

**WORLD WARS AND THE LUSHAI HILLS**

**BY**

**JOHN L PACHUAU**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY**

**Submitted**

**in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the Degree of the Master of  
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**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY  
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**

**AIZAWL: MIZORAM**

Phone: 0389-2330531/0389-2330410

Mizoram University

A Central university established by an Act of Parliament  
Accredited 'A' Grade by NAAC in 2014

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Professor Lalngurliana Sailo

Ph:9774099163

E-mail:msailo35@rediffmail.com

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“World Wars and the Lushai Hills”** submitted by John L Pachuau in fulfillment of Master of Philosophy of this University is an original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for other degree. It is recommended this dissertation be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Dated: 27/01/2020

(Prof. LALNGURLIANA SAILO)

Place: Aizawl

Supervisor

## DECLARATION

I, John L Pachuau, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis entitled **“WORLD WARS AND THE LUSHAI HILLS”** is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/ Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Master of Philosophy in history.

Date: 27/01/2020

Aizawl, Mizoram

(JOHN L PACHUAU)

Candidate

Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University

(PROF.K.ROBIN)

Head

Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University

(PROF. LALNGURLIANA SAILO)

Supervisor

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CB	:	Carton Box
Fig.	:	Figure
INA	:	Indian National Army
Mds	:	Maund
MSA	:	Mizoram State Archives
TRI	:	Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl
YMCA	:	Young Men's Christian Association



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 History of the Lushai Hills

The Lushai Hills (now Mizoram) is located on the southern part of North East India. It is bounded on the north by Cachar and Manipur, on the east and south by Burma and on the west by the Arakan and Chittagong Hill tracks.<sup>1</sup> The Lushai Hill is a mountainous terrain in which mountains run from north to south directions. The topographic features can broadly be classified into mountainous terrain, ridge and valley according to altitude.<sup>2</sup>

In this research the word Lushai or Mizo will be used interchangeably because during the colonial period Lushai was mainly used to describe the inhabitants of the Lushai Hills. They were also known by other nomenclature such as Chins, Kukis. After independence, under Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act, 1954,<sup>3</sup> the Lushai Hills District name was changed to Mizo District and the inhabitants preferred to identify themselves as Mizos. The term Lushai consisted of many clans and it is a result of incorrect transliteration of the word Lusei which is the name of a clan under which various chiefs came into prominence in the eighteenth

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<sup>1</sup> A.S. Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land*, Aizawl, TRI, 2008 (2nd Reprint), p.4

<sup>2</sup> Rintluanga Pachuau, *Geography of Mizoram*, RT Enterprise, Aizawl, 1994, p.129

<sup>3</sup> [http://theindianlawyer.in/statutesnbareacts/acts/l28.html#\\_Toc39385892](http://theindianlawyer.in/statutesnbareacts/acts/l28.html#_Toc39385892) (accessed on 6 December 2019).

century and was responsible for the eruption into Cachar of Old Kukis at the end of that century and New Kukis half a century later.<sup>4</sup>

When the British took possession of Bengal and had their contact with Zo people, the Bengalis told them that the Zo were Kuki, a Bengali word which means something like savage or wild hill people. But when the British came in close contact with the Lusei, they realized that they did not call themselves Kuki. Initially the British used the term “Loosye”. However, the British later adopted “LUSHAI” as the official designation for Zo people living in the western part of the Zo country, as the ruling clans of these people were known to them as “Lushai”.<sup>5</sup>

Before the Lushai Hills was colonised by the British, the Lushai used to conduct raids on the British tea gardens in Cachar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The first recorded raid on the British territory by the Lushais occurred in September 1826.<sup>6</sup> The increasing Lushai raids on the plains alarmed the British. On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1871 the Lushai raided Alexandrapore, a tea garden in Cachar. A British planter Winchester was killed and his daughter Mary Winchester about the age of six was captured by the Lushais. To put an end to the Lushai raids, the British officials decided to launch an expedition during the winter of 1871. The plan was formed that two columns should start as early as possible in November 1871- one from Cachar and the other from Chittagong.<sup>7</sup> The expedition although did not establish lasting

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<sup>4</sup> J. Shakespear, *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, Macmillan &Co, London, 1912, p xiii

\* *Pawi* are one of the tribes living in Chin State in Burma and southern parts of Mizoram.

<sup>5</sup> Vumson, *Zo History: with an introduction to Zo culture, economy, religion and their status as an ethnic minority in India, Burma, and Bangladesh*, Aizawl, Vumson, 1986, p.1

<sup>6</sup> J. Zorema, *Indirect Rule In Mizoram 1890-1954*, New Delhi, Mittal Publication, 2007, p.20

<sup>7</sup> Reid, *Chin-Lushai Land*, p. 10

peace but had a limited success, Mary Winchester was rescued, many of the Lushai chiefs surrendered and submitted to the British.

From 1880s onwards, some of the Lushai chiefs once again raided the settlements in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. On March 1888, a survey party consisting of a British official John Stewart and his European soldiers were killed by one of the *Pawi\** chief Howsata near Rangmati in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. On the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1889 a party of about 600 men led by Lianphunga and his brother Zahrawka, sons of Suakpuilala had descended on the valley which lay on the Chittagong Frontier, burnt 24villages, killed 101 persons and carried off 91 captives.<sup>8</sup> In response to the increasing raids, the British officials launched an operation on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1889 which came to be known as the Chin-Lushai Expedition in 1889-90. The southern column was under the command of Colonel Tregear while Northern Column under the command of Colonel G. J. Skinner. Some of the objectives of the Expedition were to visit certain tribes that have raided and committed depredations in British territory, and have declined to make amends or to come to terms ; secondly to subjugate tribes as yet neutral, but now by force of circumstances brought within the sphere of British dominion; thirdly, to explore and partly open route between Burma and Chittagong; lastly, if the necessity arises, to establish semi-permanent posts in the regions visited so as to ensure complete pacification and recognition of British power.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam 1883-1941*, Eastern Publishing House, Delhi 1983, p. 8

<sup>9</sup> Reid, *History of Frontier Areas*, p. 10

The Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 laid the foundation of the British rule in the Lushai Hills. The British established four posts two in the South- Fort Lunglei and Fort Tregear and two in the North Fort Aizawl and Fort Changsil.<sup>10</sup> The Lushai Hills was annexed in 1891. The Lushai Hills was divided into two districts South Lushai Hills and North Lushai Hills with headquarters at Lunglei and Aizawl respectively.<sup>11</sup> The South Lushai Hills was put under the administrative control of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal while the North Lushai Hills was put under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. By the proclamation of 1895 the Lushai Hills was formally brought under the British rule and later on, the two districts were merged into one district in April 1898 and placed under the Assam administration. Aizawl headed by the Superintendent became the district headquarter.

Once the British established their rule in the Lushai Hills, the Superintendent became the head chief of the Lushai Hills and the village chiefs his deputies, taking care of local matters. This was a cheap arrangement for the British because it obviated the need to have officials posted all over the Lushai Hills. The chiefs became the agents of the British government and chieftainship was made hereditary.<sup>12</sup>

## **1.2. The World Wars and the Lushai Hills**

The First and Second World Wars were the most devastating wars that mankind has ever witnessed, killing and displacing millions of people and affected

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<sup>10</sup> Liangkhaia, *Mizo Chanchin*, LTL Publications, Aizawl, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 2002, p.149

<sup>11</sup> Robert Reid, p.13

<sup>12</sup> Joy L.K Pachuau & Willem van Schendel, *The Camera as Witness: A Social History Of Mizoram, Northeast India*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p.122-123

all the continents directly or indirectly. The First World War was mainly confined to the European continent while the Second World War was more widespread and was fought not only in the European continent but also in Asia and Pacific regions. Both the World Wars had direct impact on the European colonies in Asia and Africa.

The Two World Wars are regarded as total wars because the belligerent states mobilised all available resources both civilian and military towards the warfront. British entered the First World War hoping it to be a short and decisive war, however as the war dragged on, more and more manpower was needed to fight the war and maintain supply line. Colonies were used as a reservoir of manpower and material resources. Eventually the British looked to their empire for support and Indian, Africans and West Indians came to France.<sup>13</sup> The War was used as an opportunity by the Indian princes and political leaders to show their loyalty towards the British and calculated that present service would mean future rewards. In this atmosphere of goodwill, 1,200,000 men, 800,000 of whom were combatants, were recruited, £100 million pound were given outright to Britain for the prosecution of the war and £ 20-30 million contributed annually.<sup>14</sup> A complete corps was dispatched from India to fight the German army on the French border. The War in Mesopotamia was fought by the Indian army from start to finish.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Weeks. (ed.), *Dangerous Work: The Memoir Of Private George Weeks Of The Labour Corps 1917-1918*, Gloucestershire, Spellmount, 2014, p.7

<sup>14</sup> Percival Spear. *The Oxford History Of Modern India 1740-1975*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1978,p.335

<sup>15</sup> Sneh Mahajan, *Issues in Twentieth-Century World History*, New Delhi, Macmillan, 2011,p.51

The Wars had affected even the remotest regions of British India. Even the recently colonized regions of Northeast India were not immune from the First World War. By late 1915, the British War Committee, later known as the War Cabinet realized that shortage of labour might cost them dearly in the Western Front in France. As the War progressed, combatants could not be spared for non-combat roles. Unskilled labour was found to be needed for building roads and laying railway tracks, handling ammunition, docks, supply and storm depots, forestry, quarries, hutting, trench building and grave digging. Since the demand for labour could not be met from ‘the home turf’, it had to be imported from the British colonies abroad and even from China.<sup>16</sup>

In January 1917 the Secretary State for India requested the Viceroy if India can provide labour for the war in France. The burden for providing labour fell on Assam, Orissa, Bengal because other provinces like Punjab, United Province, Madras were already sending regular soldiers to the British Indian army. Archdale Earle, the Chief Commissioner of Assam offered eight to ten thousand labourers from his province.<sup>17</sup> The Assam province sent 17 companies one from the Garo hills and four each from Khasi, Naga, Lushai and Manipur hills.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Pratap Chetri, ‘NORTH EAST and the FIRST WORLD WAR’, *The Centre For Hidden Histories: Communities, Commemoration And The First World War*, 2016, <http://hiddenhistorieswwi.ac.uk/uncategorized/2016/02/north-east-india-and-the-first-world-war/>, (accessed 24 February 2019).

\*kuli is a mizo rendering for coolie (impressed labour).

<sup>17</sup> Radhika Singha , “The Recruiter’s Eye on ‘The Primitive’: To France – and Back in the Indian Labour Corps, 1917-18.” in James E. Kitchen, Alisa Miller and Laura Rowe ( ed.) *Other Combatants, Other Fronts: Competing Histories of the First World War*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p. 201

Recruitment of labour for the War started in the Lushai Hills from beginning of 1917. Many Mizos were reluctant to send their sons to the war because they thought it was too dangerous. There was rumour circulating that once they reach France, these men will not only be used as labourers but also as regular soldiers on the front.<sup>19</sup> In order to attract the Mizos to join the recruitment the British Government declared that those who volunteered to join the Labour Corps will be exempted from *kuli\** (impressed labour) and house tax. Only the privilege sections of the society like the chiefs and his advisor and few educated people were exempted from *kuli*.. The Mizos greatly resented that is having to carry what they called the soldiers ‘fat wives’ and their childrens, while the sepoy behind kick and beat them along the roads.<sup>20</sup> The families of the Labour Corp will also be exempted from *kuli* during their tour of duty. Since money was scarce during this period, exemption from house tax was a big relief for many Mizos and became one of the main reasons for joining the Labour Corps. Another reason why men enlisted to join the Labour Corps according to Sainghinga was that the ladies they fancy would rather welcome and seek those who participated in the war over them when they returned.<sup>21</sup>

One of the British missionaries in Lushai Hills D.E Jones (Zosaphluia) also encouraged the Mizos to join the war by publishing articles on newspaper highlighting the benefits and privileges of going abroad. According to Vawmphunga,

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<sup>18</sup> Singha, p.203

<sup>19</sup> Sainghinga, *Indopui 1914-1918 Mizote France Ram Kal Thu*, Aizawl, Thakthing Bazar Press, 1939, p.2

<sup>20</sup> A.G. McCall, *The Lushai Chrysalis*, London, Luzac & Co Limited, 1949, p.288

<sup>21</sup> Sainghinga, p.5

the village chief sent men who were less prominent and who did not mean much in the society even if they die in the war.<sup>22</sup>

By April 1917, the British were able to recruit as many as 2100 men for the Labour Corps. Once enlisted in the Labour Corps, they were divided into a group of four each comprising of 500 men and were christened as 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Corps. Before leaving for France, the Lushai Labour Corps assembled at Lammual in Aizawl and the Mizos had never seen such a huge assembly of young men and gave the people a lot of confidence that these young men will defeat the Germans.<sup>23</sup> Besides the Lushai Labour Corps, as many as thirty Mizos joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearers Corps.<sup>24</sup>

The Lushai Labour Corps reached France on the third week of June 1917 and by July they were stationed at Monchy-au- Bois. The main job of the Lushai Labour Corp was to dismantle deserted trenches and dugouts and send the wooden planks to be re-used where fighting was going on.<sup>25</sup> During their stay in the war zone under adverse condition the Lushai Labour Corps proved themselves to be brave and hardworking people and they received appreciation from their British Commanders.

In 1918, the War came to an end with British emerging victorious. The Lushai Labour Corps were offered new contracts to serve in the British armed forces in Mesopotamia but most of them refused to renew their contracts and returned

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<sup>22</sup> JF Laldailova, , *German Ral Run Leh Thu Ngaihnawm Dangte*, Aizawl, ZOlif Publication, 2010, p.10

<sup>23</sup> Sainghinga, p.6

<sup>24</sup> V.L. Siama, *Mizo History*, Aizawl, Lengchhawn Press, 1953, p.112

<sup>25</sup> Pachuau & Schendel, *The Camera as Witness* p.193



home.<sup>26</sup> The money earned by the Labour Corps increased the flow of money in the Lushai Hills.<sup>27</sup>

The Second World War broke out in Europe on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. In response to German aggression, Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Hitler's early victories in Europe opened up opportunities for the Japanese in Southeast Asia. The War in Europe had weakened the European Powers and suddenly their colonies in Asia appeared vulnerable and susceptible to Japanese forces.

By 1942, the Japanese successfully drove out the Europeans from South East Asia. The Japanese had humiliated the Europeans and destroyed the myth of white superiority. According to Griess, the intricate planning, timing, and coordination of the Japanese were remarkable. They had out planned, out generalled, and outfought the Allies. Driving relentlessly, the Japanese routed British and Chinese troops and threatened the very safety of India.<sup>28</sup>

The annexation of Burma by Japan in May 1942 brought the war closer to India. The British became very alarmed and the defence of India's Eastern border became the top priority as Manipur and Assam emerged as the front line against Japan. Between 1942 and 1945 Northeast India became huge military camp as Allied troops poured in to bolster India's eastern defences.<sup>29</sup> It appeared to many Indian and

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<sup>26</sup> Pachuau & Schendel, p.194

<sup>27</sup> J. Zorema, *Indirect Rule*, p.92

<sup>28</sup> Thomas E. Griess, *The Second World War: Asia and the Pacific*, New York ,West Point Avery Publishing Group Inc,1989, p.15

<sup>29</sup> Berenice Guyot-Rechard, 'When Legions Thunder Past: The Second World War And India's Northeast Frontier', *War in History*, Vol 25, No.3, 2018.p.336

British troops in 1942 and 1943 that a new type of warfare and a new type of enemy had engulfed them.<sup>30</sup>

In response to the new fighting techniques adopted by the Japanese forces, the British under Major General Orde Wingate organised a new force called the Chindits who were specially trained and equipped with innovative fighting methods. This new approach to war fighting was dubbed as Long Range Penetration. They were to be dropped deep inside enemy lines with the aim of collecting intelligence and sabotage.<sup>31</sup>

In April 1942 McCall the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills gathered the Mizo chiefs at Aizawl and requested them to support the British and defend the Hills. The chiefs agreed to support and pledged their allegiance to the British Crown on one condition that after the war Mizoram would not be allocated to either India or Burma.<sup>32</sup>

By the time War came, many Mizos had already served in various branches of the Indian army –Assam Rifles, Burma Rifles. Royal Indian Supply Corp, Army Medical Corps.<sup>33</sup> The British formed resistance group from the local population and the group came to be known as *Pasaltha*\* “V” Force. The *Pasaltha* “V” Force was

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Layman, *Kohima 1944 The Battle That Saved India*, UK, Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2010, p.15

<sup>31</sup> Tim Moreman, *Chindits 1942-45*, New York, Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2008, p.4

<sup>32</sup> Pachuau & Schendel, p.199

<sup>33</sup> Rohmingmawii, ‘Mizos and the World Wars’, in Malsawmdawngliana & Rohmingmawii (ed.), *Mizo Narratives:Accounts from Mizoram*, Dispur, Scientific Book Centre, 2014, p.273

\* In Mizo society, Pasaltha were those men who had exceptional skills in hunting and display great valour in times of war. They occupy respectable position in the society.

divided into two groups *Pasaltha A* and B.<sup>34</sup> *Pasaltha A* main function was to maintain internal peace and security while the latter was to patrol the border areas and intelligence gathering on Japanese activities. To offer total resistance to the Japanese invading army, McCall introduced the Lushai Hills Total Defence Scheme. To counter the Japanese army, in 1944 the Lushai Scouts was formed under the command of Lt Col Jack Longbottom with its headquarter at Biate.

Although the British formed resistance groups to fight against Japanese army, the Mizos had limited skirmishes with the Japanese army in the Lushai Hills as the latter shifted their attention towards Imphal and Kohima. The Lushai Scouts were deployed in Burma where they were to join the Lushai Brigade.

The War had affected the Mizo society in several ways. The roads leading to Burma was occupied by the Japanese army for two years and this affected the economy and the mobility of the migratory tribes. Some Mizo and Khasi women had also joined the Women Auxiliary Corps of India to entertain the homesick British and American soldiers in the War front. Many of them came back home impregnated. They gave birth to white children which had some social bearings. Those Mizos who returned from the War front felt empowered by their experiences in the war. The War heroes considerably influenced the socio political thoughts of the Mizos.<sup>35</sup> The War further enhanced money economy in the Lushai Hills.

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<sup>34</sup> Siama, p.122

<sup>35</sup> Suhas Chatterjee, *Making Of Mizoram: Role of Laldenga*, Vol 1, New Delhi, M.D Publication, 1994, p. 67

Cash was not the local medium of exchange before the Second World War. Before the War, money transaction was few and limited only when they traded with the plain people. Trading and wage earning had begun only from the First World War and gained momentum during the Second World War.<sup>36</sup> The accumulation of wealth by traders and soldiers after the War led to the emergence of a new class in the society.

New forces against traditionalism which were by-products of Western education emerged and continuously strengthened by the experiences during the First and Second World Wars. The First World War, increase wider contacts and help in the accelerated process of modernization and the consequent emergence of new class of people hitherto unknown in the traditional settings. The effect of the Second World War was still greater as many Mizos had now joined different lines in the army.<sup>37</sup>

The World Wars had exposed the Mizos to the outside world and enhanced their perspectives which stimulated development. Thus, the Wars had increased the flow of money, brought changes in the mindset and lifestyle of the people, infrastructure, political consciousness and also created a sense of unity among the people.

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<sup>36</sup> Chatterjee, *Making Of Mizoram*, p. 68

<sup>37</sup> C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society And Polity*, New Delhi, Indus Publishing Company, 1996, p.121

### 1.3. Review of Literature

*Issues in Twentieth Century World History* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011) written by Sneh Mahajan is an important book for understanding the First and Second World Wars. The book describes the impact of the wars on the colonies, how the European powers acquired essential war materials and labour supply from the colonies.

*Indian Voices of the Great War Soldiers' Letters, 1914-1918* (Macmillan Press, 1999) by David Omissi is a collection of selected letters written by the Indian soldiers deployed in Europe and Mesopotamia during the First World War. This book provides invaluable information on the morale of the Indian soldiers and their encounter with European culture. Since the author had accessed to the letters of the soldiers, he is able to give a vivid account of the experiences of the soldiers posted at the front.

Percival Spear's book *Oxford History Of Modern India* (Oxford University Press, 1978) is an important book which gives detail account of India's history during the colonial and pre-colonial period. In part IV of the book, Spear discusses in detail the First World War and the loyal sentiments shown by the Indian princes and political leaders towards the British. As a gesture of good will the Indian princes donated millions of pounds annually to the war fund and sent thousands of men to be used as combatants and non-combatants (labour corps).

*The Camera As Witness* by Joy L.K Pachuau and Willem van Schendel (Cambridge University Press, 2015) aim to explore the history of Mizoram through

unpublished photographs. The photographs in this book provide in-depth knowledge about the Mizos during the First and Second World Wars.

*Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge University Press 2011) is a book edited by Santanu Das, brings out the voices and experiences of various colonial soldiers from India, China and Africa participating in the First World War. The book examines the racial and colonial aspects of the war of 1914–18. The wider aim is to embed the experience and memory of the First World War in a more multiracial and international framework.

The article '*The recruiter's eye on 'the primitive': to France in the Indian Labour Corps - and back, 1917-1918*' by Radhika Singha gives an elaborate account on the recruitment of Labour Corps in Northeast India during the First World War. The author describes the role of Christian missionaries and how missionary networks were also tapped to get labour for France, the first batch of the Labour Corp including 5000 Christians were accompanied by 11 chaplains in addition to several lay readers. The article also highlights how the recruitment to Labour Corp set off violent reactions and uprisings in Manipur and Naga Hills.

Pratap Chhetri's article '*North East India and The First World War*' is about India's participation in the First World War under the British rule by providing troops, auxiliaries and labour force from all over India including the North East. Men from North East India were recruited as paid volunteer labourers working on non-combat roles as part of the Labour Corps to serve in France and Mesopotamia. These Labour Corps were named after the regions they came from namely Garo, Lushai,

Manipur, Naga and Chin Labour Corps. For the first time, these tribal men were exposed to the modern world which propelled the growth of education, Christianity, and most importantly the dawning of political consciousness among many tribes.

*India At War The Subcontinent and the Second World War* (Oxford University Press, 2015) by Yasmin Khan describes how the Indian subcontinent was reshaped by the war. The book provides invaluable information on the diversity of wartime experiences in India. Merchants, industrialists, soldiers, agriculturalists or black marketers, in small towns or mega-cities, on coastal waterways or in the mountains, all had their own ways of negotiating the challenges and opportunities of war. Some profited and many were impoverished.

*India's War: World War Two and The Making of Modern South Asia* (Basic Books, 2016) by Srinath Raghavan , highlights that India did not fight the war as merely an appendage of the British Empire. From the beginning, India provided soldiers and defended the British Empire not only in India but also in other continents in Africa, Europe and Pacific. The book discussed the importance of martial races while recruiting the army and soldiers were mainly recruited from North West India which was immune from anti British feeling. The book also highlighted the contributions made by the Northeast tribes like Nagas, Kukis, Chin and other hill tribes during the fight against Japan.

