

The Secret Agreement : Courtesy of North East Sun, January 15, 2010



Signed between the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Government of India in 1986, the Mizo Accord so far remains the only successful Accord in the country. Security experts even refer to it as 'the only insurgency in the world which ended with a stroke of pen'. Mizoram witnessed two decades of insurgency which had broken out in 1960s and ended on June 30, 1986 when Pu Laldenga signed a Memorandum of Settlement with the representatives of Government of India and Government of Mizoram. Deepak Dewan writes about the 'Confidential' agreement signed by Late Pu Laldenga with Congress leader Arjun Singh. Incidentally this agreement led to the signing of the Mizo Accord.

IT WAS A CHILLY WINTER AND AS SUCH January is the coldest month of winter in Delhi. I was on a mission to meet Pu Laldenga who was put up in a safe house somewhere in south Delhi, provided by the Government of India. I along with my photographer landed at the house in Chirag Enclave early morning at about 6.45 am and before the guard posted outside could react, I rang the doorbell. A minute after a teenaged boy opened the door. While I was asking him about Pu Laldenga, someone interrupted "Come in. I am Laldenga". and a man with good built stretched out his right hand towards me. I shook hands with him and introduced myself. "I am Deepak Dewan from Sun. I want to have a chat with you." Repeat your name once again", Pu Laldenga said. "Deepak, Deepak Dewan," I replied.. "Deepak is a good name. It means light. Your Sun magazine I have seen. It is very popular. You can ask questions." said Pu Laldenga with a smile and told a young lady in the house to bring tea for all of us.

While blaming the Government of India for the failure of talks (1982) Pu Laldenga said "On January 12, Home Minister Zail Singh informed me about the talks being called off from their side and said in Hindi '*Laldenga , main bhi majboor him aur turn bhi mujboor ho. agar mamla khatam nahin bhi hota to bhi hamein doston ki tareh vedai leni chahiye*'. (Laldenga, I'm also bound and you are also bound, even if we

don't reach a settlement, let's part as friends)'. It seems they (The Government.) don't want any solution for the Mizo problem. What they are interested in is MNF surrender only. They don't agree to my proposals because they think by accepting my proposals they'll be rewarding insurgency..". " I agreed to surrender with all my underground men in operation. The Government wants only that. But at the same time the Government is not willing to give anything. If you want everything and are not willing to give anything then how can one even negotiate and the question of settlement does not even arise..."

Within one week Pu Laldenga returned to London and insurgency returned to Mizoram. What I learnt from my sources in the Ministry of Home Affairs was that it was not possible to dismiss or dislodge democratically elected PC Government led by Brig T Sailo to offer the seat of power to MNF Brig T Sailo (ret'd) being the Army officer had fundamental differences on the approach to MNF issue at that time. While the disturbances continued in Mizoram and in the next elections (1984) the Congress Party promised peace in Mizoram and was voted to power. Pu Lalthanhawla who took over as new Chief Minister and on the first visit to New Delhi he had disclosed to me in an interview published in June, 1984. Pu Lal Thanhawla said "My party promised to bring peace in Mizoram and so people opted for us. The undergrounds have high expectations from the new Government. We are going to bring both parties the MNF and the Government of India to an atmosphere in which the talks can start again. And we hope the talks would restart soon..." During that visit only after meeting the Prime Minister, Lalthanhawla had said with full confidence.

Once again the clouds of disturbances started to clear over Mizoram with Pu Laldenga's positive response to the Centre's offer of resuming the dialogue. This was in August 1984. After working out certain modalities Pu Laldenga once again arrived in New Delhi, and I met him again at his Mahadev Road bungalow and he said "The Government of Mizoram has changed now and it wants a peaceful solution to the problem. Even the party (Congress) fought elections on the issue of a peaceful solution. The Chief Minister Lai Thanhawla also openly declared that it is not the Congress (I) which won the election but it was the people who struggled for an amicable solution. So that's the hope and the chances are better than they were with Brig Sailo's Government, which was completely against any peaceful solution. I say this because he (Brig Sailo) wrote about this in an article titled "How to tackle insurgency."

