

## **A Summary of the Naga conflict with India and Burma.**

The Nagas are one of the Mongolian racial groups who migrated to their present land through mainland China. Some Naga historians explicitly wrote that when the Great Wall was built by Qin Shi Huang (Shihuang Di), he enslaved many people to build the wall. (Shihuang Di built the Great Wall in 221-207 BC). Since they could no longer endure enslavement by the king; many people, including those who became Kachin, Chin, and Naga, fled from Kaifeng - the erstwhile capital of China - around 210 BC. These people dispersed to various directions. The Nagas took hundreds of years to reach their present land and have been living in this present land for more than thousand years.

In human history, the Nagas had never fallen into foreign domination, but have lived independently without outside interference. Each and every village was its own sovereign republic ruled by a chieftain and governed their land by themselves. The people never knew the reign of a king or dictator, and also had no contact with the outside world. However, in the nineteenth century, this situation changed when the British came to the Western part of Nagaland, now under India, with Indian mercenaries in an attempt to dominate Nagaland. Thus since 1832, the Nagas relentlessly fought against the British in defense of their sovereignty. The intermittent wars with the British continued up to 1879 when the last war was fought with the British intruders on 22 November 1879 at Khonoma Village. After that time, the British sought for peace with the Nagas, to which the Nagas presumptuously accepted. A verbal peace agreement was thus concluded on 27 March 1880 between the two peoples (British and Nagas). Indeed the British wanted to have a written peace agreement, but the Nagas blatantly rejected it. The Nagas viewed it as a trap to have the Nagas surrender their sovereignty to the British suzerainty. This, the British clearly recorded that they had no treaty or agreement with anyone of the Naga communities.

As a written peace agreement was rejected by the Nagas, the British asked to be allowed to have a military base in the Naga Hills. The Nagas agreed and allowed the British to have a military base provided they did not interfere in Naga national affairs. The British took advantage of this and used it to begin their administration in Naga Hills. Consequently, one-fourth of Nagaland was administered by the British for more than sixty years. However, three-fourth remained as un-administered areas or Free Nagas till the British left the Indian sub-continent in 1947.

During the World War II, the Indians and Burmese people struggled to retain their independence from the British colonial rule. However, the Nagas, who had also fallen under the British colonial rule, never took part in Indian or Burmese independent movements. The Nagas did not concede to join either the emergence India or the Union of Burma. Instead, the

Nagas firmly stood to be a separate nation following the memorandum submitted to the British Statutory Commission on 10 January 1929, which stated: "leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient time". The memorandum was submitted by the Naga Club which was founded in October 1918. The Naga Club was later renamed as the Naga National Council (NNC) on 2 February 1946. By the formation of the NNC, all Naga villages were brought into a nation before India and Burma became independent nations. Henceforth, the Nagas stood, solidly and firmly, as an independent nation under the banner of the Naga National Council.

Since its formation, the NNC wrote consecutive memorandums to the British Government stating, in no uncertain terms, that "the future of Nagas should not be bound by the arbitrary decision of the British Government, and any recommendation without consultation will not be accepted (dated 9 April 1946). The Naga nation should not be thrown into the sea of Indian politics, but leave us alone when the British finally withdraw from Indian sub-continent (dated 27 March 1947)". Moreover, Naga leaders, led by A.Z. Phizo, clearly intimated the Naga national stand to both the Indian and Burma leaders before they become independent by stating that the Nagas will not join either India or the Union of Burma, but will remain independent as in ancient times.

After the Naga national stand was clearly made known to the British Government, as well as to the India and Burma leaders, the Naga National Council declared the age-old Naga independence to the outside world on 14 August 1947 before India and Burma were granted independence. The declaration was cabled to the UNO and Government of the United Kingdom, and the British India Government in particular. The declaration was done by the NNC on behalf of all Nagas, that is, the Nagas now under Burma and India. This was again reaffirmed by the Naga people when the NNC conducted a National Plebiscite on 16 May 1951. In this, 99.9% of Naga people voted to remain independent as in ancient time, and an immutable mandate was given to the NNC to speak for the future of Nagaland.

However, India and Burma, who were then recently freed from British colonial bondage, ignored and disregarded the will of Naga people. The Indian Government arrogantly sent her armed forces to Nagaland in October 1954 and started an undeclared war with the Nagas. The Nagas had no choice but to defend their sovereignty at all costs with whatever means of arms they possessed. This situation was described by B.M. Mulik, Personal Secretary of Mr. Nehru, Indian Prime Minister, in that he said; "Indian Army troops were sent to Nagaland, Tuensang areas in October 1954 and started the war with the Nagas. (Quote from B.M. Mulik's book My Years with Nehru Page 308).

After the war started, the Nagas of South-west and the so-called "Free Nagas" in the North-east formed the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) on 22nd March 1956 under

the aegis of the Naga National Council. The FGN was formed following the Yehzabo (Constitution) of Nagaland which was written based on the Naga traditional democracy and formally ratified and approved by the Naga National Council in January 1956.

The Burmese Government also sent her armed forces into the Naga Hills after 1954, claiming Eastern Nagaland as an integral part of Burma. In fact, the Nagas had been living as a free people and left by the British as free people in un-administered areas. The Nagas had no knowledge of the Panglong Agreement and did not concede to join the Union of Burma at no point of time. But in March 1953, U Nu - Prime Minister of Burma and Mr. Nehru -Prime Minister of India decided to divide Nagaland by themselves according to the cursory boundary drawn by the British. The boundary, which was known as McMahan Line, was drawn in 1914 without the knowledge of the Naga people. Dividing Nagaland by India and Burma without the knowledge of Naga people was the starting point of war with the Nagas by India and Burma. The Nagas did not go to Mandalay or Delhi to fight against them. But the armed forces of both India and Burma invaded the Nagaland in an attempt to dominate and colonize the Nagas. Consequently, the Nagas had no choice but to defend themselves at all costs.