*The Making of Mizoram: Role Of Laldenga* Vol 1 (M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1994) by Suhas Chatterjee is an important book which deals not only with the role of Laldenga but also the history and politics of Mizoram and the Japanese

campaigns in the Northeast India and Burma during the Second World War. In one of chapters, *Travails of the War Years*, Chatterjee highlights that the Mizos not only fought on the Burma Front but a number of them took part in different operations, on the Western Front also. He also describes Japanese incursion into Northeast India and the impact of the Second World War on the Mizo society and how the War brought changes in the economy and mental outlook of the Mizos. Chatterjee highlights that the War brought money economy in the Lushai Hills and this led the emergence of neo rich class in the Mizo society.

*Sepoy Against the Rising Sun: The Indian Army in Far East And South East Asia, 1941-45* (Brill Academic Publication 2016) by Kausik Roy highlights the various campaigns of the Indian Army in Asia during the Second World War. The Indian Army was not only the largest volunteer force but also the biggest colonial force. But its size pales in comparison with the armies raised by the first class powers during the Second World War. The book assesses the combat effectiveness of the Indian Army against the Japanese Army during the War. The book describes the jungle war in the Arakan, how the Indian Army defeated the Japanese Army in the challenging terrain of Imphal and Kohima.

*Kohima 1944: The Battle That Saved India* (Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2010) by Robert Layman describes the Japanese attempt to capture Kohima and the resistance put up by the British. The Japanese launched Operation U-Go to capture Kohima, which was an important base of the British army. The book explores the background of the campaign, the opposing armies and their commanders, detail account of the battle of Kohima and how the Japanese forces were finally defeated. The defeat of



the Japanese in Kohima was the turning point as it ended the Japanese attempt to overthrow the British Raj.

*Dangerous Work :The Memoir Of Private George Weeks Of The Labour Corps 1917-1918* (Gloucestershire, Spellmount, 2014) is a book edited by Alan Weeks about the experiences of his father who was drafted to the Labour Corp during the First World War on the Western Front. It does not involve great military actions but day to day survival in terrible conditions. The book also describes how the British eventually began to look to their colonies for material support and labour supply.

*A.G McCall in his book The Lushai Chrysalis* (Luzac & Co Limited, 1949) examines in detail the religion, custom and economy of the Mizos during the pre-colonial and colonial period. In chapter X, McCall discusses the impact of the First World War in the Lushai Hills, how the British government tries to persuade the Mizos to join to the Labour Corps. This book is important because it is one of the earliest books written in English which described in details the Lushai Hills and the Two World Wars.

*Chin-Lushai Land* (Thacker Spink &Co, 1893) by A S Reid is an important book as it helps us in understanding how the Lushai Hills was colonized by the British. The book gives vivid account of the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72, Lushai Expedition of 1889 and Chin Lushai Expedition of 1889-90.

*The History Of Frontier Areas Bordering On Assam From 1883-1941*(Eastern Publishing House, 1983) written by the Governor of Assam Robert

Reid provides an insightful information on the Lushai Hills. The book describes the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 and how the British finally subdued the Lushais. The book also provides an invaluable information on the administrative changes taking in the Lushai Hills once the British established their rule.

*'Jack Longbottom and the Lushai Scouts'* by Jane Robinson nee Longbottom is an important article as it gives detail information about the Lushai Scouts. The article describes how the Lushai Scouts was formed under the guidance of Jack Longbottom and the various operations they undertook against the Japanese forces in Burma. The Lushai Scouts were trained as regular troops but their speciality was to be jungle warfare with special emphasis on mobility and minimum transport. When the War ended the Lushai Scouts were flown back to India and disbanded at Shillong as a Unit.

*The Second World War: Asia and the Pacific* by Thomas E. Griess (West Point Avery Publishing Group Inc, 1989) gives a detailed account of the Allies' brutal five-year struggle with Japan. According to Griess, at the beginning of the war Allied response was inadequate and ineffective, surrender followed surrender as the Japanese crushed all resistance. Driving relentlessly, the Japanese routed British and Chinese troops and threatened the very safety of India. The Japanese main slogan was "Asia for the Asians" and by early May 1942 they had driven the white man from the control of the western Pacific and Southeast Asia; they had also humiliated him, and destroyed the myth of white superiority. According to Griess, even for isolated Australians, Japanese invasion was the immediate fear.

Sainghinga's book on *Mizote France Ram Kal Thu* (Hauhlira Press, 1995) is one of the few books written by ex Lushai Labour Corps to be published. The book provides invaluable information on how Mizos were recruited in the Labour Corps during the First World War. The book describes the Lushai Labour Corps journey to France and their experiences in the war.

JF Laldailova in his book *German Ral Run Leh Thu Ngaihnaawm Dangte* (ZOLife Publication, 2010) describes the experience of a 19 year old Vawmphunga serving the 27<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Corp in France. This is an important source for understanding the role of the Lushai Labour Corps during the First World War.

*Indirect Rule in Mizoram 1890-1954* (Mittal Publication, 2007) by J. Zorema provides a critical study of the British administration in the Lushai Hills. The book highlights how the British tried to maintain and strengthen the system of indirect rule or rule through chiefs. In chapter V the author discusses the role of Mizos during the First World War and its impact on the Mizo economy. The book also highlights the new ideas brought in by Second World War.

*Khawvel Indopui 2-Naa Mizo Pasaltha B "V" Force Te Chanchin* (Hauhlira Press, 1995) by Ch. Aikima is one of the few books which describe in details the formation and the role of *Pasaltha B "V"* during the Second World War. Since the author was part of the *Pasaltha B "V"* Force, it is an invaluable source for the proposed research topic. In 1942 the *Pasaltha B "V"* Force was formed with strength of 5100 Mizos and their main role was to act as the last line of defence as well as intelligence gathering on Japanese movements across the border. The book also highlights the Lushai Scouts which was formed in 1944.

*Mizo History* (Lengchhan Press, 1953) by VL Siana is a comprehensive book dealing with various topics in Mizo history during the pre-colonial and colonial period. This book is an invaluable source for this topic as it deals with both the World Wars. Besides writing on the Lushai Labour Corps, it is also one of the few books which mentioned the Mizos involvement in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps during the First World War. The book also described the Mizos involvement in the Second World War, the formation of Lushai Scouts and the regions where the Mizos were posted during the war.

*Mizo leh Sipai (Mizo Sipai Tang Hmasa Te)* (Jeffson Publishing House, 1999) is a book written by a retired soldier Lalsiama. This book provides important information about Mizos who had joined the Army since the earliest times. It provides detail information of those who had participated during the First and Second World Wars. After the First World War, the Mizos were not found to be fit to serve in the Army because of lack of discipline however later on football played an important role in helping the Mizos to get into the Army again after the First World War. The author looks at the various roles the Mizo soldiers recruited in the Assam Regiment and Assam Rifles undertook during the Second World War.

*Mizoram Society and Polity* (Indus Publishing Company, 1996) by C. Nunthara describes the social organization and political developments during the colonial and post-colonial period. In one of the chapters Political Developments in Mizoram, the author highlights the impact of the World Wars in the Mizo society. New forces against traditionalism emerged and according to Nunthar, these were the by-products of Western education continuously strengthened by the experiences

during the First and Second World Wars. The Wars led to negative orientation towards the traditional elites and the commoners were engulfed with new ethos of political consciousness.

*Lushai Scouts* by RK Hrangta (Franco Press, 1992) describes the formation and the operations undertaken by the Lushai Scouts during the Second World War. The Lushai Scouts played an important role during the War and won praises from their Commanders for their outstanding performance and bravery in the battlefields. They were mainly deployed in Burma against the Japanese forces. The author, an ex Lushai Scouts describes his experiences and gives in-depth information on the war thus making the book an invaluable source for this topic.

*Aizawl A Motor Lut Hmasa Ber* (R.K Printers, 1995) by C. Rochhinga is a book about the entry of jeeps into the Lushai Hills. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1942, the first jeep entered Aizawl from Sairang. The book provides insightful information on how jeep-able roads were constructed for faster troop movements in the Lushai Hills during the Second World War. The book also highlights how roads played an important role in the development of the Lushai Hills during and after the War.

The above review on selected literatures show that there are ample of works dealing with the World Wars on a wider scenario. Most of the works are confined to studying the impact of the Wars in Europe, America or South East Asia. Despite the important contribution of the Indian soldiers during the two Wars, there are only few scholarly research works on Indian Army. As far as the World Wars and the Lushai Hills are concerned, other than those books and articles written by ex-soldiers who experienced the Wars, there are hardly any books or scholarly articles which have

done an in depth study. Despite the significance of these Wars on the Lushai Hills, scholars have neglected this topic and fail to give the importance it deserves. This research therefore, aims to probe into the gap and attempt to bring to light the role of the Mizos during the two World Wars and their impact on the Lushai Hills.

#### **1.4. Statement of the Problem:**

Many scholars have written books on the World Wars-its origins, causes and impact on a global scenario. However, research work specifically dealing with the impact of the First and Second World Wars on the Mizos are limited and still remains largely unexplored.

The Mizos were no stranger to wars. Before the World Wars, the Mizos frequently engaged themselves in inter and intra tribe wars. To make them join the war the British government introduced various incentives like exemption from forced labour and house tax to motivate people. Why did the British government need to incentivise the Mizos? How relevant were the incentives for the Mizos? These questions reflect a gap that provides an opportunity to have in depth study and further research.

A few ex-recruits of the First and Second World Wars have written down their experiences. While these are valuable and indispensable available sources, information however, is confined mainly to their journey to France or their experiences on the War front. Although the Lushai Labour Corps was formed during the First World War, it was immediately disbanded after the War. Their activities were hardly recorded and only a few of their achievements were documented.

During the Second World War, the Mizo women also participated but again, there is little information regarding their role during the War and their impact in the society after the War. Whether the Mizos were passive participants or not during the First and Second World Wars is not exactly known. Some information on the consequences of the World Wars in the Mizo society, economy and culture are extracted meticulously from accounts that are not directly dedicated to the topic concerned.

Some scholars have argued that the money earned by the Lushai Labour Corps during the First World War increased the flow of money in the Lushai Hills, thereby prompting the real beginning of money economy in the Hills more than the trade itself. How far this is true, needs further investigation.

Other sources describing events are attained from foreign authors. These foreign authors have not provided adequate information on the related topic. Therefore, an in-depth study in this area is necessary. The proposed research tries to analyse in detail the impact of the First and Second World Wars in the Mizo society, culture, polity and economy.

## **1.5. Area of Study**

The geographical area the research cover is present day Mizoram and the time period is the first half of the twentieth century.

## **1.6. Objectives**

1. To understand the role of the Mizos during the First and Second World Wars.
2. To examine the impact of the World Wars on Mizo society, polity and economy.

## **1.7. Methodology**

The methodology adopted in this research is qualitative methodology based on information expressed in words-description, accounts, opinion. The research also re-examine the existing sources and works. The research uses both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the relevant archival records in the Assam State Archives, Mizoram State Archives, Missionary Reports and Gazetteers. Among the secondary sources published books, papers and journals relevant to this topic are collected and examined from various reputed libraries within the State like State library, Mizoram University library, Aizawl Theological College library and Mizoram Synod Archives. Unstructured interviews in the line of oral history methodology are adopted in this research in order to gain information and understanding of social phenomena and attitudes.

## **1.8. Structure of the study**

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the research topic and includes review of literature on selected works considered relevant for the topic.



## **Chapter Two: The Mizos and the First World War**

This chapter highlights the role of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps and the Lushai Labour Corps. The chapter also discusses the recruitment process and the incentives provided to the Mizos to enlist themselves in the Labour Corps.

## **Chapter Three: The Mizos and the Second World War**

This chapter describes and analyses the Mizo response to the Second World War. This chapter also highlights the role of the Mizos in the *Pasaltha V* Force, Lushai Scouts, Assam Regiment.

## **Chapter Four: Impact of the Wars in the Lushai Hills**

This chapter focuses on the socio-economic and political impact of the World Wars. It investigates how the World Wars brought transformation in the Lushai Hills.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

This chapter analyse and summarize major findings.

## Chapter 2

### The First World War and The Lushai Hills

The First World War has always been labelled as A White Man's War. Except for the Indian Army, British policy denied the empire's coloured subjects the opportunity for frontline service in Europe, even when, as in the West Indies, South Africa, and New Zealand, they had been inducted into their home armed forces, and in some cases, received combat training. Instead, they became labourers behind the lines, and performing a host of other indispensable but seldom acknowledged jobs. According to British 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. J. S. Smith, "More earth has been removed by a combination of man, pick and shovel in making these trenches than was excavated to make the Panama Canal possible, and in less time."<sup>38</sup> As the war dragged on, more and more labourers were needed for building roads and trenches, unloading and transporting munitions. As a result of this the British began to recruit labourers from their colonies.

The Labour Companies sent to France were recruited from the North-West Frontier Province, the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa, Bengal, Assam and Burma. Quotas were allocated on a territorial basis, and revenue officials, headmen and chiefs were deployed more forcefully to assist recruiting.<sup>39</sup> In Manipur and Naga

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<sup>38</sup>Barton.C. Hacker, 'White man's War, Coloured Man's Labour. Working for the British Army on the Western Front.' *Itinerario*, Volume 38, Issue 03, December 2014, p.28

<sup>39</sup> Radhika Singha, 'Labour (India)', *Online International Encyclopaedia Of The First World War 1914-1918 Online*, p.4, [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/indian\\_labour\\_corps](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/indian_labour_corps) (accessed on 25 March 2019)

Hills many people refused to enlist in the Labour Corps but the government used Western Missionaries like William Pettigrew to intervene, to convince the tribals to participate in the war. The convincing power of the likes of Pettigrew made the tribals finally give consensus to joining the larger labour corps of the War.<sup>40</sup> Besides India, the British colonies in Indo-China, Africa and China supplied thousands of labourers for the War. Approximately 14,0000 labourers were hired by the British and French government from China.<sup>41</sup>

### **2.1. 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps**

During the initial years of the First World War only few Mizos joined the army as Bearer Corps. It was only three years later that large number of Mizo youth began to join the War by enlisting themselves in the Lushai Labour Corps. When the First World War broke out, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills issued a notification in 1914 for enlistment into the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps. Despite no promise to *kuli awl/* impressed labour to those enlisted for the Army Bearer Corps, some of the Mizos were very enthusiastic to join the Army Bearer Corps and were even willing to lay down their lives defending the British Empire. In 1916, one of the applicant Than shanga of Chaltlang sent a letter to the Superintendent of the Lushai

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<sup>40</sup> Pamkhula Shaiza, '100 years on, a tribute to the Northeast India labour corps who fought the White War', <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/manipur-labour-corps-northeast-india-british-empire/story/1/16499.html>. (accessed on 6 December 2019)

<sup>41</sup> Santanu Das, 'Introduction' in Santanu Das (ed) *Race Empire And First World War Writing*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p.14

Hills pleading the latter to recruit him and his two friends Adanga and Sailutthanga as soon as possible.<sup>42</sup>

Some youth went to the recruitment centre and got themselves enlisted without the knowledge of their family. There were many instances where parents had to send letters to the Superintendent to cancel their son's appointment. One of selected candidate mother sent an application to the Superintendent asking the latter to revoke her son's appointment to the Army Bearer Corps.

My son Dara who is presently working as a forest guard went to the recruitment without my notice. If he joins the Army Bearer Corps he will leave me and his infant daughter behind. I cannot allow him to join because he is the sole breadwinner of the family. I request you to kindly convince him not to join the Army Bearer Corps and we are satisfied with his present job.<sup>43</sup>

Lianchama's father also sent an application to the Superintendent requesting the latter to cancel his son's appointment. Since Lainchama was so determined to join the Army Bearer Corps, Superintendent turned down his father's request and allowed him to join.<sup>44</sup>

Despite many applicants only a small number of thirty Mizos were recruited to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps. Many more Mizos would have joined but medical test and the minimum physical requirement fixed by the government prevented them.

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<sup>42</sup>MSA, CB14,M-151, Letter from Than Shanga to the Superintendent,Lushai Hills.

<sup>43</sup>MSA, CB14,M-150, Army Bearer Corps 1914-1915

<sup>44</sup>MSA, CB14,M-152, Army Bearer Corps 1914-1919

The minimum requirement height was 5.4ft to 5.8 ft. Chest measurement for ages between 18-21 years was 32 inches and ages between 21-25 years was 33inches.<sup>45</sup>

Serial No	Name	Age	Height	Chest	Remarks
1	Liandanga	17	5-1½"	31"	
2	Khaia	20	5-3"	31"	
3	Lianthawma	19	5-2"	31"	
4	Domana	18	5-4"	32½"	
5	Thavela	18	5-2"	33½"	
6	Kila	20	5-5¼"	33"	
7	Kaichhunga	19	5-6"	33"	
8	Tuahrianga	20	5-3¼"	31½"	
9	Phira	20	5-1½"	33"	
10	Aihrianga	18	5-3½"	32"	
11	Kaiaia	28	5-3½"	33"	
12	Khuangpawnga	28	5-3½"	33"	
13	Adanga	20	5-3½"	32"	
14	Lalauwa	20	5-4"	34"	
15	Kauunga	17	5-2"	31"	

Figure 2.1: Some of the applicant names and their body measurements

Source: Mizoram State Archives.

The above figure shows that many of the candidates failed to meet the minimum requirements. Some of the candidates who could not meet the minimum physical requirements wrote application to the Superintendent requesting him to grant them concession. Such was the eagerness to join the Army Bearer Corps. For the Mizo youth, joining the Army was attractive and the future look promising as

<sup>45</sup>MSA, CB14,M-154, Army Bearer Corps

there was hardly any employment in the Lushai Hills. Those who enlisted in the Army Bearer Corps were willing participants and the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills did not coerce the Mizos to enlist themselves in the Army Bearer Corps unlike the recruitment to the Labour Corps that took place three years later.

Those who enlisted in the Army Bearer Corps were sent to Deputy Director of Medical Services in Lucknow before being deployed to the War front in Mesopotamia. Unfortunately, T Kunga died in the Cantonment General Hospital, Lucknow on 27 April 1915 before being sent to Mesopotamia.<sup>46</sup> Once deployed in Mesopotamia, these Mizos in the Army Bearer Corps were the first to experience the First World War from the Lushai Hills.

Pakela in one of his letters wrote that he felt very fortunate and privilege to be part of the War because for the first time he was able to see prominent places mentioned in the Bible where Moses led the Israelis, the Red Sea, Mt Sinai in Egypt, the vast oceans and large ships. He was thrilled to see the War equipments and their capabilities. He was also very impressed with the rations provided to them. Every week they received four packs of cigarette, milk cans and meat. He also mentions that warm clothing which was of much better quality than what was available in India was provided to them.<sup>47</sup>

Pakela further says that the Mizos won praises from their superiors for the task they performed in Mesopotamia. In his letter he wrote:

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<sup>46</sup> MSA, CB 24, G-304, Annual report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills for the year 1921-1922

<sup>47</sup> Paleka, 'Indona A Mizo Tlangvalte Thawk Ve Te Chanchin', *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, January 1917, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp.10-11

In every sphere the Mizos were better than the rest... whether it was in dancing, performing their duties or dressing the wounded soldiers. Punishment was rampant in the Corps but so far the Mizos were able to avoid such punishment by the Grace of God as they were more discipline than the others and did not indulge in petty theft or spend their time with prostitutes.<sup>48</sup>

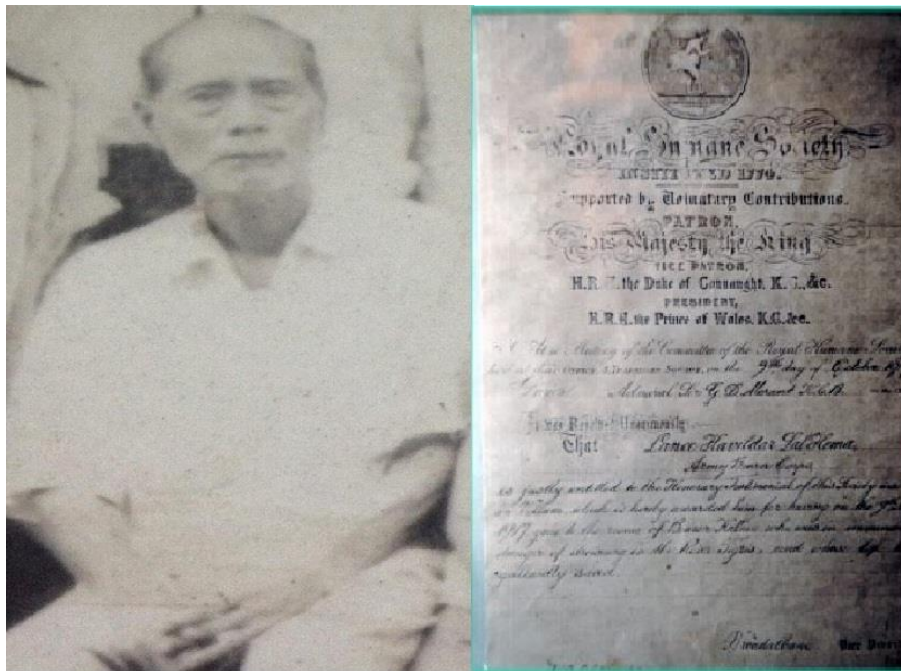
Since the Mizos displayed exemplary courage while performing their duties two Mizos, Lance Havildar Lalhema and Bearer Mangringa received Mentioned in Despatches.<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to note that Lalhema's award was signed by Winston Churchill, who was the Secretary of State for War during that period. Lalhema also received award from Royal Humane Society of London for rescuing a drowning person on the river Tigris. Out of the thirty four men, seven of them died and their names are inscribed at the War Memorial in Aizawl- T. Kunga, Buksuana, Domana, Chuauchhinga, Kila, Aihranga and Adanga.<sup>50</sup> Since they were the first to experience the War from the Lushai Hills, once they reached Lucknow and Mesopotamia they reported the War by sending letters back home and were instrumental in encouraging the Mizos to enlist themselves in the Labour Corps by conveying the benefits of joining the army.

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<sup>48</sup> Paleka, 'Lushei Ho Indona Kal Fakna', *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, November 1916, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp .92-93

<sup>49</sup> MSA, CB 24, G-304, Annual report on the Administration of the Lushai Hills for the year 1921-1922, p.23

<sup>50</sup> War Memorial at Treasury Square, Aizawl



Lalhema and the Award he received from Roval Humane Societv of London

Figure 2.2: Lalhema and his Award from Royal Humane Society of London

Once the War was over, they requested the Superintendent to exempt them from paying house tax and *kuli*. Unlike the Lushai Labour Corps who were exempted from paying house tax and *kuli* from the beginning, those who served in the Army Bearer Corps had to make separate individual petition to the Superintendent. Kaichhunga, Khaia wrote letters to the Superintendent in January 1920<sup>51</sup> followed by Lalhema's letter in September 1922<sup>52</sup> requesting for exemption. In response to the letters, the Superintendent granted their request.

