MNF activists and their participation was direct. But the Chins from both northern and central districts like the Lushais of Tripura did not actively help the MNF as these Chins were not ready to go against the mother country, Burma, with whom they were emotionally integrated. However the southern Chins, living in the Irrawaddy delta and on the south of Arakan extended support to the MNF. After the fall of East Pakistan, the MNF headquarters were shifted from Rooma (Bangladesh) to Parva (Arakan border, Burma). The MNF training camp was located at the dense forest at Arakan. It was from Arakan that Laldenga and his family escaped to Pakistan probably under the guise of a fake Chin name. The Assam Kukies provided moral and monetary support to the MNF but refrained from actively participating in the subversive activities. Despite the appeal of ‘Greater Mizoram’, the MNF movement was purely a local movement confined to the limits of Mizo Hills only and majority of the Zomis did not take part in it. Even among the older and matured Mizos of Mizoram, despite the MNF’s support base, the glamorous appeal of Laldenga, was always weak; the youth both educated or uneducated, however, were staunch supporters of the MNF. When the Mizo Peace Accord was signed the MNF movement was almost dead.

11. **Vichy Regime**: During the initial stage of World War II, the victorious German Army overrun France (1940) leading to the fall of the Third Republic of France. Under the Instruction of Hitler a puppet government under Marshal

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Patain was established at Vichy. Patain had dictatorial power and his lieutenant was Pierre Laval. The Vichy regime wholeheartedly collaborated with Nazi Germany. However, the Vichy regime was short-lived. Japan took full advantage of the Vichy regime and rapidly extended her hold over the French colonies in South-East Asia.
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