Two years of hectic negotiations yielded positive results and finally on June 30, 1986 the historic Memorandum of Settlement was signed in New Delhi by Pu Laldenga, on behalf of MNF, Pu RD Pradhan, Home Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and Pu Lalkhama, Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram which closed the chapter of 'violent Mizoram'.

But many of us may not know about another agreement signed between Indian National Congress (I) and the Mizo National Front (MNF). This agreement marked 'Confidential' was signed by Pu Arjun Singh, then the Vice President, Indian National Congress (I) and Pu Laldenga and it was signed in the presence of Pu Lalthanhawla, then Chief Minister of Mizoram. This agreement was signed on June 25, 1986, exactly five days prior to the signing of the Mizo Accord. In fact this agreement led to the signing of the main accord as the agreement took care of Pu Laldenga's demand of installing him as Chief Minister of Mizoram. Text of the Agreement between the Indian National Congress (I) and the Mizo

National Front, Mizoram'. The Government of India under the leadership of the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has brought about a situation where in the long years of disturbed conditions in Mizoram are being brought to an end. The Memorandum of Settlement is being signed between the Government of India and Shri Laldenga, President of the Mizo National Front to give shape to this effort to usher peace and prosperity in Mizoram within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Shri Laldenga has pledged to bring the M.N.F. into the mainstream of the Indian polity and irrevocably committed it to strive for a strong and united India.



The Historic Mizo Accord is being signed

In order to further strengthen this resolve and to enable a smooth and orderly transition, the Indian National Congress (I) and the MNF headed by Shri Laldenga agree to form a coalition Government. This decision shall be implemented in the following manner soon after the members of the MNF who are underground lay down their arms and join the national mainstream.

On a date agreed to between Shri Laldenga and the Government of India, Shri Lalthanhawla, the present Congress (I) Chief Minister will submit his resignation and Shri Laldenga will be elected the leader of the Government of Mizoram and be sworn in as the Chief Minister there.

Shri Lalthanhawla, the present Chief Minister, will be sworn as the Dy Chief Minister. In addition to the Dy. Chief Minister, four members of the Congress (I) Party shall be made Ministers of the new Government.

In addition to the Chief Minister, three members from the MNF Party will be made Ministers. The name of the Ministers will be nominated by the respective political parties and the Chief Minister will propose to the Lt. Governor. All issues concerning the formation and induction of this new Govt, will be decided mutually by the Chief Minister and the Dy. Chief Minister.

In order to smoothen the function of the coalition Government, a Coordination Committee will be constituted consisting of the following:

(a) Shri Laldenga — Chaiman

(b) Shri Lalthanhawla— Vice Chairman

Two members of the Congress Party, Two members of the MNF Party.

This committee will take into consideration all matters concerning the party and the Government which either of the political parties may deem necessary to bring for its consideration in order to help smooth functioning of the Government and to bring better coordination between the Congress (I) and the MNF.

This Coalition Government will continue to MP function till such date when the President is satisfied that the normalcy has returned and the holding of elections has become feasible. In the event of any difference arising between the two parties in the functioning of the Government or relationship between the parties they would seek the help of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to resolve the same. Whatever was agreed between the MNF and the Congress Party and the Government of India was strictly followed. All the armed cadres of MNF laid down their arms in July 1986. On August 2, 1986, the Young Mizo Association organized a grand reception for the MNF returnees in Aizawl. As agreed, Pu Lalthanhawla stepped down to become Deputy Chief Minister and Pu Laldenga took over as the new Chief Minister of Mizoram. That was the beginning of MNF as an over ground political party in Mizoram. All the cadres of MNF were rehabilitated in due course. All this transition would not have been possible without the will of the Mizos who longed for a lasting peace in Mizoram and now the peace loving Mizos are reaping rich dividends. One needs more Lalthanhawlas in the trouble-torn North East region who are willing to sacrifice their political interest for the sake of peace.