<sup>51</sup> MSA, CB 21, G-260, Letter from Khaia Army Bearer Corps, to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills – regarding applications for exemption of housetax (Army Bearer Corps)

<sup>52</sup> MSA, CB 25, G-309, Order Exemption of Lushai's who serve with Army Bearers Corps from payment of House Tax



## 2.2. Lushai Labour Corps

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1917, a notification was issued by J.Hezlett, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills to all the chiefs in the Lushai Hills requesting them to send able young men from their respective villages for the recruitment to the Labour Corps. To make the recruitment attractive the Government announced several concessions. Those who joined the Labour Corps, their families were to be exempted from *kuli*/impressed labour during their deployment in France. Once their tour of duty is over, they will also be exempted from *kuli*. Hezlett announced that those who join the Labour Corps would be given monthly salary of Rs 20 and additional bonus of Rs 20 every six months. They were also entitled to get pension once they retired. If any of the recruits get injured or died during their duty, the families were to be given gratuity amounting to Rs 300. To further attract the youth and bring peace of mind to the Mizo population, the Superintendent assured that the Labour Corps would be deployed only in peaceful areas far from the frontline.<sup>53</sup>

The missionaries like Reverend J.H Lorrain and Reverend D.E Jones played an important role in publicising the War to the Mizo population and recruiting them by writing articles on newspapers. J.H Lorrain was the first to write about the War and put it up at one of the shops in Lunglei for everyone to read.<sup>54</sup> D.E Jones also wrote about the War and his articles about the War were published regularly in *Mizo and Vai Chanchinbu*. In one of his articles, he encouraged the Mizo youth to join the Labour Corps and highlighted the benefits. He says that those who join the Labour

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<sup>53</sup> J.Hezlett, 'Lal ho Hnena Bawrsap Lehkha Thawn' *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, January 1917, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp.18-19

<sup>54</sup> Sainghinga, p.1

Corps, besides their monthly salary, would also get good accommodation and be fed and treated well in France. He further says that the Lushai Labour Corps would be supervised by three English men who were fluent with the Mizo language so that the Mizos would not face any problems in France. Besides this, educated Mizos would also be recruited to act as translator.<sup>55</sup> D.E Jones also accompanied the Lushai Labour Corps to France. Since the Government did not allow pastors or missionaries in the war zone, he was given honorary captain rank in the Indian Army Reserve unit.<sup>56</sup> According to the Government, 1500 youth between the ages of 18-30 should be recruited from Aizawl and 500 from Lunglei. To finance the War, the Government collected donations from the people and also introduced War bonds which yielded interest. People with surplus money were asked to purchase War bonds from the post office as these bonds help finance the war effort.

The Mizo response was very different from that of many people in the plains but also from that of their neighbours in Manipur.<sup>57</sup> In 1917 too much force used in the labour recruitment, together with other grievances, triggered an uprising in the princely state of Mayurbhanj and a prolonged insurgency in the Kuki –Chin tracts along Assam Burma border.<sup>58</sup> Angamis, Kachas Nagas and Kuki residing within the Naga Hill districts refused to volunteer for France. The Thado, Haokip and Mangum

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<sup>55</sup>ZoSaphluia, ‘Sap Rama Mizo Hnathawh Tur Thu’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, January 1917, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp.20-21

<sup>56</sup> J.V Hluna, Mizoram Welsh Missionary-te Chanchin, Synod Press, Aizawl, 1993, p.55

<sup>57</sup> Joy L.K Pachuau & Willem van Schendel, *The Camera as Witness: A Social History Of Mizoram, Northeast India*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p191

<sup>58</sup> Radhika Singha, Labour(India) in 1914-1918 *Online International Encyclopaedia Of The First World War*, 2016, p.4 [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/indian\\_labour\\_corps](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/indian_labour_corps) (accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019)

Kuki chiefs in Manipur may have refused to supply men for the Labour Corps because it would have stripped them of fighting men.<sup>59</sup>

When men were being enlisted for Labour in France the greatest inducement to joining up was the promise of Government that all who went would receive exemption from *kuli*/impressed labour for the remainder of their lives. A circular was also issued by the Government saying that “during their absence their families will be exempted from impressed labour, and they themselves when they return will be exempted from impressed labour forever”.<sup>60</sup> In South Lushai Hills, J.Needham who was Sub-Divisional Officer played an important role in recruiting men for the Labour Corps. He did the recruitment in such a manner that there was no disturbance and when it was known that he himself was going to France in command of the Labour Company many joined up with gladness, others who would otherwise have gone with tears went with joy because he went with them.<sup>61</sup>

Once the Mizos were enlisted, they had to undergo medical test where they had to stand naked. They felt uncomfortable as they were not used to such practise for medical examination. After the medical examination they were asked if they had

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<sup>59</sup> Radhika Singha , “The Recruiter’s Eye on ‘The Primitive’: To France – and Back in the Indian Labour Corps, 1917-18.” in James E. Kitchen, Alisa Miller and Laura Rowe ( ed.) *Other Combatants, Other Fronts: Competing Histories of the First World War*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p 14

<sup>60</sup> MSA, CB 41, G-524, Letter from Thanzama Sailo (Ex-Headman), Zathanga (Ex-Asstt.Headman), Khawngchinga (Ex-Head Interpreter), to the Honourable the Chief Commissioner of Assam, through the Sub-Divisional Officer, Lungleh - Petition regarding the promise of exemption from impressed labour.

<sup>61</sup> Chautera, ‘Mr. Needhma Sap lawm man pek thu’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, September 1919, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.132

been imprisoned or not, whether they were willing to work for atleast a year and whether they were willing to get posted anywhere.<sup>62</sup>



Figure 2.3: Lushai Labour Corps assembled at Lammual, Aizawl.

Source: greatwarforum.org

By April 1917, the Government was able to enlist as many as 2100 Lushai youth. The contingent from the South Lushai Hills was under Captain Jack Needham while the North Lushai Hills contingent was under Colonel Playfair and Reverend D.E Jones.<sup>63</sup> Men recruited from various parts of the Lushai Hills came together and

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<sup>62</sup> Sainghinga, *Indopui 1914-1918 Mizote France Ram Kal Thu*, Aizawl, Thakthing Bazar Press, 1939, p.5.

\*Lammual was the first parade ground constructed under Captain C.H. Loch, commander of troops at Aizawl

assembled at Lammual\*, Aizawl for inspection. During their stay in Aizawl the men were given advance salary of two months, which most of them sent it to their families. Before leaving for France, the Labour Corps was divided into four Companies comprising of 500 men each.<sup>64</sup>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the village chief sent men who were less prominent and who did not mean much in the society even if they die in the war however it is interesting to note that some village chiefs were also enlisted to head the Labour Company. The headman of the 26<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company was Sailo Thanzama, Thiltlang chief. The headman of the 27<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company was Sailo Thangkima, Chalrang chief. The headman of the 28<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company was S. Dohleia, Lungdar chief. The 29<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company headman was Sailo Thangliana, Champai/Zote chief.<sup>65</sup>

The Lushai Labour Corps departed from Aizawl in two batches. The 26<sup>th</sup>&27<sup>th</sup> Labour Company left on 27 April 1917 while the 28<sup>th</sup>&29<sup>th</sup> Labour Company left the following day. They boarded a train from Silchar and since none of them had travelled by train before, all of them were very excited. During the day time most of them looked out of the windows and were amazed at what they saw. They reached Bombay on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1917 and were medically examine again. Around 60 of them were found to be medically unfit and were sent back<sup>66</sup>. They boarded a ship called Kinfouns Castle from Bombay and headed to France. Majority of them

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<sup>63</sup> McCall, p.290

<sup>64</sup> Sainghinga, p.6

<sup>65</sup> Sainghinga, p. 6-7

<sup>66</sup> Sainghinga, p. 8

suffered from sea sickness and one of them Kairova died. Throughout their journey they were escorted by battleships, to prevent them from German submarine attacks.<sup>67</sup>

After travelling for 29 days the Lushai Labour Corps reached Marseilles, France on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1917. Once they reached France the Lushai Labour Corps were divided into two batches. The 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> Labour Corps formed one batch while the 26<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> Labour Corps formed the second batch.<sup>68</sup> After 10 days in Marseilles, they boarded a train and headed to the front. While travelling on the train they could hear the sound of artillery bombardment throughout their journey. Sainghinga, one of the head clerk of the 26<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company began to think what people said before they left was true – “once you reach the frontline they will make you fight like regular soldiers.

All the Lushai Labour Companies were employed near Arras sector of the firing line. At first they were employed on salvage under the instruction of a few Canadian Royal Engineers. Some of the companies worked together with Canadians and German prisoners and some also with Chinese labourers.<sup>69</sup> On 2<sup>nd</sup> July the Lushai Labour Corps reached their first camp- Monchy au Bois, 12 miles south and west of Arras.<sup>70</sup> They were posted for four months before being transferred to other front. The Lushai Labour Corps set up their tents but after sometime the government provided proper lodging to them with corrugated tin roof. According to Rozika, they

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<sup>67</sup> Sainghinga, p.12

<sup>68</sup> S.Lianbuka, 'France Rama Kal Thu', *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, May 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.114

<sup>69</sup> MSA, CB 2, M-17, Brief Note on Lushai Labour Corps

<sup>70</sup> McCall, p.291

were very delighted to find ample of mustard growing around their camps which was one of their staple diet back home.<sup>71</sup> The main job of the Lushai Labour Company in Monchy au Bois was to dismantle wooden planks and barbed wire in the trenches. The Labour Corps were asked to carry their work with caution and not to touch anything left behind by the Germans because in the enemy trenches any leftover could be poison or explosives. Despite the cautionary advice one of them touch a detonator causing an explosion which ripped off his two fingers.<sup>72</sup>

At first they were new to the climate and their work but after getting accustomed to the climate and their work, though small and short in stature they could always finish their job sooner than other people.<sup>73</sup> Once they settled down, the Mizos were able to establish good relationship with *sap sipai*/European soldiers. Sainghinga recalled that these soldiers enjoyed their companionship and used to sing gospel songs together. Gospel songs like Abide with Me and Nearer to my God to Thee were the two songs that both parties could sing along in English. Sainghinga says that by collecting old corrugated metal sheets and other materials they were able to build a recreation hall and canteen. With their savings the 26<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company was able to buy bioscope for entertaining themselves. During non-working Sundays the recreation hall was used as a Church.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Rozika, 'Ral-rama atanga Thu-thawn I na', *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, May 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.66

<sup>72</sup> Sainghinga, p.16

<sup>73</sup> MSA, CB 2, M-2, Brief Note on Lushai Labour Corps

<sup>74</sup> Sainghinga, p.15

The Lushai Labour Corps were employed on various works such as felling trees, converting of logs, burning charcoal, loading and unloading war materials for the front, in digging trenches behind firing line for defensive purposes and making railways and tramways. As they were somewhat near the firing line, they faced bombardment from enemy's artillery and sometimes aeroplanes also dropped bombs near their camps but the Lushais were always steady and they never showed alarm.<sup>75</sup>

Once they reached France there was lot of rumours circulating in the Lushai Hills that the ship carrying the Labour Corps had sunk and all of them died or they were sent directly to the frontline as regular soldiers. When such information reached the Labour Corps they were very disappointed that such news was creating chaos and panic among their family members back home. In one of the letters sent by Saprama, he says that people who spread such rumours are not fit to live. People who spread such rumours should be suppressed immediately and be treated as enemies just like the Germans for spreading false information.<sup>76</sup> Thangliana the headman of the 29<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Corps in his letter described their condition in France. He wrote that:

People back home should not panic about rumours that the Lushai Labour Corps were being converted into regular soldiers for fighting and deployed on the frontline. This rumour is false and the Labour Corps are not deployed for fighting on the frontline. The 26<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> Labour Corps are deployed together and frontline is 16 miles away from our deployment which is roughly a distance between Tuirial and Aizawl. However we could hear the sound of the

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<sup>75</sup> MSA, CB2, M-2, Brief Note on Lushai Labour Corps

<sup>76</sup> Saprama, Lekhathawn Ina, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, April 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.51



artillery bombardment. The Corps headed by Dohleia and Thangkima are deployed 100 miles away from the frontline.<sup>77</sup>

Thangliana also highlighted their routine in France. Their work starts at 8 in the morning and finishes by 3 in the afternoon. They were given warm blankets along with some cigarettes. Like any other European soldiers, they were provided with water heater for bathing. During their initial deployment some of them got sick but after getting used to the condition very few people reported sick. Some of them were eager to go to the frontline and shoot the enemies. Thangliana further says that, “If I had my way, I would like to go to the frontline and see the enemy but we are not allowed to take even one step towards the frontline.”<sup>78</sup> The Lushai Labour Corps were transferred out of Monchy au Bois to Peronne and the Corps was divided into two groups.<sup>79</sup> In Peronne the winter became very severe and for the first time the Mizos experience snow falling from the sky. Some of them felt so cold that their body began to freeze. Rozika in his letter mentioned about harsh winter they faced. He says that even their warm clothing could not protect them from the cold. Even in clear sky, the sunshine did not comfort them much and their condition worsen because the sunset early.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Thangliana, ‘Sap Rama Mizo Kulite Tan A Hlahawm-lohzia’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, February 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp.22-23

<sup>78</sup> Thangliana, ‘Sap Rama Mizo Kulite Tan A Hlahawm-lohzia’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, February 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp. 22-23

<sup>79</sup> Sainghinga, p.17

<sup>80</sup> Rozika, ‘Ral Rama Thu Thawn’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, August 1917, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.59

At Roisel they were visited by Reverend J.H Lorrain, one of the first missionary to come to the Lushai Hills. Since civilians were not allowed in the war zone, Revd J.H Lorrain came along with YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association).<sup>81</sup> YMCA entertained troops and provided writing materials in all the theatres of war. Run by "secretaries," their huts or tents were the only places of respite for many soldiers on the frontlines.<sup>82</sup> Revd J.H Lorrain was able to visit the Lushai Corps frequently and entertain them by showing the Magic Lantern. Some of the pictures were early Mizo Christians and children attending church services at Lunglei. Mrs Tom Lewin the wife of T.H. Lewin also sent them warm clothes. Mrs Lewin personally wanted to meet the Lushai Labour Corps but was not allowed due to certain restrictions.<sup>83</sup>

Despite the harsh winter the Lushai Labour Corps performed their work diligently, sometimes under heavy bombardment. At Roisel they work around the clock and won praises from their officers. Because of their hard work, the soldiers were able to advance rapidly and recapture one of the canons that have fallen into enemy's hand.<sup>84</sup> Lianbuka in his letter wrote that around 50,000 men from Indian came to France as labourers and of all the Indian Labour Corps, the Lushai Labour Corps were considered the best because they were always ready to go to work. Unlike other men of the Indian Labour Corps, the Mizos never pretended to be sick so that they can abstain from work. The doctor noticed that even when the Mizos

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<sup>81</sup> Sainghinga, p.20

<sup>82</sup> Michelle Ule, 'The YMCA during the World War I', <https://www.michelleule.com/2014/02/28/world-war-ymca> (accessed on 11 July 2019)

<sup>83</sup> Sainghinga, p.20

<sup>84</sup> Sainghinga, p.18

were sick they recover quickly and when enquire on how they are feeling today, they always say “I am fine now, I can work and please let me join my friends”.<sup>85</sup> When the doctor asked the Mizos what they wanted to do after getting discharge from the hospital, they always say they wanted to go back to their company and work whereas the *vais* always begged the doctor to send them to Marseilles so that they can be relieved from work.<sup>86</sup>

In one of the operation, the 26<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Corps won the hearts of their officers for their commitment. In a letter forwarded to the Superintendent Lushai Hills, mentions that “the men of the Company worked splendidly at Merignelles dump and volunteered to continue even when ordered to retire although they were then utterly exhausted. Their spirit throughout was highly commendable”.<sup>87</sup> On their way to Amiens the Lushai Labour Corps came under heavy fire, instead of looking for cover some of the men displayed utmost bravery and requested their superior for firearms so that they can fight back the Germans. However their request was turned down.<sup>88</sup> The Lushai Labour Corps wherever they were deployed, were always appreciated for their dedication and commitment to their work.

After staying in France for almost a year, other than the harsh winter the Mizos never complained about the nature of their work. Although some of them were homesick, they quickly adjusted to the condition and performed their duties to the

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<sup>85</sup> S.Lianbuka, p.116

<sup>86</sup> Rualkhuma, ‘Chiar rawh inchir lo vang’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, November 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.154

<sup>87</sup> Sainghinga, p.21

<sup>88</sup> Sainghinga, p .22

best of their abilities irrespective of the weather condition. According to L. Tawia one of the assistant headman of the 29<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company, “after finishing our work in the afternoon, around 4 pm we usually play football or some other sports. After dinner all of us gather in one hall where some of us sing or play games and we were always in good spirits.”<sup>89</sup> Although the Mizos did not speak French, some of them were able to established romantic relationship with the French women. Since there were very few literate among the labourers, Darhuaia one of the educated few used to write letters for those people who did not know writing. He even read the letters for them sent by their wives or girlfriends.<sup>90</sup>

While staying in France the Mizos were surprised to find that the Europeans especially the French were friendly and did not look down on them despite their backwardness and physical appearance. Whether they were from Africa or India, everyone was treated equally and with respect. When the Mizos visited their homes, they were welcomed with warm gesture and were always offered seats.<sup>91</sup> The Mizos highly admired the French etiquettes and if possible wanted to implement some of it when they reach home.

Around April 1918 the Lushai Labour Corps tour of duty ended and was disbanded. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April they boarded a ship from Marseilles and left France. On

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<sup>89</sup> Shena, ‘Lehkha Thawn’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, June 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.88

\*Vais people from mainland India.

<sup>90</sup> Z.S Zuala, ‘27 Lushai Labour Corps And The World War 1’ in F. Ngurbiakvela, *Mizo Tlangval German ral run tura France ram kalte chanchin*, Lengchhawn Offset, Aizawl, 2019, p.39

<sup>91</sup> Kailuia, ‘France ram’, *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, Septemberr 1918, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp.134-138

their way back home, one of the European officers summoned Sainghinga and asked him whether the Lushai Labour Corps are interested in serving for another six months in France with better pay and a tour to London after their contract. When Sainghinga reported this offer to the Labour Corps, only five of them were interested. One of them even said that he was more interested in seeing his hen house at home rather than touring London.<sup>92</sup> Such was the eagerness to return home as majority of them were homesick and wanted to reach home as soon as possible.

On their journey back home while travelling on the train, one of the Lushai Labourer Thangaihvunga has been oversleeping and missed his stop. Since his colleagues did not wake him up the train carried him all the way to Jerusalem. Since he was illiterate, he could not find his way back and for one week he roamed around Jerusalem begging for food in the streets. He was finally picked up by one Israeli person who took him home and employed him in his house to do household chores. This person even taught him some basic Hebrew words and took him for sightseeing around Jerusalem. After staying in Jerusalem for about a year and half, Thangaihvunga wanted to go back to the Lushai Hills and his employer made the necessary arrangements. His employer dropped him off in one of the Allied military base and to make sure that he reaches his destination safely he was escorted by two soldiers up to Aizawl.<sup>93</sup>

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\*Chanmari is one of the localities which is located at the northern part of Aizawl. During the colonial period Chanmari was used as a firing range by the Assam Rifles.

<sup>92</sup> Sainghinga, p.23

<sup>93</sup> Pakunga, interviewed by John L Pachuau on 30 December 2019 at his residence at Kanan, Aizawl. Pakunga is the youngest son of Thangaihvunga.

On 18<sup>th</sup> June 1918, the Lushai Labour Corps reached Aizawl and were greeted warmly by the people. The Government also welcomed them with drums and bagpipes at Chanmari\*. So many people converged there that there had never been such a great gathering of people among the Mizos before.<sup>94</sup> Out of 2100 men, the Lushai Labour Corps lost 71 men. Some of them died on their way to France while others during their tour of duty.



Figure 2.4: List of names of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps and the 27<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Corps who gave their lives during the First World War inscribed on the War Memorial at Aizawl.

Source: Author

<sup>94</sup> V.L Siama, *Mizo History*, Lengchhawn Press, Bethel House, Khatla, Reprint 1991, p.112



Figure 2.5: Some of the Lushai Labourers buried at Pas-de-Calais, France.

Source: <https://rememberourdead.weebly.com/india>

After returning from France, most of them went back to their respective villages and not much is known about what job they took up. Sainghinga one of the clerks, was appointed as Political Assistant later on. After sometime, they were shocked to know that they were exempted only from *kuli pui* not *kuli te*. *Kuli pui* consisted of any kind of impressed labour for which wages are paid such as building, carrying loads for Government officers, sepoys whereas *kuli te* consists of any kind of labour for which wages are not paid. Exemption from all types of *kuli* was the main attraction for enlisting into the Labour Corps. As a result of this, a petition to the Chief Commissioner of Assam was sent by three men of ex Lushai Labour Corps. They requested the Chief Commissioner of Assam to exempt all those who went to France and their family members from all types of *kuli*. The former after looking into the matter and discussing with the Superintendent and Sub Divisional Officer concluded that:

No distinction should be made between *kuli pui* and *kuli te*. The promise exemption should cover both. The call upon other members of the family should however be made in a reasonable, and even generous manner. Other members of the family who are over 40 should seldom be requisitioned, and if they are over 45 they should never be requisitioned.<sup>95</sup>

The Government gave incentives to the children of those who died or became handicapped during their tour of duty in France. On the recommendation of the Superintendent, their children were provided financial assistance, free education and scholarship from class I till college.<sup>96</sup>

The First World War is an important landmark in the history of the Mizos because for the first time large numbers of Mizos were recruited for non-combat role in the Army by the British. Those who were recruited got the opportunity to go abroad and were the first to experience the Western world. Though they had limited exposure to the Western civilization as they were posted only in France and Mesopotamia, they were greatly impressed with what they saw and highly admired the West. When they went back to the Lushai Hills, some of them became harbinger of change and brought back with them new ideas. Even after the War, some of them continued to serve in the Army and by the Second World War thousands of Mizos joined the Army as regular combat soldiers.

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<sup>95</sup> MSA, CB 41,G-524, Letter from Thanzama Sailo (Ex-Headman), Zathanga (Ex-Asstt.Headman), Khawngginga (Ex-Head Interpreter), to the Honourable the Chief Commissioner of Assam, through the Sub-Divisional Officer, Lungleh - Petition regarding the promise of exemption from impressed labour.

<sup>96</sup> MSA, CB 3, M-31, Indona A Va Thi Ta Te Leh Hna Thawk Thei Lo Hlen Khawp A Awm Phah Te Fate Ho Lehkha Zir Thei A Shiam Na Dan.