The resistance war remains unsolved till date because both India and Burma refuse to address the root causes of the conflict.

In the Western part of Nagaland (under India), fierce fighting with Indian Army has continued since 1954. While in Eastern Nagaland (under Burma), the fierce fighting has continued since the formation of the Eastern Naga Revolutionary Council (ENRC) on 7 April 1965. Many villages were burned down to ashes by Burma Army with many people killed. Women and girls were molested and raped. However, as Eastern Nagaland was an isolated and landlocked area, all these atrocities committed by Burma Army were unreported and unheard by the world communities. Up until the present time, no reporter or media has penetrated to this landlocked and isolated area.

As the Nagas had never fallen under foreign domination, they wanted to remain as an independent and free people without any interference by foreigners in their national affairs, they declared their age-old independence to the outside world at the right time before India and Burma become independent nations. Indeed, the Nagas had such strong faith in the Indian and Burmese freedom fighters as they bitterly fought against British colonialism. The Nagas never thought that they would try to colonize Naga nation after they had freed themselves from the colonial bondage.

But now, it is a history that they (India & Burma) used the same colonialism, that they bitterly fought against it in the past, to colonize Nagaland by force of arms. If they would

honor and accept the will of Naga people, the Nagas would have fought no war with them and live with them as good neighbors.

Since the Nagas had never fallen historically under either the Indian or Burmese kingdoms, and have no common history, India and Burma have no right to claim an inch of Nagaland as an integral part of their countries. Because an inch of Nagaland never belonged to India or the Burma Kingdom in the history. But after they created the problem with the Nagas, they attempted to justify their claim on Nagaland stating that they inherited Nagaland from the British colonial rule, and hence, they call the sovereign Nagas as underground, hostiles, rebels, insurgent and so on and so forth to bluff the world. But their claim is completely disapproved by the following historical facts:

1. The British administered only one-fourth of Nagaland and left three-fourth as free Nagas and un-administered areas. The territories which they did not belong or control were not for the British to give or hand it over to other nations. Even the Naga people, within the territory which British did administer, stated time and again since 1929 that the Nagas must be left alone when the British withdraw from her colonial countries as stated above. More than enough memorandums in this regard were submitted to the British Government at the right time before colonial countries were set free. In the light of all these memorandums, the British had no right to hand Nagaland over to other countries without the consent of Naga people.
2. On 14 August 1941, the British and American Governments signed the Atlantic Charter. In this document, it was most importantly stated that no people and territory shall be handed over to other nations without the people's consent. According to this Charter, the British had no right at all to hand Nagaland over to other nations without the knowledge and consent of the Naga people.
3. Both India and Burma had no right to justify their claims for the Nagaland with the present cursory boundary drawn by the British in 1914, which was done without the knowledge of Naga people. The Nagas, at no point of time, recognized this boundary because the British had no right to draw a boundary line in the heart of Naga country. The Nagas cannot have a boundary in between our homes and farms, and in between our hearth and bedroom. Because of this boundary, our homes in India, and our farms are in Burma. Our cattle are roaming in India and Burma. Longwa village Ahng (Chieftain) use to say; "I sleep in Burma and eat in India". Because the boundary crosses in between his bedroom and kitchen. No world people can have such boundary.
4. As mentioned above, the Nagas had no knowledge about the Panglong agreement of February 12, 1947, which was signed by four free Nations, Shan, Kachin, Chin, and Burma

in the interest of forming a Union, known as the Union of Burma. But the Nagas at no point of time agreed to join the Burma Union. The Burma has thus not right to claim the Eastern Nagaland as the territory of Burma. Though the Panglong Agreement was signed in good faith by four nations to form a Union, but the Burman leaders had never implemented the Agreement in the past more than sixty years, instead they tore it and threw it away, when Gen. Newin declared coup d'état on 2nd March 1962 and dissolved the Constitution of Burma Union. Since then the Union of Burma did not exist legally, and hence the Kachins, Chins, and Shans, the signatory nations have the right to claim their independence. If the signatory nations have the right to claim their independence, the Nagas, who did not involve in the agreement, have more legal right to remain as an independent nation.

These historical facts mentioned above, given clearance that India and Burma have no right to claim Nagaland as the integral parts of their countries by conquest or consent. The war, therefore, did not start from the Nagas to demand independent from them; but started when the armed forces of these two countries invaded Nagaland in an attempt to colonize Nagaland. The conflict is, therefore, a case of aggression and war, but not the internal affairs of India and Burma. The Nagas' birthright is to be as a people and a nation among the nations of the world. And our goal is to achieve recognition of Naga sovereignty by the world. This, our national stand doesn't go against India or Burma if they do regard and respect the right of our nation. In fact, the Nagas have no belligerent attitude towards either of them. The Nagas are not the enemy of India or Burma but want to be a good neighbor to them. And the Nagas want to solve the conflict through peaceful and amicable means. Because the Nagas firmly believe that there is no problem in the world which cannot be solved through peaceful means especially in this present civilized world.

July 5, 2017.

W. Shapwon,  
Joint Secretary. NNC.