## Chapter 3

### The Second World War and the Lushai Hills

India joined the Second World War when Lord Linlithgow announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 that His Majesty's Government was at War with Germany – and so was India.<sup>97</sup> Like the First World War the Indian Army was deployed in Europe, Africa, Middle East and South East Asia to defend the British Empire. Unlike the First World War where India fought the War from a distance, during the Second World War, the War was fought on Indian soil because the rapid expansion of the Japanese Army in the East turned the Northeast India into a major war zone.

India fought two important battles in the Northeast India - the Battle of Kohima and Imphal in 1944. These two battles became the turning point for the Allied forces as the Japanese suffered crushing defeat. In 2013, the battles of Kohima and Imphal have been named as Britain's greatest battle surpassing D-Day and Waterloo in a contest organised by National Army Museum.<sup>98</sup>

The fall of Burma in May 1942 brought Northeast India under the striking distance of the Japanese Army. The Northeast India was important because several Allied bases were located and these bases also provided supplies to Nationalist

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<sup>97</sup> Srinath Raghavan, *India's War: World War II and the Making of Modern South Asia*, Basic Books, New York, 2016, p.1

<sup>98</sup> Angus MacSwan, 'Victory over Japanese at Kohima named Britain's greatest battle,' Reuters, 21 April 2013, <https://in.reuters.com/article/britain-kohima-imphal-nagaland-manipur-w/victory-over-japanese-at-kohima-named-britains-greatest-battle-idINDEE93K04W20130421>, (accessed 27 July 2019).

Chinese forces via airlift.<sup>99</sup> The Japanese launched Operation U-Go, an offensive against the Allied forces in Northeast India and the main objectives were to capture the important bases. Imphal, Kohima and Dimapur had sufficient stores to sustain an army on the offensive for several months. If these bases could be captured, Bose and his Indian National Army could pour into Bengal initiating the long awaited anti-British uprising.<sup>100</sup>

Large amount of manpower was needed to fight the War. The British knew that the white soldiers alone were not sufficient to defeat the Axis Powers. Fifty three thousand men were enlisted in the Indian Army during the first eight months of the War. By late 1940s as many as twenty thousand Indians were joining the Army per month. By the end of the War there were over two million Indian soldiers.<sup>101</sup> The Indian Army became the largest voluntary force in history.<sup>102</sup>

Despite having the largest voluntary Army, the rapid expansion of the Japanese Army in South East Asia alarmed the British. With the annexation of Burma in May 1942 by the Japanese Army, the frontier areas of Northeast India came under immediate threat. The British expected the Japanese Army to enter India through the Chin Hills. The British began to seek support of tribal chiefs who exert considerable influence over the local population. Since Northeast India had inhospitable terrain with no proper roads and means of communication, the support of the local population was vital for the Allied Forces.

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<sup>99</sup> Robert Lyman, *Kohima 1944 The Battle That Saved India*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2010, p.5

<sup>100</sup> Lyman, p.23

<sup>101</sup> Yasmin Khan, *India At War: The Subcontinent And the Second World War*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, p.18

<sup>102</sup> Raghavan, *India's War*, p.1

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1942, A.G McCall the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills called on the chiefs of the North Lushai Hills and requested them to support the British in their war effort. The Superintendent addresses the chiefs:

I have asked you all here to-day to discuss with you whether you are prepared to gird yourselves and your peoples for the purpose of organising the defence of our Land, our Homes, our Women, and our Children. The Japanese have not stopped at invading Burma. Are we going to stand by if they ever attempt to invade our fair land?<sup>103</sup>

The Superintendent asked the Lushai chiefs to decide whether they will give support to the British and take up arms and fight till the end. The next day the chiefs and colonial officials joined hands around the Union Jack to pledge allegiance to His Majesty against the Japanese Army.<sup>104</sup> Supporting the British in their fight against the Axis Powers, the Government gave War aid of Re1 was given to every household and Rs 2 to all the chiefs.<sup>105</sup> After securing the loyalty of the chiefs and the people, in order to put up effective resistance against the Japanese Army, McCall requested every gun in the villages must be utilised and put in the hands of the bravest and strongest of the villagers. On the 4<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> April the Lushai chiefs of the North and South respectively agreed to support the British and offer total resistance to any invader in the Lushai Hills on the same basis of Total Defence as the peoples of England, Scotland and Wales.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> McCall, p.312

<sup>104</sup> Pachuau & Schendel, p.200

<sup>105</sup> Chaltuahkhuma, *History Of Mizoram*, R D Press Electric Veng, Aizawl, 1987, p.80

<sup>106</sup> McCall, p.313



Figure 3.1: The Mizo chiefs standing around the Union Jack pledge allegiance to support the British in their fight against the Axis Powers.

Source: M Suaka - Photographs [1907-1950], British Library, EAP454/12/1, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP454-12-1>.

Total Defence Scheme initiated by McCall involves preparing villages to stock food and other necessary items in secret jungle places, to give free food and hospitality to men fighting the enemy, making weapons and arming the villagers for self-defence, laying traps.<sup>107</sup> The chiefs were responsible to implement the scheme in their respective villages. The Superintendent also gave financial assistance to the chiefs in order to successfully implement the scheme.

Once the chiefs joined the War, they were expected to mobilize their subjects and make donations. The Mizos were expected to remain loyal towards the British rule and make contributions whenever they can. The War Fund was established in 1939 to collect voluntary donations from the people. Some of the Mizo chiefs like

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<sup>107</sup> McCall, p.314

Sangkhuma opened War Fund stall at Demagiri( Tlabung).<sup>108</sup> In other parts of India the War Fund was not received well by large number of people as it placed huge burden on the poorer section of the population. Although it was not compulsory to give donations to the War Fund but it became a tool to secure small favours from official and untie red tape. If a man needed a favour from local officials or was submitting a job application for state service, subscription to the War Fund became all but compulsory.<sup>109</sup> However in the Lushai Hills, giving donations or collecting money for the War Fund weren't seen as a huge burden by the people. Under the initiative of the Red Cross Committee, some people agreed to weave atleast six *rawmawl*/handkerchiefs every year and donate some rice to the soldiers fighting the War.<sup>110</sup> Those Mizos who were employed by the Government also agreed to give monthly contributions from their salary.

People with surplus were encouraged to deposit their money with the Government. The Government has informed the people that they should not panic and withdraw their deposits from post office because of the War. The Government has ample of money in its treasury and it is better to deposit their savings in the post office as it generate interest than to keep it at home which is not from free thieves and other complications. The Government came up with three types of deposits:<sup>111</sup>

1. Deposit for 10 years with net interest of Rs 3-2-0 per annum.

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<sup>108</sup> Pachuau & Schendel, p. 203

<sup>109</sup> Khan, p.52

<sup>110</sup> Bawrsap, 'Reiek Khua in Indo Tanpui Dilna An Chhana' *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, May 1940, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aizawl, p. 80

<sup>111</sup> Thanga, 'Indona Thu' *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, July 1940, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aizawl, p.100

2. Deposit for 6 years with net interest of Rs 3 and an additional interest of Re 1 at the end of the term.
3. Lending to the Government without any net interest.

The Government needed funds for the War and these deposits provided the much needed money for further investment, without these deposits the Government would not be able to access funds from individuals at all.

L. Kailuia who supported the British during the War persuaded people to enlist in the Army and give donations. He urged the people to avoid discussing some of the defeats of the Allied Forces and spread news which might reduce the confidence of the people. He further says that supporting the British in the War is an opportunity for the Mizos to show their gratitude towards the former because it is under their rule they had lived in peace and harmony for several years.<sup>112</sup>

The rapid advancement of the Japanese army in Burma made the Japanese invasion into the Lushai Hills a real threat. In April 1942, a platoon of Japanese soldiers was reported in some of the villages in the Chin Hills. Around 30 Japanese soldiers came near the border and hoisted their flag at Khuangphah, the last village in Burma bordering the Lushai Hills.<sup>113</sup> On 28<sup>th</sup> March 1944, some Japanese jet fighters flew over the Lushai Hills and dropped bombs on North Vanlaiphai, a village near the Burma border. Luckily no one was injured but it was enough to create panic

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<sup>112</sup> L. Kailuia, 'Indona' *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, May 1940, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp .77-78

<sup>113</sup> Lalaudinga & Zakhuaia, *Indopui II 1940-1945 (Japana leh Allied Power)*, Muka Printing Press, Mission Veng, Aizawl, 2000. p.71

among the people.<sup>114</sup> Some of the villagers who recollected the event said that six bombs were dropped and the hospital and its adjacent quarters bore the heaviest brunt.<sup>115</sup> Again in June 1944, Hnahlan another village near the Burma border where the British soldiers were stationed was strafed by Japanese jet fighters in the night. Since the army camps were near the civilians it created chaos and many had to flee the village during the night. The attack killed 5 soldiers and to pacify the villagers the higher authorities cajole them by saying that it was an accidental friendly fire from the Royal Air Force and such attack would never happen again.<sup>116</sup> Whether the jet fighters were from the Royal Air Force or not was never really confirmed. This may be the only village in the Lushai Hills that came under air attack and suffered casualties during the War.

In order to prevent the Japanese entering the Lushai Hills from Burma A.G. McCall ordered all the chiefs to seize any non Lushai plainsman entering the Hills without a pass. If there is difficulty in identifying whether a person is Japanese or Chinese, he should be asked to say Lungleh. The Japanese will say 'Rungreh' because they pronounced 'l' like 'r'. McCall instructed the chiefs to show hospitality and help refugees from Burma if they are genuinely in distress. Those who cannot

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<sup>114</sup> Zokima, *Mizo Tlangval Rual Leh Japan Ral*, V.L.B Press, Venghnuai, Aizawl, 1996, p.12

<sup>115</sup> Zodin Sanga, 'World War-era hospital in Mizoram stands test of time - Village council organises grand centenary celebrations of heritage building; residents recall attacks', *The Telegraph*, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2014, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/world-war-era-hospital-in-mizoram-stands-test-of-time-village-council-organises-grand-centenary-celebrations-of-heritage-building-residents-recall-attacks/cid/172245>, (accessed 17 September 2019)

<sup>116</sup> Lalaudinga & Zakhuaia, *Indopui II*, p.75

give proper account of themselves must be produced at Headquarters immediately.<sup>117</sup>

The Japanese might come dressed in Lushai clothes, instead of wearing their regular army uniform. Another way of identifying Japanese is their long arm and long body. It is possible that the Japanese may use traitorous hill men to spy for them; and anyone asking many and curious questions should be watched carefully and if suspicious, should be seized.<sup>118</sup>

To counter the Japanese army entering the Lushai Hills, large number of soldiers was deployed throughout the Lushai Hills. Some of the soldiers stationed in the Lushai Hills demanded free *kuli*, eggs and chickens from the villagers. It became a burden for the people to supply such services on a regular basis. When such practise came to the notice of the Superintendent Macdonald he was infuriated and issued a notification:

Hereby no one is permitted to demand *kuli*, eggs and chickens for free from the villagers. Only the Superintendent, Buchhawna A.D.C, Sainghinga Political Assistant will have the privilege to demand the said items from the villagers.<sup>119</sup>

Unlike the First World War where British had to search for recruits, many Mizos had already enlisted themselves in various branches of the Army even before the start of the Second World War. Assam Rifles and Burma Rifles were the main units where Mizos enlisted themselves before the War. Once the War broke out several new units like Assam Regiment, Lushai Scouts, Lushai Brigade and Pasaltha “V” Force were formed giving the Mizos the opportunity to join the Army. Majority

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<sup>117</sup> MSA, CB 44, G-556, Notice to all chiefs

<sup>118</sup> MSA, CB 44, G-576, Defence Order No.6

<sup>119</sup> Chaltuahkhuma, *History Of Mizoram* , pp 82-83



of the Mizos joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment and Army Medical Corps. One significant aspect of the War was the participation of Mizo women, though in limited number. A small group of 30 Mizo women joined the Auxillary Nursing and Army Auxillary Corps.<sup>120</sup> Since money was scarce and there were hardly any stable jobs available in the Lushai Hills, joining the Army seems the most attractive avenue for the youth to earn decent amount of money. The money earned and incentives received by those Mizos who participated in the First World War may have also attracted the youth to join the Army.

During the War, most of the Mizo youth who wanted to join the Army wanted to enlist themselves in the Assam Regiment but there were only limited vacancies in the Assam Regiment. As a result of this, those who were not able to enlist in the Assam Regiment, the British officials had to persuade them to join other Army units like the Medical Corps which was also looking for recruits in the Lushai Hills. The officials also announced that serving in the Medical Corps was the same as serving in the Assam Regiment as they are both Army units under the British Empire and any Mizo who does not immediately join the Medical Corps loses the great opportunity to earn Rs 15 a month including free ration and clothing.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Labiakthanga, interviewed by John L Pachuau on 29 June 2019 at his residence at chanmari , Aizawl. Labiakthanga joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment as recruit instructor in 1945.He is also the current President of the Second World War Veteran Association of Mizoram.

<sup>121</sup> W.D Joyce, 'Hriattirna', *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu*, October 1941, The Assistant Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.146.

The table shows the number of persons who joined the Army, Navy or Air Force from Lushai Hills District (i.e. persons who have their homes in the District and who were in services in 1940 or after).<sup>122</sup>

<b>Unit</b>	<b>North Lushai Hills</b>	<b>South Lushai Hills</b>	<b>Total</b>
Assam Regiment	914	358	1272 (a)
Lushai Scout Corps	285	24	309 (b)
Assam Rifles	315	25	340 (c)
Indian Army Medical Corps	600	172	772
Burma Army or various units or corps	531	50	581 (d)
Air Force	44	8	52
Navy	18	9	27
S.A.C (I)	16	4	20
Auxiliary Nursing Service	7	3	10
Other Units or Corps	24	44	168
<b>Total</b>	<b>2854</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>3551</b>

(a) Includes men enlisted before the War and transferred to Assam Regiment.

(b) Includes officers and men of Burma Rifles enlisted before the War.

(c) Includes men enlisted before the War.

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<sup>122</sup> MSA, CB-8, M-70, List of Lushais serving in Military Services.

Although the Army wanted to enlist large number of Mizos into the Army, the small population of the Lushai Hills prohibited the former because most of them were engaged in agriculture which requires large number of able bodied men. The 1941 census figure gives the male population for the whole of Lushai Hills as 70,000; of these 25,200 were able bodied males i.e. between the ages of 18-40 years. Bearing in mind the economic needs of the area, it was feasible to recruit only 20% (5040 males) of the able bodied male population without causing a breakdown in the local food production and making it necessary to import from outside areas. As a result of this, Maj. Gen. Williams recommends careful observation of the man power situation and any increase in recruitment in any one direction must be offset by a corresponding decrease in another.<sup>123</sup>

### **3.1. Pasaltha “V” Force**

On August 1942 Pasaltha “V” Force was formed in the Lushai Hills. According to the guidelines framed by the Army, the “V” Force will operate in close cooperation with Civil Affairs Officers who are in best position to secure the services of the local agents in any given area. Local agents engaged by “V” Force report centres should be employed on temporary basis so that when the area of operations changes, these agents will be discharged and fresh agents with local knowledge of the new area taken on.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> MSA, CB 4, M-44, Copy of letter (SECRET) No.2113/161/27/A dated 28 May.44 from H.Q.Fourteen Army addsd to Rear HQ 11 Army Group. S.E.A.

<sup>124</sup> MSA, CB10, M-108, Letter No. 231/3/GS (O) H.Q.Fourteenth Army. South East Asia Command. 21 Aug.44

The “V” Force consisted of Pasaltha A “V” Force and Pasaltha B “V” Force with 2000 and 5100 men respectively. Those who joined the Pasaltha B “V” Force had to swear an oath of enlistment in front of Colonel Parson Sap. After being enlisted they were given basic training at Lungdai by the Assam Rifles on how to handle firearms and throw grenades. The main objective of Pasaltha B “V” Force was to fight and prevent the Japanese Army from entering the Lushai Hills whereas Pasaltha A “V” Force was armed with local firearms and in charge of the village defence.<sup>125</sup> The Pasaltha B “V” Force was directly under the command of the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills.<sup>126</sup> To improve the effectiveness of the “V” Force the General Officer Commanding Assam District had sanctioned the supply of additional improved guns to be used by selected Pasalthas. They were supposed to work in close cooperation with the Assam Rifles.<sup>127</sup>

Some of the group commanders of Pasaltha B “V” Force were Mizos who retired from Assam Rifles while some of them were from the Burma Rifles who retreated to the Lushai Hills when Japanese Army invaded Burma. Some of the Mizos from the Burma Army who retreated from Burma were attached as instructors to the ‘V’ Force.<sup>128</sup> The Pasaltha “A” and “B” were given a monthly salary of Rs 10 and Rs 5 respectively. The group commanders were given Rs 15 while Officers were given between Rs 20-35. One of the members of The Pasaltha “B” V Force Ch.

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<sup>125</sup> Ch. Aikima, *Khawvel Indopui 2-Naa Mizo Pasaltha B “V” Force- Te Chanchin*, Haulhira Press, Sarong Veng, Aizawl, 1995, pp. 4-5

<sup>126</sup> Ch. Aikima, p.15

<sup>127</sup> McCall, p. 320

<sup>128</sup> Lalbiakthanga, interviewed by John L Pachuau on 29 June 2019 at his residence at chanmari , Aizawl

Aikima says that Pasaltha “B” V Force was training continuously and always in a state of alert. They were always eager and ready to face the Japanese Army.<sup>129</sup> As the Government requested donations from the people and the chiefs, several chiefs gave voluntary and unpaid contributions of rice and paddy to the “V” Force<sup>130</sup>. The table below shows the amount of rice and paddy given by various chiefs of the Lushai Hills in 1944.

Sl.no	Name of Chief	Name of Village	Rice (mds)*	Paddy(mds)
1	Lalliang	Ratu	20	—
2	Tilua	Tualbung & Sihfa	—	100
3	Awksarala	Phullen	—	100
4	Lalthangkuma	Puilo	40	—
5	Lalzidinga	Ngopa	—	100
6	Chhingvunga	Selam	—	260
7	Tawnga	Darngawn	182	—
8	Zahuata	Chawngtlai	6	59
9	Lianhlira	Tualte	589	—
10	Domana	Tualpui	10	5
11	Thangtea	Chawngchim	14	—
12	Thatkhuma	Vanzau	—	60
13	Lalchuanga	Leithum	20	60
14	Lalliansiama	Dungtlang	5	—
15	Thangthiauva	Vangchia	50	—
16	Lalluauva	Tlungvel	—	88
17	Hrangkunga	Mualpheng	—	40

<sup>129</sup> Aikima, pp .6

<sup>130</sup> MSA, CB 10, M-108, D.A.Q.M.G. Lushai Bde.

18	Saihnuna	Mualcheng	—	117
19	Saihnuna	Lengthuam	42	—
20	Thanchhuma	Sailulak	—	100
21	Thangburha	Lungdar	—	50
22	Sangluaia	Zawlsei	1	—
23	Lalrokhama	Vaphai	3	—
24	Banglala	Sialsir	3	—

Source: Mizoram State Archives

The Pasaltha “B” V Force did not come into direct contact with the Japanese Army since the latter never made any attempt to invade the Lushai Hills. The only instance the Japanese Army penetrated the Lushai Hills was when they hoisted their flag in Teikhang, one of the villages situated near the Burma border. When the Pasaltha “B” V Force went to confront the Japanese Army, the latter had already left and was re-occupied by the Allied Forces.<sup>131</sup> The patrolling of the Japanese Army near the border created panic and Mimbang chief, one of the villages near Teikhang even sent a letter to Ngopa chief asking whether they should surrender or not to the Japanese Army. Unfortunately the letter was confiscated by MacDonald, Superintendent of the Lushai Hills while on his way to Teikhang to verify the Japanese presence. Because of the letter the Superintendent removed the chief and imprisoned him at Aizawl.<sup>132</sup> It also came to MacDonald’s notice that some of the Mizos crossed over to Burma to trade with *Pawi*\* also went over to the Japanese camps and provided them with food and *kuli*. Some of them said they were captured

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\*1md=37.5kg

<sup>131</sup> Aikima, p.39

<sup>132</sup> Aikima, p.39

\**Pawi* are one of the tribes living in Chin State in Burma and southern parts of Mizoram.

and coerced to do so by the Japanese while trading with the *Pawi*. MacDonald issued a notification stating that helping the enemy is not acceptable irrespective of the excuses given by the Mizos and considered it a serious crime against the State. If the chief cannot prevent his subjects from helping the enemy, the chief and his entire village was to be punished.<sup>133</sup>

Although The Pasaltha “B” V Force was never involved in any major combat operations, they were actively patrolling the borders and gathering information on the Japanese Army movements. Sakeia one of the Pasaltha “B” V Force soldier in his report wrote that:

Since he was able to speak the *sukte paihte* dialect, he was sent as an undercover agent to collect information on the Japanese Army camp located at Tuikhiang and Chikha in Burma.<sup>134</sup>

Besides patrolling the borders and intelligence gathering, they played an important role in rescuing downed Allied pilots and escorting them to safety. They were the last line of defence if the Lushai Hills come under attack.

### **3.2. Lushai Scouts**

The Lushai Scouts was another unit formed to counter the Japanese Army invasion to the Lushai Hills. The term ‘Scouts’ was used because they were formed as a temporary unit, only to counter the Japanese aggression during the War and were

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<sup>133</sup> MSR, CB 49, G-619, A. Macdonald, Superintendent, Lushai Hills in Japan, British hmelma laka awm dan tur thupek a chhuah chungchang,

<sup>134</sup> Aikima, p. 42

not regarded as regular army unit.<sup>135</sup> General William Slim, the 14<sup>th</sup> Army Commander wanted the Mizos to participate in the War mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the Mizos had pledged loyalty to the Crown and supported her War effort in 1942. Secondly, since the Lushai Hills and the Chin Hills have similar terrain, the Mizos would not have difficulty in operating in those hilly terrains. As a result of these factors, General Slim requested the Government to grant him permission to form the Lushai Scouts.<sup>136</sup>

Lushia Scouts has been called General Slim's Special Army because he once said that "if the Government doesn't grant me permission to form the Lushia Scouts... I will raise it from my own money". Once the sanction order came it was initially called the 98<sup>th</sup> Infantry Company but was later rechristened as Lushai Scouts. Instead of creating another record office for the Lushai Scouts and to reduce the cost of their maintenance, they were affiliated to the Assam Regiment.<sup>137</sup> Initially it was planned to have a battalion of four companies but in fact the unit never developed beyond two companies that totalled 250 scouts.<sup>138</sup>

Lt Col Jack Longbottom who was involved in the First Burma Campaign in 1942 was given the task of raising and training the Lushai Scouts. As there were so few officers he had to undertake this task single-handed, travelling into the Lushai Hills to raise 400 soldiers. By this stage in the War the Japanese had pushed beyond

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<sup>135</sup> Zokima, *Mizo Tlangval Rual* ,p.15

<sup>136</sup> R K Hranga, *Lushai Scouts Mi Huaisente*, Merryland Book House, Bara Bazar, Aizawl. 1992, p .41

<sup>137</sup> Hranga, *Lushai Scouts*,p.42

<sup>138</sup> The Soldier's Burden: The Lushai Brigade',  
<http://www.kaiserscross.com/304501/617322.html>,(accessed 15 August 2019).



Tiddim in the Chin Hills, with heavy fighting in the Kohima and Imphal areas. The Lushai Scouts would be used as guerrillas in the rear of the enemy so they had to be raised and trained as regular troops. Their speciality was to be jungle warfare with special emphasis on mobility and minimum transport.<sup>139</sup>

In February 1944, the Lushai Scouts recruited the first batch of 80 men followed by another 80 men in the second batch. The Lushai Scouts was entirely made up of the Mizos and the last batch was recruited in September 1944. The total strength of the company was 344 including 8 officers from Assam Regiment. The First Assam Rifles, Lushai Hills Battalion gave the Lushai Scouts training in handling firearms and other basic drills.<sup>140</sup> Some of the Mizos in the Burma Army who were driven out by the Japanese Army and retreated to the Lushai Hills were also assigned to train the Lushai Scouts. Biate a village near the Burma border became their Headquarter and because of this the Lushai Scouts was also known as Biate *Sipai*/Soldiers. Some of their Mizo Officers were Lieutenant Lalhmingliana Tochhong, Lieutenant Saptea Halliday, Captain RK Hranga, Captain Hrangbuanga and Captain Rohawka.<sup>141</sup>

On August 1944 after completing their trainings, the Lushai Scouts was deployed to Burma. The Lushai Scouts operations were mainly confined to the Chin Hills areas. They also carried out joint operations against the Japanese Army with

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<sup>139</sup> Jane Robinson nee Longbottom, 'Jack Longbottom and the Lushai Scouts', WW2 People's War, 15 October 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/30/a7106230.shtml> (accessed 3 July 2019).

<sup>140</sup> Zokima, p.16

<sup>141</sup> Hranga, p.44

other British Indian Army units like the Lushai Battalion and Chin Hills Battalion. Their first encounter with the Japanese Army took place at Saizang, one of the villages in the Chin Hills. It was an intense gunfight which lasted the whole night. The Lushai Scouts killed 4 Japanese soldiers without suffering any casualties on their side. They destroyed the Japanese ammunition dump and burnt their camps. Fighting became frequent once they reached Burma and the Lushai Scouts adopted guerrilla tactics. The Lushai Scouts were quite successful in ambushing the Japanese Army, destroying several of their vehicles on the Tiddim road. In one of their operation against the Japanese army at Suangpi led by Ralkapa, Labela and Sangkaikhama displayed exemplary courage. While crawling under heavy enemy fire they managed to throw grenade inside the Japanese bunker and shot dead those who tried to escape. In this operation, atleast 14 Japanese soldiers were killed and several wounded with no losses to the Lushai Scouts.<sup>142</sup> After their operation, Ralkapa was summoned by his Commanding Officer to the Headquarter located at Vangtehah. Ralkapa brief his Commanding Officer about their operation at Suangpi. On the recommendation of Ralkapa to his Commanding Officer, Lalbela and Sangkaikhama were awarded Military Medal for their bravery.

All the Non Commissioned Officers of the Lushai Scouts were Mizos and there was good camaraderie amongst them. However they did face racial discrimination from one of their superior Officer. Captain Wilson Wood was very unpopular among the Mizos as he was racist and treated them harshly. Despite the severe winter he refused to provide them warm blankets and did not give them

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<sup>142</sup> Zokima, pp.31-32

proper ration.<sup>143</sup> Most of the men under his command could not bear his attitude towards them as he uses obscene words to address them. On the night 24<sup>th</sup> December 1944, some of the men of the Lushai Scouts heard a burst of gun fire. When they went to enquire where the gunshots came, they found Captain Wood dead in the house of a prostitute. An empty magazine of stengun was found near Captain Wood's body and this type of gun was issued only to the Non Commissioned Officers of the Lushai Scouts. Major Longbottom suspected a foul play and ordered R.K Hranga to head the Court of Enquiry to find out who exactly killed Captain Wood.

Major Longbottom suspected two of his men were involved in killing Captain Wilson and put them under close arrest. Once the enquiry is completed he wanted to put them on trial. However R.K Hranga who headed the Court of Enquiry, in his final report instead of acquitting the two accused soldiers, wrote that Captain Wood was killed during an operation by the Japanese Forces. It was a controversial report and Major Longbottom was extremely dissatisfied with the Court of Enquiry findings. Major Longbottom demoted R.K Hranga as a punishment and appointed Halliday in his place who was far junior to him.<sup>144</sup>

The most intense battle of the Lushai Scouts with the Japanese Army took place at Laungshe in March 1945. Although they were quite successful in their previous operations, this time they were not able to gain the upper hand. Despite putting up a brave fight, they were at a disadvantage position and were heavily

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<sup>143</sup> Hranga, p.59

<sup>144</sup> Hranga, p.62

outnumbered by the Japanese Army. There were only 40 Lushai Scouts soldiers against approximately 1000 Japanese soldiers. According to R.K Hrang, one of the officers of the Lushai Scouts said, “even if we fight with all the available men from our unit, we would still not be able to defeat the Japanese Army.” Luckily they received air support from the Royal Air Force jet fighters and this prevented the Japanese advance.<sup>145</sup> The Lushai Scouts lost one of their men Zotawna and several others were injured. Chhawnlova, Hrangdawla and Chawngzika were seriously injured during the intense gun fight. This battle is quite significant because this was the first and only time during the War that a Mizo soldier Chhawnlova from the Lushai Hills was involved in a hand-to-hand fight with a Japanese soldier and emerged victorious. For his gallant act, Chhawnlova was awarded the Military Medal.<sup>146</sup>

The Lushai Scouts was deployed in the Chin Hills for 10 months from August 1944 to June 1945. Although the Lushai Scouts was not a regular army unit and did not have any combat experience before the War, they displayed exemplary valour in their operations against the Japanese soldiers. Despite the limited training they received, they inflicted heavy damages on their enemies. During their tour of duty in the Chin Hills, the records from one of their Adjutant’s War Diary shows that the Lushai Scouts killed as many as 179 Japanese soldiers and wounded many more.<sup>147</sup> During the entire War the Lushai Scouts suffered only 17 casualties and lost only 3 men (1 British officer and 2 soldiers). The bravery of these men can be seen from the

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<sup>145</sup> Hrang, pp.84-85

<sup>146</sup> Zokima, p.96

<sup>147</sup> Hrang, p.110

number of medals awarded to them. In total 13 medals were awarded to the men of the Lushai Scouts.<sup>148</sup>

Military Cross	5
Military Medal	8
Mentioned in Despatched	16

The surrender of Japan brought the War to an end and the Luhsai Scouts lost its relevance as it was formed solely to counter the Japanese threats from Burma. The Lushai Scouts held their last parade at Polo Ground in Shillong and was disbanded in November 1945. The officers of the Lushai Scouts were repatriated back to their respective Regiments while the soldiers were given two options- to retire or join the Assam Regiment. If they choose to join the Assam Regiment, they had to undergo training again like any fresh recruits. Most of them chose to retire and return to the Lushai Hills because they felt that they were already combat proven soldiers with lots of experience and it hurt their pride to undergo such training again.<sup>149</sup>

### **3.3. Mizos and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment**

On June 1940, Muhammed Saadulla the then Chief Minister of Assam made a proposal in the cabinet meeting that the Province should raise a regular infantry regiment for the Indian Army. His proposal was accepted by his colleagues and the Governor of Assam sent it to the Viceroy, who forwarded with his support to the General Headquarters. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1941, the Governor of Assam was informed

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<sup>148</sup> Zokima, p.140

<sup>149</sup> Hranga, p.110

that permission was given to form a new infantry regiment. The task of raising a new regiment was given to Major R.C Howman as he had already some background knowledge of the men and the country while serving with the Burma Rifles.<sup>150</sup> The Headquarter of the new regiment was located at Elephant Fall in Shillong and the main objective was to fight against the Japanese invasion. The newly formed unit was to be called the Assam Regiment and men from Mizo, Naga, Garo, Khasi, Ahom, Kuki, Gorkhas and other tribes of the Northeast India were recruited.

The initial strength of the Assam Regiment was low as it was difficult to recruit men at a quick pace. To increase the strength of the regiment men from other units- Assam Rifles, Gorkha Rifles and Assam Police were transferred to the Assam Regiment. Besides this, the civil authorities located many ex-soldiers and police men and persuaded them to re-enlist. On 29<sup>th</sup> May 1941, seven Mizos from the 1<sup>st</sup> Assam Rifles - Hrangkunga, Parala, Lalthanmawia, Lalnghinglova, Vandailova, Thangzuala and Pamuma were the first to be transferred to the Assam Regiment.<sup>151</sup> Soon new recruits and men from other units joined and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment was formed. The inauguration ceremony was held at Shillong on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1941, which was also the Regiment's Raising Day.

The majority of the recruits in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment were from the Lushai Hills. The first posting of the Assam Regiment was at Digboi. The main objective of the unit was to protect and defend the Assam Oil Company's property

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<sup>150</sup> Peter Styen, *The History Of The Assam Regiment, Vol 1,1941-47*, Orient Longmans, Calcutta Press, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 1,2&3

<sup>151</sup> Lalthanmawia Sailo, *Indopui Pahnihna Leh 1<sup>st</sup> Assam Regiment*, ARBEE Publications, Aizawl, 1990, p.5

against the attack of Japanese parachute troops. There was possibility that if the Japanese attack the oil field, they might put it temporarily out of production by destroying vital but repairable plants rather than resort to bombing which might long delay the oil to the Japanese themselves.<sup>152</sup> The unit was always on high alert conducting patrol and setting up defensive position. Despite the tension, they managed to celebrate their first Christmas at Digboi, invited hosts from the neighbouring districts and the unit organised cultural shows where different tribes from the unit showcase their traditional dances and songs.<sup>153</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment was also deployed in Burma to protect a newly constructed road to run from Ledo to Kunning in China. During their deployment in Burma, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment used to send secret codes in Mizo language as the Japanese were not familiar and could not decipher it.<sup>154</sup>

Within three years of its raising, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment was deployed in Manipur and faced one of the fiercest battles against the Japanese Army at Jessami in March 1944. One Company was deployed at Kharasom, 30km from Jessami. At Jessami, they fought the Japanese Army on Indian soil for the first time. The battle at Jessami was fought from 28<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 1944.

There were only 450 Assam Regiment soldiers at Jessami as they thought they would be facing only one battalion of the Japanese Army. Instead, they had to face the entire elite 31<sup>st</sup> Division Imperial Guard of the Japanese Army led by Lt.

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<sup>152</sup> Peter Styen, *The History Of The Assam Regiment* , p.15

<sup>153</sup> Lalthanmawia Sailo,p.8

<sup>154</sup> Chhuanliana interviewed by John L Pachuau on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019 at his residence in Bethlehem Venghlang, Aizawl. Chhuanliana joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment as clerk in 1945.

General Sato. The Assam Regiment was heavily outnumbered but despite their grim situation, they put up a brave fight. Young and inexperienced sepoy were fighting like veterans, Japanese grenades and cracker-bombs were picked up and thrown clear of the trenches with all the calmness in the world and there did not seem to be a man in the garrison afraid to carry out any task given to him.<sup>155</sup> For five days and nights they came under heavy Japanese bombardment. Two times the Allied aircrafts came to drop supplies and retreat order but unfortunately it missed its dropping zone and did not land inside the Assam Regiment perimeter. They were desperately short of ammunitions and food and did not receive the retreat order as they could not retrieve their supplies and other consignments. As they remained ignorant about the orders to withdraw, the officers instructed their men to hold their ground and to fight to 'last man, last round'. Since air drop was unsuccessful, Col Hugh Richard, the Operation Commander at Kohima had to send intelligent officer to inform the Assam Regiment to retreat to Kohima.<sup>156</sup>

J. Lalsangzuala who joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment as reader clerk and posted in the Intelligence Section during the War, recalled his experience during the battle of Jessami:

After the Japanese Army had surrounded us for five days and nights, by 1<sup>st</sup> April, the Japanese Army began to breach the southern perimeter of our camp. Our Commanding Officer instructed us to retreat to Kohima but due to heavy fire we had to wait until midnight to make our move. Before we retreat,

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<sup>155</sup> Peter Styen, p.68

<sup>156</sup> H. Kaphlira, *Ral Hmaa Zam Ngai Lo Capt Boilora (Mi hrat khawkheng, Japan ral lian zam lova beitu)*, Mualchin Publication & Paper Works, Aizawl, 2010, pp.94-95



we burnt all the important documents. On our way to Kohima, we were ambushed by the Japanese Army and two Mizo soldiers lost their lives.<sup>157</sup>

Some of the soldiers who retreated from Jessami reached Kohima on 1<sup>st</sup> April while majority of them reached on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1944. Out of 450 soldiers, only 280 soldiers survived and managed to retreat to Kohima. Those who retreated were given only 24 hours rest and were again deployed to defend Kohima.<sup>158</sup> According to Lalbiakthanga, around 30 Mizos were killed and several were injured at Jessami. Some of the soldiers died not only from enemy bullets but also because of malnutrition and diseases like malaria, cholera, dysentery and scrub typhus. Lalbiakthanga further says that despite the Mizos showing exemplary courage against the Japanese Army at Jessami, very few were awarded medals.<sup>159</sup> At Kharasom, subedar Boilora Colney was the Company Second in Command. Once they retreated from Kharasom, Boilora was able to safely escort his platoon to Kohima.<sup>160</sup> Havildar Zachhingia Lushai was killed while he attempted to destroy Japanese wireless post facing the 8<sup>th</sup> platoon sector at Kharasom. During the withdrawal of the last parties, jemedar Lalhuliana, who was recently promoted, was killed enroute to Jessami.<sup>161</sup>

Despite the withdrawal and heavy losses suffered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment at Jessami and Kharasom, their brave resistance for five days did not go in

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<sup>157</sup> Kawlremsiama, *Assam Regiment Chanchin, Vol 1 1941-1947*, Synod Press, Aizawl, 2006, pp.xvi-xvii.

<sup>158</sup> H. Kaphlira, *Ral Hmaa Zam Ngai Lo Capt Boilora* p.99

<sup>159</sup> Lalbiakthanga, interviewed by John L Pachuau on 29 June 2019 at his residence at chanmari , Aizawl.

<sup>160</sup> H. Kaphlira, p.86

<sup>161</sup> Peter Styen, pp.74-76

vain as they inflicted heavy casualties on the Japanese Army. The battle at Jessami is one of the most important battles in the Burma sector because it delayed the Japanese Army advance into Kohima and gave plenty of time to the Allied Forces for the preparation of the defences at Kohima.

### **3.4. Mizos in Singapore Jail and Indian National Army**

After the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment, the Indian Army Medical Corps was the second largest recruiter of Mizos during the Second World War. Those Mizos who joined the Medical Corps were posted in various places in Middle East and South East Asia. On December 1941, 53 Mizos attached to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Fd. Ambulance unit was deployed to Singapore. After 16 days of journey they reached Singapore on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1942.<sup>162</sup> Since December 1941, Japanese Forces had been continuously bombing Singapore. Despite the heavy bombardment, the Mizos were able to stay at a safe distance and did not suffer any casualties. Rosiama who was a doctor recalled his near death experience during the attack on Singapore:

When the hospital came under attacked, I was about to jump into the trench but it was already filled with nuns and our superiors. So I just ran to the nearby trees and within few minutes, planes started bombing the hospital and everyone in the trench was blown to bits<sup>163</sup>

On 15<sup>th</sup> February, Singapore finally fell to Japanese Forces and a large number of Allied Force soldiers were taken as prisoners of war. Around 80000 soldiers defending Singapore surrendered. The soldiers along with thousands of

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<sup>162</sup> James Dokhuma, *Singapore-a Mizo Saltangte*, Gilzom Offset, Aizawl, Reprint 2017, p.53

<sup>163</sup> James Dokhuma, *Singapore-a Mizo Saltangte* , p.70

civilians were sent to labour camps. The death rates in Japanese prison camps were extremely high. Estimates vary from around 30% to 37%. The main causes of death were disease, inadequate food and brutal treatment by Japanese captors.<sup>164</sup> Thousands more were shipped out to Singapore to work on the Thai- Burma railway for the Japanese forces, as well as other projects.

There were in total 64 Mizo prisoners of war in Singapore. Besides 53 men from the 43<sup>rd</sup> Fd. Ambulance unit, there were 8 men from Nursing unit, 2 Doctors and 1 havildar from Royal Indian Army Service Corps.<sup>165</sup> The Japanese were barbaric and cruel to the prisoners of war. The prisoners were left with very little food and as a result they suffered from malnutrition. Overcrowding and lack of proper sanitation in the camps led to diseases like malaria, cholera, beriberi and dysentery.

Since most of the Mizos were from the Medical Corps, they were sent to work in one of the hospitals. The Japanese allowed their prisoners to send letters to their homes. However it was a readymade letter written in English and the sender could only write his name and no return address was written. Despite the cruelty of Japanese towards their prisoners, it seems that they were less harsh towards the

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<sup>164</sup> The National Archives Learning Curve | World War II | Asia, Extracts from a report on the health of prisoners at Changi prisoner of war camp in Singapore July 1942, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/worldwar2/theatres-of-war/asia/investigation/singapore/sources/docs/3>, (accessed 19.9.2019)

<sup>165</sup> James Dokhuma, p.93

Mizos. They were allowed to play football and hockey, they even celebrated Christmas.<sup>166</sup>

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1943, Subash Chandra Bose visited the Prisoners' Camp at Singapore. He invited the Indian prisoners to join the Indian National Army (INA). Many prisoners responded to his call to take up arms against the British. Even among the Mizo prisoners, three joined the INA on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1942. Rosiama agreed to join the INA but after three days he changed his mind and resigned. He was sent back to the Prisoners' Camp.<sup>167</sup>

Darthawma Renthlei was another Mizo who joined the INA. He was enlisted as Nursing Sepoy in November 1940 and was posted at Penang in Malaysia in August 1941. Before being enlisted in the INA he swore an oath by placing his hands on the Holy Bible: "I give my life and my abilities to my nation." After joining the INA he was again given training and was deployed at the front.<sup>168</sup> He fought against the British in Burma in 1944, he was shot in the chest and was captured. He was charged for waging war against the British Empire and was imprisoned for two years in Chittagong and Lucknow jails. He was released in January 1946 when Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru intervened and told the British that these people were not rebels but fought for independence like us. Even after he was released from jail, he could not get any employment under British India Government. Even after he returned to his home in Lunglei, he was still under CID surveillance and was not

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<sup>166</sup> James Dokhuma, pp.102,103 -104

<sup>167</sup> James Dokhuma, p.95

<sup>168</sup> Naveen Joshi (ed.), *Freedom Fighters Remember*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1997, pp.206-207

allowed to say anything about independence. After India got independence, those who joined the INA, their contributions during the War were recognised and accepted them as freedom fighters. On 15 August 1973 Darthawma was awarded Tamrapatra.

Racism was one of the prominent features during the War despite the British and the Indian soldiers fighting together to defeat their enemies. It was not only the British Commissioned Officers but also the Non Commissioned Officers who enjoyed special privileges over the Indian soldiers. The British soldiers had their own separate living quarters and would not allow any Indian soldiers to come near it. The British called their Non Commissioned Officers as British Other Ranks while the Indian Non Commissioned Officers were called Indian Other Ranks. According to Chhuanliana, the British were very racists and would call the Indian Other Ranks as Indian dogs. Chhuanliana further says that one of the Mizo soldier accidentally went over to the British quarters as he was unaware of racial segregation and was immediately chased out. This Mizo soldier narrowly escaped punishment as his commanding Indian officers pleaded and apologised on his behalf to the British soldiers.<sup>169</sup>

The Mizo participation during the Second World War was much higher as compared to the First World War. Because of the Lushai Hills proximity to the battlefield, everyone was directly or indirectly affected by the War. Many civilians left their jobs and joined the irregular fighting units while others were contributing to the War effort by donating money and providing essential commodities to the

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<sup>169</sup> Chhuanliana interviewed by John L Pachuau on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019 at his residence in Bethlehem Vengthlang, Aizawl.

soldiers fighting the War. The Second World War gave the Mizos opportunity to enter the Army on a large scale. It is interesting to note that few Mizo women also participated as nurses. People became aware of the importance of earning money and many began to look for government employment within and outside the Lushai Hills. The War not only brought employment but also development in terms of roads, communications and infrastructures. Some of the soldiers who returned from the War came back with new ideas and visions and began to play an important role in the Mizo society.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Impact of the World Wars on the Lushai Hills**

The World Wars had profound impact on the Lushai Hills. The World Wars gave the Mizos the opportunity to enter the armed forces on a large scale. As a result of this, the small and isolated Lushai Hills experienced progress like never before. Many got the opportunity to serve in different parts of India as well as abroad and this increased the Mizo contacts with the outside world and widened their visions and perspectives. Despite the progress, the Wars also brought hardships to the people of the Lushai Hills. There were shortages of food and price of essential commodities increased. The Wars though devastating, were also able to usher in transformation and development in the Lushai Hills. The Wars brought socio-economic, political changes in the Lushai Hills.

#### **4.1. Impact of the First World War**

Even before the Mizos were recruited in the Labour Corps, the War already had an impact on the Lushai Hills. According to Sainghinga, some of the shopkeepers increased the price of essential commodities like salts and other bamboo products because of the War.<sup>170</sup> It was only in 1917 that the Mizos participated in the War on a large scale when they were recruited in the Labour Corps.

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<sup>170</sup> Sainghinga, p.2



Figure 4.1: Men wearing Western clothes in the 1920s



Figure 4.2: Photos taken in 1919 shows men wearing Western clothes



Source: Lalengliani - Photographs [1917-1956], British Library, EAP454/2/9, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP454-2-9>.

The War for the first time gave large number of Mizos the opportunity to venture outside the Lushai Hills. They were greatly impressed by what they saw and admired the Western culture. One of the noticeable impacts of the War was in fashion. The men who went to France cut their hair short and began to wear western clothes like coat and boots. Initially some of the men were not used to wearing Western clothes and many felt uncomfortable. Thangaihvunga one of the labourers cut his trousers into half-length as he was not used to wearing a full length trouser. He also cut opened the upper part of his boots as his feet felt hot and uncomfortable as he has never worn shoes earlier.<sup>171</sup> These men brought back with them their uniforms which were in great demand in the Lushai Hills. The Mizos admired the uniforms that the men wore in France and some of the civilians took pride in wearing Army boots and uniforms.<sup>172</sup> The above pictures taken in 1919 displayed that Western fashion had more impact on the men rather than on women after the First World War. Majority of women continued with their traditional attire and it was only during the Second World War that women fashion began to see transformation.

In terms of cosmetics, many new things were brought in from France. The soldiers brought back with them synthetic dyes or soap dyes. As it was much easier

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<sup>171</sup> Pakunga, interviewed by John L Pachuau on 30 December 2019 at his residence at Kanan, Aizawl. Pakunga is the youngest son of Thangaihvunga.

<sup>172</sup> TunlaiTlangvala, 'Kan Incheina leh Chibai,' in *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu*, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal May, 1938, p. 71

to use, it became very popular and prized among the women.<sup>173</sup> Besides these, the soldiers also brought back with them earrings, powder, soap, rings and wrist watches for their relatives and girlfriends.<sup>174</sup>

From the early days Mizos were always fond of music and those who came back from France popularised Western songs thanks to the introduction of gramophone. Often, they would compose their own lyrics to the tune of these songs besides translating many of them.<sup>175</sup> Several songs related to the War were composed and one of the most famous of them was *German Ral Run Zai*. It was composed by the Mizo soldiers during the War when they were deployed against Germans in France. The song is about what the soldiers encounter in their fight against the enemy during the War.

The Mizos also brought new variety of mustard seeds in the Lushai Hills called *feren antam*/French mustard from France. While they were being posted at Monchy au Bois, they came across large mustard field and took home some of the seeds for cultivation.<sup>176</sup> The *feren antham* became quite popular among the Mizos and was cultivated throughout the Lushai Hills. It was in France that the Mizos played football for the first time. They usually play it during their leisure time and they seemed to have enjoyed the game so much that when they went back to the

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<sup>173</sup> Rosaline Varsangzuali, 'Evolution of Mizo Dress', PhD Thesis, Mizoram University, 2018, (unpublished), p. 226

<sup>174</sup> Z.S Zuala, 'Lushai Labour Corps(1917-1918)', p. 39

<sup>175</sup> Vanhlupuii, Music – A Channel of Peace, <https://www.theindiapost.com/nation/north-east-post/music-%E2%80%93-a-channel-of-peace-contributed-by-vanhlupuii/> (accessed 30/11/2019).

<sup>176</sup> Sainghinga, p. 14

Lushai Hills, they introduced football and it became a very popular sport among the Mizos. Later on, it was football that helped Mizos to get into the Army. The British officer Major W.D Shakespeare considered the Mizos unfit to serve in the Army because of lack of discipline. In 1933 the IGP of Assam came to watch a football match at Lammual, Aizawl between the Mizos and the Gurkhas, the former put up a formidable team. The Gurkhas were considered to be brave and strong but the Mizos played aggressively where they dominated the game and won the match. The IGP was highly impressed by the Mizos' performance and gave orders to recruit 50 Mizos in the Army in 1933.<sup>177</sup>

While some of the War returnees started their own business, others later on, joined various branches of the armed forces like the Assam Rifles, Assam Regiment and Indian Army Hospital Corps. One noticeable person was Sabinga who was part of the Lushai Labour Corps and later on joined the Assam Rifles in 1922. When he applied for the post, the Commandant Maj. W Cory Corry knew Sabinga as the former was also serving in France during the War and enlisted him. The Commandant showed favours towards Sabinga and placed him Naik without all formalities that others followed. In 1933, he was transferred from Aizawl to Sadiya, Assam.<sup>178</sup> While being posted in Assam, his main task was intelligence gathering of the enemy movements near the China border. Sabinga was one first Mizos to be

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<sup>177</sup> Lalsiama, *Mizo leh Sipai (mizo sipai tang hmasa te)*, Jeffson Publishing House, New Delhi, 1993, pp.7,8& 9

<sup>178</sup> J.V Hluna, 'SABINGA: The Exemplary Mizo Young Man', *Historical Journal Mizoram* Vol. XVI. November 2015, pp.167-168

recruited as a regular soldier; he lived an exemplary life and was highly respected by his friends and in the Army.<sup>179</sup>

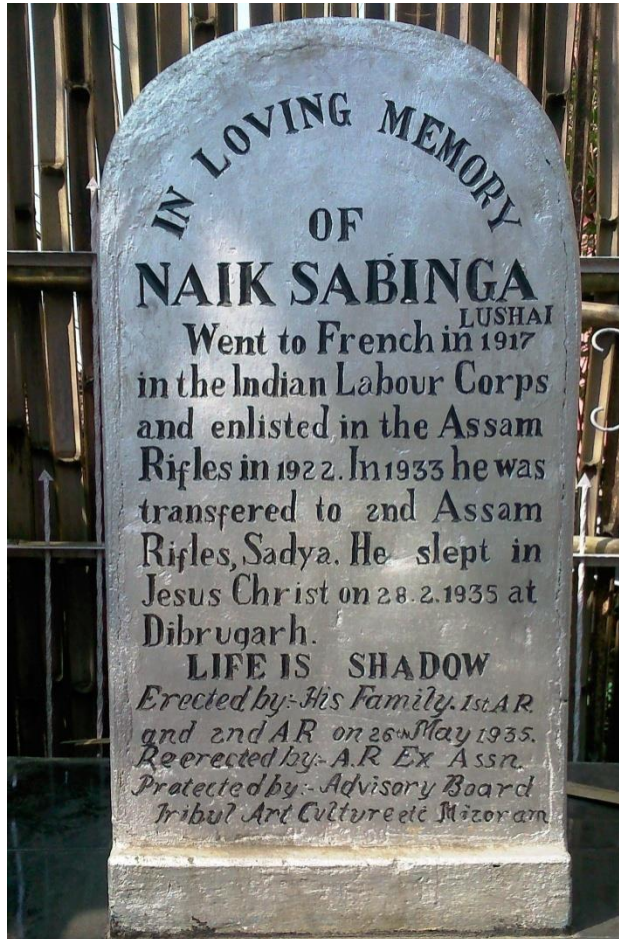


Figure 4.3: Tombstone of Naik Sabinga, Lushai Labour Corps.

Source: <https://buatabawihlung.wordpress.com/2015/03/04/naik-sabinga-lushai-khandaih>

Those who were unsuccessful in their quests have willingly agreed to serve in any labour corps, which might at any time be formed.<sup>180</sup> Few educated men were able to get high ranking administrative jobs. Thangliana, Champhai chief who was

<sup>179</sup> Makthanga, 'Thunawi,' in *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu*, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, September 1934, p. 143

<sup>180</sup> McCall, p.292

the headman of the 29<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company was favoured by successive Lushai Hills Superintendents. In 1922 W.L Scott gave Thangliana a plot of land in Bungtlang and again in 1925 N.E Perry gave him a land in North Khawbung. When the Second World War broke out, he was appointed as intelligent officer and was given a monthly salary of Rs 500 which was a huge amount of money because even the primary head teachers received monthly salary of only Rs 8.<sup>181</sup> Sainghinga who was a head clerk in the 26<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Company was also appointed as political assistant to the Superintendent of the Luhsai Hills.

Besides bringing in new ideas and material prosperity, the Mizos who came back from France may have brought influenza and spread the disease in the Lushai Hills because according to one of the leading newspaper of the Lushai Hills *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* in November 1918 published that more than 60 people have died from influenza.<sup>182</sup> In India it originated in Bombay in September 1918, spreading to other provinces in October 1918. The pandemic is believed to have originated from influenza-infected World War I troops returning home. The disease was passed on to and spread amongst civilian populations in different regions.<sup>183</sup> Pandemic influenza struck all the armies, although it is problematic to assign a specific date to the

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<sup>181</sup> C. Lalhruaitluanga, *Lalropui Thangliana Sailo*, Zorin Compugraphics, Aizawl, 2016, p.122.

<sup>182</sup> Makthanga, 'Chanchin tinreng,' in *Mizo leh Vai Chanchin Bu*, The Assistant Superintendent, N.Lushai Hills, Aijal, December 1918, p. 192

<sup>183</sup> Siddharth Chandra and Eva Kassens-Noor, 'The evolution of pandemic influenza: evidence from India, 1918–19', *BMC Infectious Diseases*. 2014, <https://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2334/14/510>, (accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2020).

beginning of the pandemic, it is clear that its origin was inextricably linked with the millions of men occupying military camps and trenches during the War.<sup>184</sup>

Due to the exposure to western civilization, some of the men realised the importance of education and began to criticise traditional institutions like Zawlbuk. Since all male from the age of 9 and above had to spend the night in Zawlbuk, they found it to be primitive institution hampering the growth of development and progress. The emergence of new ideas can be seen in the demands for expansion of education. The two Middle English schools at Aizawl and Lunglei failed to satisfy the Mizo's desire for higher education. Not surprisingly the demand for the establishment of a High School in Aizawl was to be seen just after the end of the War. Those who earned enough money during the War were able to send their children outside the Lushai Hills to pursue higher studies. Outside the Lushai Hills, the Mizos came into contact with variety of students and admired the way they organised themselves for their welfare. They became aware that an organised body was necessary to put pressure on the government on various issues of improvement. This led to the formation of the Lushai Students' Association in October 1924 at Shillong with its branches in Calcutta and Guwahati.<sup>185</sup> The First World War did not have much political impact on the Lushai Hills but it definitely widened the perspectives of the Mizos and increased their contacts with the outside world.

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<sup>184</sup> Peter C. Wever and Leo van Bergen, 'Death from 1918 pandemic influenza during the First World War: a perspective from personal and anecdotal evidence', *Influenza Other Respir Viruses*. 2014 Sep; 8(5):i. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4181817/>, (accessed on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2019).

<sup>185</sup> J Zorema, p.94

## 4.2. Impact of Second World War

The Second World War had deeper impact on the Lushai Hills than the First World War because the War was fought on Indian soil. The annexation of Burma by the Japanese in 1942 brought the War at the backyard of the Lushai Hills and also transformed North east India into a major War zone. Although the Lushai Hills was not invaded by the Japanese, the War brought hardships to the people. There were inflation and shortage of essential commodities and food; schools were shut down and the Lushai Hills was placed under wartime restrictions. Since Japanese were at the borders, many people left their villages and moved to emergency jungle hide outs. Those who stayed behind dug trenches around their villages to prevent the Japanese Army from marching into their villages. The roofs of the houses were painted green like the surrounding forest so that it would be difficult to spot from above. To prevent their villages from Japanese air attack during the night, there was complete blackout as light could attract Japanese jet fighters.<sup>186</sup> Not only people living near the borders but also living in Aizawl were also affected by the presence of the Japanese Army at the borders and some people moved out of Aizawl for the fear of Japanese invasion.<sup>187</sup>

Despite the inconvenience caused by the War, as compared to its neighbouring states like Manipur and Naga Hills there were no civilian casualties

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<sup>186</sup> Ch. Aikima p.8

<sup>187</sup> Neihthangi, interviewed by John L Pachuau on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at her residence in Zarkawt, Aizawl. She is the youngest daughter of Pachhunga, one of the successful business men during the Second World War. During the War, they fled Aizawl and moved to Reiek fearing Japanese invasion. The Reiek chief arranged accommodation for Pachhunga and his family.

inside the Lushai Hills other than one compounder who was hit by shrapnel when Japanese jet fighters attacked and dropped their bombs in North Vanlaiphai hospital.<sup>188</sup> The main reason why the Lushai Hills did not see major combat operations on its soil was because the Japanese excluded the Lushai Hills from their invasion plans and shifted their attention towards Manipur and Naga Hills, which became major battlefields. However many Mizos believed that it was because of the Churches which never cease praying, asking God to protect their land from the Japanese invasion.

The Second World War gave the Mizos the opportunity to enter the Army on a large scale, more than 3000 Mizo men and women joined various branches of the armed forces. Unlike the First World War, many Mizos were involved in combat operations against the Japanese Army. Since the War brought employment to thousands of Mizos, purchasing power of the people also increased. Soldiers were able to send their salary back home which increased money circulation in the Lushai Hills thus mitigating the effects of inflation. With the War getting closer to the Lushai Hills day by day many people left their studies so that they can make contributions to the War effort. An important feature of the War was that several women had joined the Army and were mainly confined to clerical works while some of them work as nurses in hospitals. Some men work as porter while others were employed to construct roads. The War had also affected the Church and some of the pastors joined *Pasaltha* 'V' Force. Since majority of the men were directly or

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<sup>188</sup> V.L Siama, p.124



indirectly engaged in the War, between 1938 and 1951, no efforts were made to recruit evangelists, and no pastors were ordained between 1948 and 1956.<sup>189</sup>

Once the war broke out, one of the leading newspaper *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* played an important role in spreading awareness about the importance of supporting the British in their fight against the Axis Powers. Those who were not enrolled in the armed forces were also cooperating with the British. The people contributed to the War effort by purchasing War bonds and opening fund raising stalls. Under the guidance of Mrs McCall, the wife of Superintendent of Lushai Hills, the Mizos set up fund raising stalls starting from 13<sup>th</sup> January 1940, where they sell vegetables and other old household items. Many people donated vegetables from their farms and other items to be sold. Within six months they were able to collect Rs 160 and donated it to the War Fund. Some of the people who played an important role in opening fund raising stalls/ *Indo Tanpuina Dawr* were BM Roy, Biaki, Zaii, Lalhema, Sainghinga H.C.<sup>190</sup>

At Lunglei, the second biggest town in the Lushai Hills, news about the War was transmitted by telegram every day to L.L Peters and this news was translated to Mizo language. The news was printed and sold it for one paisa to the people. Besides many people buying it, it also had a daily subscriber of 75 people.<sup>191</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> April 1940, a conference was held at Tlabung was attended by L.L Peters, the

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<sup>189</sup> Lalmuaka, *Zoram Thim Ata Engah*, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, 1988, p. 184

<sup>190</sup> Pachhunga, 'Indo Tanpuina', *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu*, August 1940, The Assistant Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aijal, pp.114-115

<sup>191</sup> Saitawna, 'Lunglei Thu Nawi', *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu*, August 1940, The Assistant Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aizawl, p.118

Superintendent of Lunglei and 18 Lushai chiefs. In this conference, the chiefs agreed to donate Rs 140 to the troops fighting at the front. The chiefs also agreed to arrange more handkerchiefs and cloths which were highly useful to the soldiers and in hospitals.<sup>192</sup>

During the War, the Superintendent McDonald travelled around Lushai Hills, carrying his own belongings. This brought peace and comfort to the people. The English missionaries also did their part to bring comfort and encouragement to the people by travelling around many of the villages bordering the War zones. Welsh missionary D.E Jones took along V.L Siamia one of the few educated Mizos in the winter of 1943 to visit the churches nearby the War zone. They were able to visit most of the peripheral churches and instilled confidence among the people.<sup>193</sup> Since the Mizos were loyal and cooperating with the British during the War and to further win their support, McDonald agreed to open a High School at Aizawl which the Mizos have been demanding since 1926. The location for setting up the school was chosen and with the consent of the chiefs, McDonald diverted the war aid of Rs 1/2 given to every family and chiefs amounting to Rs 27,000 towards the construction of the school.<sup>194</sup> On February 1944, the Mizo High School was established at a southern part of Aizawl in a locality called *Mission Veng* with 56 students. The school was placed under the control of the Welsh Presbyterian Mission. Reverend D.E Jones was the first Headmaster. D.E Jones and other missionaries helped run the

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<sup>192</sup> L. Hnuna Palian Thiante, 'Tlabung hmuna bial 18 lalho conference thurel', *Mizo Leh Vai Chanchinbu*, June 1940, The Assistant Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aijal, p.88

<sup>193</sup> V L Siamia, pp.124-125

<sup>194</sup> Lalhmuaka, *Zoram Thim Ata Engah*, pp.187-188

school without receiving any salary. The only Mizo teacher was Vankhuma and worked for two years. After the War, in 1947 the school was shifted to a new location called McDonald Hill which was named after the school founder McDonald, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills.<sup>195</sup>



Figure 4.4: Teachers and students of Mizo High School at Aizawl.

Source: M.Suaka - Photographs [1907-1950], British Library, EAP454/12/1, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP454-12-1>

The deployment of British and Indian soldiers in the Lushai Hills further popularised the use of English and Hindi languages among the Mizos. Many Mizos without getting formal education were able to communicate with these soldiers. The contact with foreign soldiers also exposed them to English songs and inspired many Mizo young men to form their own music bands. Many songs related to the War were also composed like *V Force Hla/V Force Song* and *Japan Run Zai*. P.S Chawngthu who served in the Royal Indian Air Force during the War is one of the

<sup>195</sup> C. Lianzuala, Mizoram School Hmasate (1894-1952), Mizoram Publication Board, 2005, p.40

most famous Mizo musicians. He composed many songs and joined a band named “Roman Francisco and His Hawaiian Serenaders” that included Spanish, English, Jamaican and Goan members. They played at many hotels around the world.<sup>196</sup>

Like The First World War, the Second World War brought changes in fashion. No longer was *puan*\* popular, but trousers and shirts. Many young ladies refused to wear *puan*. The ladies imitated Western style of dressing. Those women who joined the Army popularised western dresses like skirts, coats and heels. Wearing shoes among women became popular. During the Christmas of 1941, gatekeepers of the church midnight service, commented, “Hearing the footsteps of the ladies wearing shoes, we have really become *vai*.” Before the War, only few had actually worn shoes in Aizawl, not even those educated outside the Lushai Hills.<sup>197</sup> Some of the women cut their hair short and curled them; they also began to wear lipsticks and jewellery. Some even married their British colleagues in the army creating a whole new level of cross cultural relations.<sup>198</sup> Among the men, Army uniform became popular. There were men who owned different types of uniforms. These fashions were inspired by the soldiers posted in the Lushai Hills as well as the Mizos who served in the Army. They brought home various kinds of military uniforms. The men and women who joined various branches of the Armed Forces were well groomed and were more civilised than many of the people back home.

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<sup>196</sup> Pachuau & Schendel, p.379

*Puan* is a wrap around cloth worn by the Mizo women.

<sup>197</sup> Lalhmuaka, pp. 186-187

\*military jeeps were used to transport Army officials and war materials.

<sup>198</sup> Rosaline Varsangzuali, ‘Evolution of Mizo Dress’, p.227

Besides bringing employment, the War brought development in communication and infrastructures. Before the War, there was no motor road in the Lushai Hills and it was only up to Sairang (the only navigable river port near Aizawl) where large cargo could be brought in. It was inconvenient to carry large cargo from Sairang as people had to transport it on foot to Aizawl. Since the British had expected the Japanese to penetrate India through the Lushai and Chin Hills, constructing motor road for faster mobilisation of troops became top priority. The first motor road constructed between Sairang and Aizawl was completed in September 1942. Boats transported military jeeps\* from Assam to Sairang and from Sairang they were driven to Aizawl. During the inauguration of Sairang-Aizawl road, many people gathered and everyone in Aizawl was excited to see the jeeps making its way into the capital.<sup>199</sup> The jeeps always attracted large number of people wherever it was parked as the Mizos have never seen such machines before and people were always following wherever the jeeps went. The people were always curious to know about the drivers and some even thought that drivers were much higher ranking than the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. During the Wars, drivers were highly admired by the people and were in high demand from the young ladies.

Road connectivity in Lushai Hills improved further when the road linking Aizawl to Silchar was completed in 1943. The improved road connectivity increased the Mizos contacts with the plain people. Mizo business men never went beyond Silchar but with the improved connectivity, many started going as far as Calcutta for

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<sup>199</sup> C. Rochhinga, *Aizawl A Motor Lut Hmasa Ber*, K.R Printers, Aizawl, 1995, p.4

business trip.<sup>200</sup> The construction of road encouraged some of the Mizos to buy their own vehicles in Silchar. Pachhunga and Hmingliana were the first to co-own a mini truck. Thangruma was the first to own a jeep followed by C Rochhinga. The price of a newly jeep during this period was fifteen thousand and because of this only a few wealthy Mizos could afford to buy it. Those who bought these jeeps and trucks took up drivers and mechanics as their professions. J.Lianchungnunga started his own truck business where he started a service between Aizawl and Silchar. Initially the hilly terrain and bad roads made the service challenging but after several years of travelling up and down the muddy roads along the hills to Silchar and overcoming numerous difficulties, he finally made profit. He further invested his profit and later on became a successful contractor working on major Government contracts like construction of buildings.<sup>201</sup>

After the War, road construction continued under Assam Governor Barkataki. He gave orders to the Lushai chiefs to support the construction of jeep road between Aizawl and Lunglei. In response to his order, the chiefs formed Road Committee and mobilised their people for road construction. On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 they started constructing Aizawl to Lunglei road starting from Bawngkawn, the northern part of Aizawl. All the people in the villages between Aizawl and Lunglei were mobilised for the road construction. Villages which were not located between Aizawl and Lunglei road were asked sent atleast one representative from each family. Some of the wealthy businessmen living in Aizawl were tasked with constructing shops in

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<sup>200</sup> Lalhmuaka, p.186

<sup>201</sup> C. Rochhinga, *Aizawl A Motor Lut Hmasa Ber*, pp.28-29

Aizawl.<sup>202</sup> Within a short period of time Aizawl to Lunglei jeep road was completed and this further enhanced connectivity within the Lushai Hills.

The War saw the emergence of numerous contractors and suppliers. Pachhunga, Lalupa and Lalhmingthanga were some of the prominent businessmen who benefitted from the War by supplying food for the Army horses and donkeys and other various items. During the War, horses and donkeys were used for transporting War materials as road coverage was limited. Pachhunga became one of the most successful businessmen in the Lushai Hills and inspired many people to invest their money in trade and start their own business. The construction of road between Aizawl and Silchar further facilitated Pachhunga's business and was able to establish business offices in various parts of Assam.<sup>203</sup>

Once the War was over, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills forced some of the incompetent chiefs to resign and replaced them with soldiers who had distinguished service during the War. Some of the chiefs were deposed for helping the enemies during the War while others were too old and weak to perform administrative duties.<sup>204</sup> The newly appointed Ex-servicemen were Jemedar Ralkapa (Mimbung village chief), Subedar Pakunga (Hriphaw and Goboicherra village chief), Subedar Khawma (Kawnpui village chief) and Jemedar Darthuama (Phuaibuang village chief). These newly appointed chiefs were progressive and had visionary

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<sup>202</sup> C. Lalbiaknema, *Mizo leh Politics*, Offset Printing, Aizawl, 1998, pp.81-82

<sup>203</sup> Chatterjee, p.21

<sup>204</sup> J.Zorema, p.151

leadership. Pakunga being a talented sportsman promoted football and constructed football fields at several villages.<sup>205</sup>

Although the War brought progress and development in the Lushai Hills, at the same time it also led to moral degeneration. One woman was caught running a brothel for the soldiers and was evicted from the locality. Other women also got impregnated by Indian soldiers.<sup>206</sup> Once the War was over, soldiers were given the two options- whether to continue or opt for voluntary retirement. Many opted for voluntary retirement and came back to the Lushai Hills. Not all the soldiers led an exemplary life and many were addicted to alcohol. Some of them did not bring home much money and being uneducated they were not able to find suitable job to sustain them.<sup>207</sup>

Some of the Ex-servicemen may have not been treated well by officials after coming back to the Lushai Hills. The Sub-Divisional Officer of Lunglei disapproved granting concessions to ex- servicemen in the Lushai Hills in respect of Government appointments granting of house sites or concession in any form whatsoever over the civilian population of the district. In one of his letters sent to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, he classified the ex-servicemen into Combatants and Non Combatants. Non Combatants enjoyed much better comfort in respect of danger, food and clothing and money (pay) than the civil population. As for combatants, they

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<sup>205</sup> P.S Chanwgth, *Zo Hmaruai Sub. Pakunga Chanchin*, RD Printech, Aizawl, 2000, p.91

<sup>206</sup> MSA, CB 50, G-634, Correspondence regarding N0.795, L/Nk Thangkama and Thangkawla of Assam Regiment

<sup>207</sup> Lalbiakthanga, interviewed by John L Pachuau on 29 June 2019 at his residence at chanmari , Aizawl.



are on the same footing as the civil people because the country was exposed to such great danger of life and property during the War.<sup>208</sup> Whether he was a soldier or not the sufferings were all the same as the whole country was threatened and within the Danger Zone. The Superintendent disagreed with the Sub-Divisional Officer's view and continued to give preferential treatment to Ex-servicemen. However the concession given was meagre and was not sufficient to sustain their family. Thansiamama son of late Subedar Suakthuama wrote a petition to the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, requesting him to extend the scholarship of Rs 4 received by him and his sister as both wanted to pursue higher studies.<sup>209</sup>

The Second World War created a sense of unity amongst the *commoners*\* and the War created a condition favourable for political activities. The interaction with the outside world enlightened several Mizos and wanted to replace chieftainship with democracy. Some of the traders in Aizawl disapproved the paying of *Fathang*/paddy tax amounting to Rs2 and providing *kuli* service to the chiefs after the War.<sup>210</sup> Restrictions on politics which were imposed earlier were relaxed and after the War the Superintendent allowed the formation of political party. The Post-war period saw the formation of two major political parties in the Lushai Hills. On April 1946 the Mizo Common People's Union was formed but later the name was changed to Mizo

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\**commoners* refer to the ordinary people in the Mizo society who did not belong to the ruling elites. They had to pay taxes and provide *kuli* services to the chiefs.

<sup>208</sup> MSA, CB 60, G739, Letter from the S.D.O., Lungleh to the Superintendent, Lushai Hills, Aijal - Regarding Concession granted to Ex-Servicemen in the Lushai Hills.

<sup>209</sup> MSA, CB 5, Edn 74, Letter No. 3586/SB dated 29 March 1947.

<sup>210</sup> MSA, CB 58, G724, Letter from Aijal Merchants Association, Aijal, Lushai Hills, to the Superintendent, Aijal, Lushai Hills - Regarding *Fathang*. Traders were not supposed to provide *kuli* as they did not cultivate rice. During the War due shortage of man power they had to provide *kuli*

Union and the second political party United Mizo Freedom Organization was formed on July 1947. The Mizo Union had two main objectives: long term and short term. Its long time objective was the fulfilment of their political aspiration which might arise from time to time. Its short term objective was the abolition of chieftainship as soon as possible.<sup>211</sup> The main agenda of the United Mizo Freedom Organization was to amalgamate the Lushai Hills with Burma.

Political dissents increased after the War and some men became bold enough to criticize L.L. Peter, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. The Superintendent unabated support for the chiefs angered the Mizo Union. On 28<sup>th</sup> December 1948, the Mizo Union organised a protest against the Superintendent. Their main demand was to remove the Superintendent L.L.Peter and they shouted their slogan “*Petera haw rawh se*”/ Go Home Peter. Several villages also joined the protest, some of the chief and their ruling elite houses were damaged due to stone pelting from the protestors. The Superintendent ordered the arrest of Mizo Union leaders and used the Assam Rifles and the Police to crush the protest in the villages.<sup>212</sup> Finally the Mizo Union and the Superintendent came to an agreement avoiding major crisis. The protest was significant because it was the first time that the people in the Lushai Hills protested against the Superintendent. It also exposed the *commoners*’ strong desire for the abolition of chieftainship.

Some of the soldiers after experiencing the political conditions of various parts of the sub-continent became dissatisfied with the Lushai Hills administrative set

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<sup>211</sup> Sangkima, *Mizos: Society And Social Change (1890-1947)*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati,1992, pp. 137-138

<sup>212</sup> Saprawnga, Ch., *Ka Zin Kawng* , Synod Press, Aizawl, 1990, pp. 156,157&158

up. Some of the retired Mizo Army officers became active in politics and later on two officers from the Armed Forces became the Chief Minister of Mizoram (new name of Lushai Hills). Ch Chunga who served in the Royal Indian Navy during the War became the first Chief Minister in 1972 and was followed by Brigadier T. Sailo in 1978.

The Two World Wars had played an important role in opening up the Lushai Hills. Despite the limited participation of the Mizos during the First World War, the experience they gained during their tour of duty encouraged them to have an inquisitive and competitive spirits. The Second World War had a larger impact on the Lushai Hills as it affected all the people directly or indirectly and because of this it was able to usher in various changes in the Lushai Hills. Thus the Second World War was able to bring in modernity, creating a sense of unity and political awareness amongst the Mizos.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The World Wars were important events in the history of the Lushai Hills. Despite its isolated location, the Lushai Hills was never immune from these Wars. This research attempts to investigate and reconstruct the history of Mizos' participation in the World Wars. By analyzing both the available primary and secondary sources, this research shows that the military service had tremendous impact on the Lushai Hills. Besides monetization of the economy during the Second World War, the Wars had brought modernity and created a new intelligentsia class in the society.

The First World was a turning point for the Mizos because thousands of them were recruited by the British Government to work in France as labourers. This research investigates how the Mizos during the First World War were recruited by the British and what incentives were given to them to make the recruitment attractive. The earliest Mizos to experience the War were the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps who were recruited in 1914. It is interesting to note that the Mizos who joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps were willing participants and the British officials did not offer any incentives like *kuli awl* or exemption from house tax. Archival sources have shown that there were many applicants but only a handful of thirty Mizos were selected as majority of them could not pass the minimum physical requirements. The 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps was deployed in Mesopotamia and since it was the first time they went outside the Lushai Hills, these men admired the advanced technologies and

civilizations they encountered. Some of these men wrote letters to their home and encouraged the people to join the Labour Corps.

As the First World War dragged on, Britain was facing severe shortage of labourers which forced them to recruit men from all over her colonies. In the Lushai Hills, to attract the men to join the Labour Corps, the British government offer incentives such as exemption from *kuli* and house tax. As mentioned in the previous chapters, exemption from *kuli* was given only to the selected few and was seen as a status symbol in the society. Exemption from *kuli* was seen as a privilege in the society because *kuli* was considered to be a degrading job. Those who work as *kuli* had to carry heavy load over long distances and were treated harshly by their masters. For a common man, the only way to avoid *kuli* was to enlist himself in the Labour Corps. Since money was scarce during this period, exemption from house tax was another offer which many Mizos found it hard to resist. By 1917, 2100 men were recruited from the Lushai Hills and these men formed the Lushai Labour Corps which were divided into four companies each comprising 500 men.

During the recruitment process incentives alone were not enough to attract large number of people and the role of the missionaries could not be ignored as they played an important role in encouraging the people to enlist their sons in the Labour Corps. Right from the start, the missionaries disseminated the news of the War through newspapers. Many people were reluctant to send their sons to the War for the fear of not coming back home alive. However the missionaries were able to pacify and persuade the people by highlighting the benefits of going abroad. This instilled confidence to the parents who enlisted their sons and the men who join the

Labour Corps. One of the missionaries D.E Jones also accompanied the Labour Corps to France. J. H Lorrain also visited the Mizos at Roisel in France several times. Since Christianity was just making its presence felt in the Lushai Hills, for the missionaries it was an important opportunity to spread the Gospel and convert them to Christianity.

During their tour of duty in France, the Mizos work diligently and never complained about the nature of work assigned to them in their letters. Some of the letters published in *Mizo and Vai Chanchinbu* paint a rosy picture of their stay in Mesopotamia and France. However it is difficult to verify how the letters have been written as majority of them were illiterate. It is also interesting to know that there were layers of censorship within the British Army. The few literate men who accompanied the Labour Corps may have been assigned by the officials to write doctored letters on behalf of the labourers as most of them were illiterate. The initial letters sent by the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps describing the ideal working condition may have been used by the British officials in the Lushai Hills as a propaganda to encourage the youth to enlist in the Labour Corps. It would not be wrong to say that it was not only the exemption of *kuli* and house tax that attracted men to enlist in the Labour Corps but also the letters and the role of missionaries, all played an important factor in the recruitment of the Lushai Labour Corps.

Once they reached France, they were deployed in non-combat roles, although some of them wanted to participate in actual combat operation. On one occasion, while retreating from enemy attack they even asked their Commander to issue them rifles so that they can shoot back at the Germans. Since they were not trained as

regular soldiers their request was denied. The Mizos displayed extreme valour during their tour of duty and work tirelessly under heavy bombardment. They won several praises from their Commanders. Since the Lushai Labour Corps were hard working and honest, they were considered much better than the other Indian Labour Corps deployed in France.

During their sojourn in France several men of the Lushai Labour Corps were able to establish relationships with French women. Romantic encounters between colonial troops/labourers and French women were quite common during the War and the Mizo labourers were also no exception. Despite not able to speak the French language, some of them courted the French ladies and able form intimate bonding with them.

The Mizos who came back from France might be responsible for spreading influenza in the Lushai Hills. The terrible living condition in the trenches made the soldiers susceptible to diseases. Other than enemy fire, influenza was one of the biggest killers during the War. According to the news published in *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* the disease started spreading from October 1918 onwards and had claimed the lives of several people.

The First World War gave the Mizos the opportunity to interact with other races from different parts of the world. The Mizos benefitted from such interaction and gave them inquisitive minds. This interaction seems to have given education in the Lushai Hills a boost as existing schools in Aizawl and Lunglei failed to satisfy the desire for higher education. They demanded the setting up of High School as they realised education was an important factor for securing jobs in the Government.

The men depending on their ranks brought home between Rs 1000 and 250. This increased the money circulation in the Lushai Hills but it was not enough to transform the Lushai Hills into a monetized economy as the war returnees made up only 2.3% of the total male population (1911 Census). Some of them set up their own business while most of them went back to their respective villages cultivating their lands as subsistence farmers. The interaction with the West also made them imitate Western fashion up to certain extent. They began to developed taste for Western products and music. Though the First World War brought progress and modernity in the Lushai Hills, it was limited as it was fought in other continents and the changes it brought was not as profound as the one brought by the Second World War. However despite its limited impact it definitely changed the mental outlook of those who experienced the War. As changes cannot be introduced overnight, the men who came back from France laid the necessary ground work for development to come in the Lushai Hills.

It was the Second World War that brought major transformation in the Lushai Hills. Since the Northeast India became a major theatre of War, it affected all the people in the Lushai Hills directly or indirectly. Besides causing hardships to the people the War also generated employment at the same time. New Army units like Assam Regiment and Lushai Scouts were created where majority of them were recruited from the Lushai Hills. With over 3500 Mizos recruited in various branches in the Army and another 5000 employed as *Pasaltha* V Force, the Lushai Hills saw the beginning of cash economy. Although trading and wage earning were not absent in the previous years but it gained momentum from the Second World War onwards.



Unlike the First World War, Mizo women participated actively during the War weaving cloth and handkerchiefs. Since there was shortage of manpower as most of the able-bodied men were sent to the front, women also found employment in Women Auxiliary Corps and were tasked mainly with clerical works.

During the War, The Mizos did a commendable job fighting the Japanese Army in the Northeast India and Burma. They formed the backbone of the 1<sup>st</sup> Assam Regiment and fought bravely at Jessami and Kharasom. The Lushai Scouts conducted various operations in Burma and suffered few casualties while inflicting heavy damages on the enemy. However, despite fighting the enemy with exemplary courage, many ex-servicemen felt dejected as the Mizos received only few medals and were always overlooked when it comes to awarding the highest military medals. The British were racist towards their colonial soldiers and the Mizo soldiers were also not immune from this racial discrimination.

The War had not only open employment opportunities in the Army but also in various other fields. Some people were employed in road constructions while others took to business and went on to become successful contractors, suppliers and transport agents. The War brought improvements in infrastructure and communication. The construction of roads between Aizawl and Silchar in 1943 facilitated trade and increased the Mizo contacts with the plain people. With the construction of roads and the frequent entry of vehicles, many took up driving as their profession. The War had definitely increased the flow of money in the Lushai Hills.

During the War large number of British and Indian soldier were deployed in the Lushai Hills and the interaction between the soldiers and the locals popularised the use of English and Hindi languages. Education also received a boost as the Superintendent gave permission to construct High School in Aizawl. The War also brought Western fashion in the Lushai Hills. Many women started wearing western cosmetics and dresses instead of their traditional attire.

The War also brought some negative elements in the society. The War had corrupted the minds of several people. Some of the women became impregnated by Indian soldiers while others were found running brothels to cater the needs of the soldiers. The deployment of large number of soldiers may have increased prostitution in the Lushai Hills. Some of the soldiers after returning from War became addicted to alcohol and remained unemployed, tarnishing the image of the Army and ex-servicemen.

The War enhanced the power of the chiefs because they became the link between the British and the people in the Lushai Hills. The British would not be able to consolidate her rule and mobilise resources without the support of the chiefs as the latter had tremendous influence over their subjects. As a result of this, the British had always supported chieftainship in the Lushai Hills despite opposition from the people.

The exposure to the outside world created a sense of unity and political consciousness amongst the Mizos. The employment generated by the War had created a new intelligentsia class consisting of traders, ex-servicemen and intellectuals. This new class enjoyed better living standard and many considered

employment in the government as a status symbol. The relaxation on political activities on the Lushai Hills gave opportunities for some intellectuals to raise their voice against the existing administrative set up. This new class wanted to overthrow the chiefs and replace it with a democratic form of government where everyone will have equal voice and representation. During the Post-war period political parties like Mizo Union and United Mizo Freedom Organization were formed in 1946 and 1947 respectively to decide what course the Lushai Hills would take after the British withdrawal from India. The Post-war period saw increased number of dissents among the Mizos and many were no longer ready to accept the dictates of the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. Some of the traders and ex-servicemen came up with new ideas and visions. They became important leaders in the political parties and began to play an instrumental role in shaping the politics of the Lushai Hills.

During the Two World Wars, the Mizos have remained loyal to the British and had supported her War effort. Despite their limited participations and contributions during the Wars, the Mizos seemed to have benefitted from participating in these Wars. The importance of the Wars cannot be overlooked as it had brought changes in the society, economy and politics. As a result of this, the Two World Wars are important landmarks in the history of the Lushai Hills.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Interview Questions:**

1. How did the Second World War affect the economy of the Lushai Hills?
2. Do you think the Second World War brought changes in fashion?
3. Was there any racial discrimination to the Indian soldiers especially towards Mizos during the Second World War?
4. What occupations did the soldiers take up after the War?
5. What role did the Mizo women play during the Second World War?

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## Glossary

Aijal	:	Aizawl
Fathang	:	Rice tax
Influenza	:	A highly contagious airborne disease that affects the lungs, nose and throat.
Kuli	:	Impressed labour
Lungleh	:	Lunglei
Zawlbuk	:	Bachelor's dormitory
Maund	:	It is an anglicised name for a traditional unit of mass used in British India

### **BIO DATA OF THE CANDIDATE**

NAME : John L Pachuau

FATHER'S NAME : Van Hela Pachuau

D.O.B : 24<sup>th</sup> September 1988

REGISTRATION NO & Date : MZU/M.PHIL./497 of 10.04.2019

DEPARTMENT : History & Ethnography

TITLE OF THESIS : WORLD WARS AND THE LUSHAI HILLS

SEX : Male

NATIONALITY : Indian

CATEGORY : Schedule Tribe

PERMANENT ADDRESS : YE07, Chaltlang, Dawrkawn, Aizawl, Mizoram

CONTACT NO : 8794971356

EMAIL ID : [jpachuau24@gmail.com](mailto:jpachuau24@gmail.com)



## EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Sl. No	Name of Examination	Year of Passing	Name of Institution	Name of Board/University
1	HSLC	2004	Home Mission School	MBSE
2	ISC	2006	Bishop Cotton School	ISCE
3	B.A History	2009	Ramjas College	Delhi University
4	M.A History	2011	St. Stephens' College	Delhi University
5	NET	September 2012		UGC

## **PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE**

NAME OF CANDIDATE : John L Pachuau

DEGREE : Master of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT : History & Ethnography

TITLE OF DISSERTATION : World Wars and the Lushai Hills

DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION : 23.07.2018  
(Commencement of First Sem)

COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEMESTER/DISSERTATION : January 2019  
(From conclusion of end semester exams)

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

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Prof. K.Robin

Head

Department of History & Ethnography



**ABSTRACT**

**WORLD WARS AND THE LUSHAI HILLS**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF  
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**BY**

**JOHN L PACHUAU**

**REGISTRATION NO & DATE : MZU/M.PHIL./497 of 10.04.2019**

**SUPERVISOR:**

**PROF. LALNGURLIANA SAILO**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**

**AIZAWL-796004**

**2020**

## **Introduction**

The Lushai Hills was colonised by the British in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, other than the British officials and missionaries, the Mizos had limited contact with the outside world. However, during the two World Wars many Mizos had participated and joined the Army as combatants and non-combatants. This research focuses on the role and contribution of the Mizos during the World Wars. This research also tries to analyse the measures initiated by the British during the Wars and the impact of the Wars on the Lushai Hills.

The First and Second World Wars were the most devastating Wars that mankind has ever witnessed, killing and displacing millions of people and affected all the continents directly or indirectly. The First World War was mainly confined to the European continent while the Second World War was more widespread and was fought not only in the European continent but also in Asia and Pacific regions. Both the World Wars had direct impact on the European colonies in Asia and Africa.

The Wars had affected even the remotest regions of British India. Even the recently colonized regions of Northeast India were not immune from the First World War. In January 1917 the Secretary State for India requested the Viceroy if India can provide labour for the War in France. The burden for providing labour fell on Assam, Orissa, Bengal because other provinces like Punjab, United Province, Madras were already sending regular soldiers to the British Indian army. Archdale Earle, the Chief Commissioner of Assam offered eight to ten thousand labourers from his province. The Assam province sent 17 companies one from the Garo hills and four each from Khasi, Naga, Lushai and Manipur hills.

In 1914, 30 men from the Lushai Hills were recruited in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps and were deployed in Mesopotamia. Major recruitment for the Lushai Labour Corps started only in 1917. Many Mizos were reluctant to send their sons to the War for the fear of not coming back home alive. There was rumour circulating that once they reach France, these men will not only be used as labourers but also as regular soldiers on the front. In order to attract the Mizos to join the recruitment the British Government declared that those who volunteered to join the Labour Corps will be exempted from *kuli*\* (impressed labour) and house tax. The families of the Labour Corp will also be exempted from *kuli* during their tour of duty. Since money was scarce during this period, exemption from house tax was a big relief for many Mizos and became one of the main reasons for joining the Labour Corps. Another reason why men enlisted to join the Labour Corps according to Sainghinga was that the ladies they fancy would rather welcome and seek those who participated in the war over them when they returned.

One of the British missionaries in Lushai Hills D.E Jones (Zosaphluia) also encouraged the Mizos to join the war by publishing articles on newspaper highlighting the benefit and privileges of going abroad. According to Vawmphunga, the village chief sent men who were less prominent and who did not mean much in the society even if they die in the war.

The Lushai Labour Corps were employed on various works such as felling trees, converting of logs, burning charcoal, loading and unloading war materials for the front, in digging trenches behind firing line for defensive purposes and making railways and tramways. As they were somewhat near the firing line, they faced

bombardment from enemy's artillery and sometimes aeroplanes also dropped bombs near their camps but the Lushais were always steady and they never showed alarm. Since they were hard working and honest, they won praises from their Commanders. When the War was over, the Lushai Labour Corps was immediately disbanded and were sent back to the Lushai Hills.

The Second World War broke out in Europe on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. By 1942, the Japanese successfully drove out the Europeans from South East Asia. The rapid expansion of the Japanese Army in South East Asia and the annexation of Burma in May 1942 brought the War on to the doorstep of India.

The British expected the Japanese Army to enter India through the Lushai Hills and the Chin Hills. Therefore, they began to seek the support of the Lushai chiefs who exerted considerable influence over the local population. Since Northeast India had inhospitable terrain with no proper roads and means of communication, the support of the local population was vital for the Allied Forces.

On 2nd April 1942, A.G McCall, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills called on the chiefs of the Lushai Hills and requested them to support the British in their War effort. The chiefs agreed to give their support on one condition, that after the War, Lushai Hills would not be allocated to either India or Burma. To put up effective resistance against the Japanese Army, McCall introduced Total Defence Scheme which involved preparing villages to stock food and other necessary items in secret jungle places, to give free food and hospitality to men fighting the enemy, making weapons and arming the villagers for self defence, and laying traps. The

Government gave War aid of ₹1 to every household and ₹2 to all the chiefs for supporting the British in their fight against the Axis Powers. The War Fund to collect voluntary donations from the people was also introduced in Lushai Hills.

The British formed a resistance group from the local population and it came to be known as *Pasaltha* “V” Force. The “V” Force consisted of *Pasaltha A* “V” Force and *PasalthaB* “V” Force with 2000 and 5100 men respectively. The Lushai Scouts was another unit formed in 1944 to counter the Japanese Army invasion in the Lushai Hills. The British recruited only Mizos in the Lushai Scouts because the Lushai Hills and the Chin Hills have similar terrain, the Mizos would not have difficulty in operating in those hilly terrains. The Lushai Scouts were deployed extensively in Burma and were quite successful against the Japanese Army. Once the War was over, the Lushai Scouts was immediately disbanded. The officers of the Lushai Scouts were repatriated to their respective Regiments while the soldiers were given two options- either to retire or join the Assam Regiment. Besides the Lushai Scouts, the Mizos formed the backbone of the 1<sup>st</sup> Assam Regiment. This Regiment fought the Japanese Army at Jessami and Kharasom. The battle of Jessami is significant because it delayed the Japanese Army advance into Kohima and gave the Allied Force time to reinforce.

When Singapore fell to Japanese Forces in February 1942, there were in total 64 Mizo prisoners of war. They were mainly from 43<sup>rd</sup> Fd. Ambulance unit. Since most of the Mizos were from the Medical Corps, they were sent to work in one of the hospitals. On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1943, Subash Chandra Bose visited the Prisoners’ Camp at Singapore. He invited the Indian prisoners to join the Indian National Army (INA).



Few Mizos agreed to join the INA. Rosiama agreed to join but after three days he changed his mind and resigned. Darhawma Renthlei was another Mizo who joined the INA. He fought against the British in Burma in 1944 but was captured. He was charged for waging war against the British Empire and was imprisoned. After independence, those who joined the INA, their contributions during the War were recognised and accepted them as freedom fighters.

The Second World War gave the Mizos the opportunity to enter the Army on a large scale. With the Mizos cooperating with the call to arms, this small and isolated tribal region experienced progress like never before. The War brought employment and development in terms of roads, communication, and infrastructures. Before the War, motor road did not exist but with the Japanese threats, for faster mobilization, the British constructed road linking Aizawl to Silchar. Interestingly, the War also ushered in a change of fashion in the Lushai Hills. Western clothes like trousers, boots, skirts, and suits were becoming increasingly popular in the Mizo culture which still stands today. Moreover, as many Mizos were employed in the Army, money circulation increased and some of the soldiers were able to invest their money and start their own business. Hence, Mizos were becoming more conscious of the development beyond the hills so much so that they started making headways in different spheres of life.

## **Review of Literature**

*Issues in Twentieth Century World History* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011) written by Sneh Mahajan is an important book for understanding the First and Second World Wars. The book describes the impact of the wars on the colonies, how

the European powers acquired essential war materials and labour supply from the colonies.

*Indian Voices of the Great War Soldiers' Letters, 1914-1918* (Macmillan Press, 1999) by David Omissi is a collection of selected letters written by the Indian soldiers deployed in Europe and Mesopotamia during the First World War. This book provides invaluable information on the morale of the Indian soldiers and their encounter with European culture. Since the author had accessed to the letters of the soldiers, he is able to give a vivid account of the experiences of the soldiers posted at the front.

Percival Spear's book *Oxford History Of Modern India* (Oxford University Press, 1978) is an important book which gives detail account of India's history during the colonial and pre-colonial period. In part IV of the book, Spear discusses in detail the First World War and the loyal sentiments shown by the Indian princes and political leaders towards the British. As a gesture of good will the Indian princes donated millions of pounds annually to the war fund and sent thousands of men to be used as combatants and non-combatants (labour corps).

*The Camera As Witness* by Joy L.K Pachuau and Willem van Schendel (Cambridge University Press, 2015) aim to explore the history of Mizoram through unpublished photographs. The photographs in this book provide in-depth knowledge about the Mizos during the First and Second World Wars.

*Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge University Press 2011) is a book edited by Santanu Das, brings out the voices and experiences of

various colonial soldiers from India, China and Africa participating in the First World War. The book examines the racial and colonial aspects of the war of 1914–18. The wider aim is to embed the experience and memory of the First World War in a more multiracial and international framework.

The article '*The recruiter's eye on 'the primitive': to France in the Indian Labour Corps - and back, 1917-1918*' by Radhika Singha gives an elaborate account on the recruitment of Labour Corps in Northeast India during the First World War. The author describes the role of Christian missionaries and how missionary networks were also tapped to get labour for France, the first batch of the Labour Corp including 5000 Christians were accompanied by 11 chaplains in addition to several lay readers. The article also highlights how the recruitment to Labour Corp set off violent reactions and uprisings in Manipur and Naga Hills.

Pratap Chhetri's article '*North East India and The First World War*' is about India's participation in the First World War under the British rule by providing troops, auxiliaries and labour force from all over India including the North East. Men from North East India were recruited as paid volunteer labourers working on non combat roles as part of the Labour Corps to serve in France and Mesopotamia. These Labour Corps were named after the regions they came from namely Garo, Lushai, Manipur, Naga and Chin Labour Corps. For the first time, these tribal men were exposed to the modern world which propelled the growth of education, Christianity, and most importantly the dawning of political consciousness among many tribes.

*India At War The Subcontinent and the Second World War* (Oxford University Press, 2015) by Yasmin Khan describes how the Indian subcontinent was reshaped by the war. The book provides an invaluable information on the diversity of wartime experiences in India. Merchants, industrialists, soldiers, agriculturalists or black marketers, in small towns or mega-cities, on coastal waterways or in the mountains, all had their own ways of negotiating the challenges and opportunities of war. Some profited and many were impoverished.

*India's War: World War Two and The Making of Modern South Asia* (Basic Books, 2016) by Srinath Raghavan , highlights that India did not fight the war as merely an appendage of the British Empire. From the beginning, India provided soldiers and defended the British Empire not only in India but also in other continents in Africa, Europe and Pacific. The book discussed the importance of martial races while recruiting the army and soldiers were mainly recruited from North West India which was immune from anti British feeling. The book also highlighted the contributions made by the Northeast tribes like Nagas, Kukis, Chin and other hill tribes during the fight against Japan.

*The Making of Mizoram: Role Of Laldenga Vol 1* (M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd, 1994) by Suhas Chatterjee is an important book which deals not only with the role of Laldenga but also the history and politics of Mizoram and the Japanese campaigns in the Northeast India and Burma during the Second World War. In one of chapters, Travails of the War Years, Chatterjee highlights that the Mizos not only fought on the Burma Front but a number of them took part in different operations, on the Western Front also. He also describes Japanese incursion into Northeast India

and the impact of the Second World War on the Mizo society and how the War brought changes in the economy and mental outlook of the Mizos. Chatterjee highlights that the War brought money economy in the Lushai Hills and this led the emergence of neo rich class in the Mizo society.

*Sepoy Against the Rising Sun: The Indian Army in Far East And South East Asia, 1941-45* (Brill Academic Publication 2016) by Kausik Roy highlights the various campaigns of the Indian Army in Asia during the Second World War. The Indian Army was not only the largest volunteer force but also the biggest colonial force. But its size pales in comparison with the armies raised by the first class powers during the Second World War. The book assesses the combat effectiveness of the Indian Army against the Japanese Army during the War. The book describes the jungle war in the Arakan, how the Indian Army defeated the Japanese Army in the challenging terrain of Imphal and Kohima.

*Kohima 1944: The Battle That Saved India* (Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2010) by Robert Layman describes the Japanese attempt to capture Kohima and the resistance put up by the British. The Japanese launched Operation U-Go to capture Kohima, which was an important base of the British army. The book explores the background of the campaign, the opposing armies and their commanders, detail account of the battle of Kohima and how the Japanese forces were finally defeated. The defeat of the Japanese in Kohima was the turning point as it ended the Japanese attempt to overthrow the British Raj.

*Dangerous Work :The Memoir Of Private George Weeks Of The Labour Corps 1917-1918* (Gloucestershire, Spellmount, 2014) is a book edited by Alan Weeks about the experiences of his father who was drafted to the Labour Corp during the First World War on the Western Front. It does not involve great military actions but day to day survival in terrible conditions. The book also describes how the British eventually began to look to their colonies for material support and labour supply.

*A.G McCall in his book The Lushai Chrysalis* (Luzac & Co Limited, 1949) examines in detail the religion, custom and economy of the Mizos during the pre colonial and colonial period. In chapter X, McCall discusses the impact of the First World War in the Lushai Hills, how the British government tries to persuade the Mizos to join to the Labour Corps. This book is important because it is one of the earliest books written in English which described in details the Lushai Hills and the Two World Wars.

*Chin-Lushai Land* (Thacker Spink &Co, 1893) by A S Reid is an important book as it helps us in understanding how the Lushai Hills was colonized by the British. The book gives vivid account of the Lushai Expedition of 1871-72, Lushai Expedition of 1889 and Chin Lushai Expedition of 1889-90.

*The History Of Frontier Areas Bordering On Assam From 1883-1941*(Eastern Publishing House, 1983) written by the Governor of Assam Robert Reid provides an insightful information on the Lushai Hills. The book describes the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90 and how the British finally subdued the Lushais.

The book also provides an invaluable information on the administrative changes taking in the Lushai Hills once the British established their rule.

*'Jack Longbottom and the Lushai Scouts'* by Jane Robinson nee Longbottom is an important article as it gives detail information about the Lushai Scouts. The article describes how the Lushai Scouts was formed under the guidance of Jack Longbottom and the various operations they undertook against the Japanese forces in Burma. The Lushai Scouts were trained as regular troops but their speciality was to be jungle warfare with special emphasis on mobility and minimum transport. When the War ended the Lushai Scouts were flown back to India and disbanded at Shillong as a Unit.

*The Second World War: Asia and the Pacific* by [Thomas E. Griess](#) (West Point Avery Publishing Group Inc, 1989) gives a detailed account of the Allies' brutal five-year struggle with Japan. According to Griess, at the beginning of the war Allied response was inadequate and ineffective, surrender followed surrender as the Japanese crushed all resistance. Driving relentlessly, the Japanese routed British and Chinese troops and threatened the very safety of India. The Japanese main slogan was "Asia for the Asians" and by early May 1942 they had driven the white man from the control of the western Pacific and Southeast Asia; they had also humiliated him, and destroyed the myth of white superiority. According to Griess, even for isolated Australians, Japanese invasion was the immediate fear.

Sainghinga's book on *Mizote France Ram Kal Thu* (Hauhlira Press, 1995) is one of the few books written by ex Lushai Labour Corps to be published. The book provides invaluable information on how Mizos were recruited in the Labour Corps

during the First World War. The book describes the Lushai Labour Corps journey to France and their experiences in the war.

JF Laldailova in his book *German Ral Run Leh Thu Ngaihnaawm Dangte* (ZOlife Publication, 2010) describes the experience of a 19 year old Vawmphunga serving the 27<sup>th</sup> Lushai Labour Corp in France. This is an important source for understanding the role of the Lushai Labour Corps during the First World War.

*Indirect Rule in Mizoram 1890-1954* (Mittal Publication, 2007) by J. Zorema provides a critical study of the British administration in the Lushai Hills. The book highlights how the British tried to maintain and strengthen the system of indirect rule or rule through chiefs. In chapter V the author discusses the role of Mizos during the First World War and its impact on the Mizo economy. The book also highlights the new ideas brought in by Second World War.

*Khawvel Indopui 2-Naa Mizo Pasaltha B "V" Force Te Chanchin* (Hauhlira Press, 1995 ) by Ch. Aikima is one of the few books which describe in details the formation and the role of *Pasaltha B "V"* during the Second World War. Since the author was part of the *Pasaltha B "V"* Force, it is an invaluable source for the proposed research topic. In 1942 the *Pasaltha B "V"* Force was formed with strength of 5100 Mizos and their main role was to act as the last line of defence as well as intelligence gathering on Japanese movements across the border. The book also highlights the Lushai Scouts which was formed in 1944.

*Mizo History* (Lengchhan Press,1953) by VL Siama is a comprehensive book dealing with various topics in Mizo history during the pre colonial and colonial period. This book is an invaluable source for this topic as it deals with both the



World Wars. Besides writing on the Lushai Labour Corps, it is also one of the few books which mentioned the Mizos involvement in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps during the First World War. The book also described the Mizos involvement in the Second World War, the formation of Lushai Scouts and the regions where the Mizos were posted during the war.

*Mizo leh Sipai ( Mizo Sipai Tang Hmasa Te)* (Jeffson Publishing House, 1999) is a book written by a retired soldier Lalsiama. This book provides important information about Mizos who had joined the Army since the earliest times. It provides detail information of those who had participated during the First and Second World Wars. After the First World War, the Mizos were not found to be fit to serve in the Army because of lack of discipline however later on football played an important role in helping the Mizos to get into the Army again after the First World War. The author looks at the various roles the Mizo soldiers recruited in the Assam Regiment and Assam Rifles undertook during the Second World War.

*Mizoram Society and Polity* (Indus Publishing Company, 1996) by C. Nunthara describes the social organization and political developments during the colonial and post colonial period. In one of the chapters Political Developments in Mizoram, the author highlights the impact of the World Wars in the Mizo society. New forces against traditionalism emerged and according to Nunthar, these were the by-products of Western education continuously strengthened by the experiences during the First and Second World Wars. The Wars led to negative orientation towards the traditional elites and the commoners were engulfed with new ethos of political consciousness.

*Lushai Scouts* by RK Hrang (Franco Press, 1992) describes the formation and the operations undertaken by the Lushai Scouts during the Second World War. The Lushai Scouts played an important role during the War and won praises from their Commanders for their outstanding performance and bravery in the battlefields. They were mainly deployed in Burma against the Japanese forces. The author, an ex Lushai Scouts describes his experiences and gives in-depth information on the war thus making the book an invaluable source for this topic.

*Aizawl A Motor Lut Hmasa Ber* (R.K Printers, 1995) by C. Rochhinga is a book about the entry of jeeps into the Lushai Hills. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1942, the first jeep entered Aizawl from Sairang. The book provides insightful information on how jeep-able roads were constructed for faster troop movements in the Lushai Hills during the Second World War. The book also highlights how roads played an important role in the development of the Lushai Hills during and after the War.

The above review on selected literatures show that there are ample of works dealing with the World Wars on a wider scenario. Most of the works are confined to studying the impact of the Wars in Europe, America or South East Asia. Despite the important contribution of the Indian soldiers during the two Wars, there are only few scholarly research works on Indian Army. As far as the World Wars and the Lushai Hills are concerned, other than those books and articles written by ex-soldiers who experienced the Wars, there are hardly any books or scholarly articles which have done an in depth study. Despite the significance of these Wars on the Lushai Hills, scholars have neglected this topic and fail to give the importance it deserves. This

research therefore, aims to probe into the gap and attempt to bring to light the role of the Mizos during the two World Wars and their impact on the Lushai Hills.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

Many scholars have written books on the World Wars-its origins, causes and impact on a global scenario. However, research work specifically dealing with the impact of the First and Second World Wars on the Mizos are limited and still remains largely unexplored.

The Mizos were no stranger to wars. Before the World Wars, the Mizos frequently engaged themselves in inter and intra tribe wars. To make them join the war the British government introduced various incentives like exemption from forced labour and house tax to motivate people. Why did the British government need to incentivise the Mizos? How relevant were the incentives for the Mizos? These questions reflect a gap that provides an opportunity to have in depth study and further research.

A few ex-recruits of the First and Second World Wars have written down their experiences. While these are valuable and indispensable available sources, information however, is confined mainly to their journey to France or their experiences on the War front. Although the Lushai Labour Corps was formed during the First World War, it was immediately disbanded after the War. Their activities were hardly recorded and only a few of their achievements were documented.

During the Second World War, the Mizo women also participated but again, there is little information regarding their role during the War and their impact in the

society after the War. Whether the Mizos were passive participants or not during the First and Second World Wars is not exactly known. Some information on the consequences of the World Wars in the Mizo society, economy and culture are extracted meticulously from accounts that are not directly dedicated to the topic concerned.

Some Scholars have mentioned that the money earned by the Lushai Labour Corps during the First World War increased the flow of money in the Lushai Hills, thereby prompting the real beginning of money economy in the Hills more than the trade itself. How far this is true, needs further investigation.

Other sources describing events are attained from foreign authors. These foreign authors have not provided adequate information on the related topic. Therefore, an in-depth study in this area is necessary. The proposed research will try to analyse in detail the impact of the First and Second World Wars in the Mizo society, culture, polity and economy.

### **Area of Study**

The geographical area the proposed research cover is Mizoram and the time period is the first half of the twentieth century.

### **Objectives**

1. To understand the role of the Mizos during the First and Second World Wars.

2. To examine the impact of the World Wars on Mizo society, polity and economy.

## **Methodology and Sources**

The methodology adopted in this research is qualitative methodology based on information expressed in words-description, accounts, opinion. The research also re-examine the existing sources and works. The research uses both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include the relevant archival records in the Assam State Archives, Mizoram State Archives, Missionary Reports and Gazetteers. Among the secondary sources published books, papers and journals relevant to this topic are collected and examined from various reputed libraries within the State like State library, Mizoram University library, Aizawl Theological College library and Mizoram Synod Archives. Unstructured interviews in the line of oral history methodology are adopted in this research in order to gain information and understanding of social phenomena and attitudes.

## **Structure of the study**

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the research topic and includes review of literature on selected works considered relevant for the topic.

## **Chapter Two: The Mizos and the First World War**

This chapter highlights the role of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps and the Lushai Labour Corps. The chapter also discusses the recruitment process and the incentives provided to the Mizos to enlist themselves in the Labour Corps.

## **Chapter Three: The Mizos and the Second World War**

This chapter describes and analyse the Mizos response to the Second World War. This chapter also highlights the role of the Mizos in the Pasaltha V Force, Lushai Scouts, Assam Regiment and Indian National Army.

## **Chapter Four: Impact of the Wars in the Lushai Hills**

This chapter focuses on the socio-economic and political impact of the World Wars. It investigates how the World Wars brought transformation in the Lushai Hills.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

This chapter summarizes and analyse major findings

## **Research Findings**

The World Wars were important events in the history of the Lushai Hills. Despite its isolated location, the Lushai Hills was never immune from these Wars. This research attempts to investigate and reconstruct the history of Mizos' participation in the World Wars. By analyzing both the available primary and secondary sources, this research shows that the military service had tremendous impact on the Lushai Hills. Besides monetization of the economy during the Second

World War, the Wars had brought modernity and created a new intelligentsia class in the society.

This research investigates how the Mizos during the First World War were recruited by the British and what incentives were given to them to make the recruitment attractive. The earliest Mizos to experience the War were the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps who were recruited in 1914. It is interesting to note that the Mizos who joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps were willing participants and the British officials did not offer any incentives like *kuli awl* or exemption from house tax. Archival sources have shown that there were many applicants but only a handful of thirty Mizos were selected as majority of them could not pass the minimum physical requirements.

In the 1917 to attract the men to enlist themselves in the Labour Corps, the British government offer incentives such as exemption from *kuli* and house tax. Exemption from *kuli* was seen as a privilege in the society because *kuli* was considered to be a degrading job. For a common man, the only way to avoid *kuli* was to enlist himself in the Labour Corps. Since money was scarce during this period, exemption from house tax was another offer which many Mizos found it hard to resist.

During the recruitment process, the role of the missionaries could not be ignored as they played an important role in encouraging the people to enlist their sons in the Labour Corps. Right from the start, the missionaries disseminated the news of the War through newspapers. However the missionaries were able to pacify and persuade the people by highlighting the benefits of going abroad. This instilled

confidence to the parents who enlisted their sons and the men who join the Labour Corps. One of the missionaries D.E Jones also accompanied the Labour Corps to France. J. H Lorrain also visited the Mizos at Roisel in France several times. Since Christianity was just making its presence felt in the Lushai Hills, for the missionaries it was an important opportunity to spread the Gospel and convert them to Christianity.

During their tour of duty in France, the Mizos work diligently and never complained about the nature of work assigned to them in their letters. Some of the letters published in *Mizo and Vai Chanchinbu* paint a rosy picture of their stay in Mesopotamia and France. However it is difficult to verify how the letters have been written as majority of them were illiterate. It is also interesting to note that there were layers of censorship within the British Army. The few literate men who accompanied the Labour Corps may have been assigned by the officials to write doctored letters on behalf of the labourers as most of them were illiterate. The initial letters sent by the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Bearer Corps describing the ideal working condition may have been used by the British officials in the Lushai Hills as a propaganda to encourage the youth to enlist in the Labour Corps. It would not be wrong to say that it was not only the exemption of *kuli* and house tax that attracted men to enlist in the Labour Corps but also the letters and the role of missionaries, all played an important factor in the recruitment of the Lushai Labour Corps.

During their sojourn in France several men of the Lushai Labour Corps were able to establish relationships with French women. Romantic encounters between colonial troops/labourers and French women were quite common during the War and



the Mizo labourers were also no exception. Despite not able to speak the French language, some of them courted the French ladies and able form intimate bonding with them.

The Mizos who came back from France might be responsible for spreading influenza in the Lushai Hills. The terrible living condition in the trenches made the soldiers susceptible to diseases. Other than enemy fire, influenza was one of the biggest killers during the War. According to the news published in *Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu* the disease started spreading from October 1918 onwards and had claimed the lives of several people.

The First World War gave the Mizos the opportunity to interact with other races from different parts of the world. This interaction seems to have given education in the Lushai Hills a boost as existing schools in Aizawl and Lunglei failed to satisfy the desire for higher education. They demanded the setting up of High School as they realised education was an important factor for securing jobs in the Government.

The money circulation in the Lushai Hills increased but it was not enough to transform the Lushai Hills into a monetized economy as the War returnees made up only 2.3% of the total male population (1911 Census). Some of them set up their own business while most of them went back to their respective villages. The interaction with the West also made them imitate Western fashion up to certain extent. They began to developed taste for Western products and music.

It was the Second World War that brought major transformation in the Lushai Hills. Since the Northeast India became a major theatre of War, it affected all the people in the Lushai Hills directly or indirectly. With over 3500 Mizos recruited in various branches in the Army and another 5000 employed as *Pasaltha V* Force, the Lushai Hills saw the beginning of cash economy.

Mizo women participated actively during the War weaving cloth and handkerchiefs. Women also found employment in Women Auxiliary Corps and were tasked mainly with clerical works.

During the War, The Mizos did a commendable job fighting the Japanese Army in the Northeast India and Burma. They formed the backbone of the 1<sup>st</sup> Assam Regiment and fought bravely at Jessami and Kharasom. The Lushai Scouts conducted various operations in Burma and suffered few casualties while inflicting heavy damages on the enemy. However, despite fighting the enemy with exemplary courage, many ex-servicemen felt dejected as the Mizos received only few medals and were always overlooked when it comes to awarding the highest military medals. The British were racist towards their colonial soldiers and the Mizo soldiers were also not immune from this racial discrimination.

The War brought improvements in infrastructure and communication. The construction of roads between Aizawl and Silchar in 1943 facilitated trade and increased the Mizo contacts with the plain people. The War saw the emergence of numerous contractors and suppliers. Pachhunga, Lalupa and Lalhmingthanga were some of the prominent businessmen who benefitted from the War by supplying food for the Army horses and donkeys and other various items.

During the War large number of British and Indian soldier were deployed in the Lushai Hills and the interaction between the soldiers and the locals popularised the use of English and Hindi languages. Education also received a boost as the Superintendent gave permission to construct High School in Aizawl.

The War brought changes in fashion in the Lushai Hills. Many women started wearing western cosmetics and dresses instead of their traditional attire. They began to develop taste for Western products.

The War also brought some negative elements in the society. The War had corrupted the minds of several people. Some of the women became impregnated by Indian soldiers while others were found running brothels to cater the needs of the soldiers. The deployment of large number of soldiers may have increased prostitution in the Lushai Hills. Some of the soldiers after returning from War became addicted to alcohol and remained unemployed.

Once the War was over, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills forced some of the incompetent chiefs to resign and replaced them with soldiers who had distinguished service during the War. The newly appointed Ex-servicemen were Jemedar Ralkapa (Mimbung village chief), Subedar Pakunga (Hriphaw and Goboicherra village chief), Subedar Khawma (Kawnpui village chief) and Jemedar Darthuama (Phuaibuang village chief).

The exposure to the outside world created a sense of unity and political consciousness amongst the Mizos. The employment generated by the War had created a new intelligentsia class consisting of traders, ex-servicemen and

intellectuals. This new class wanted to over throw the chiefs and replace it with a democratic form of government where everyone will have equal voice and representation. Some of the traders and ex-servicemen came up with new ideas and visions. They became important leaders in the political parties and began to play an instrumental role in shaping the politics of the Lushai Hills.