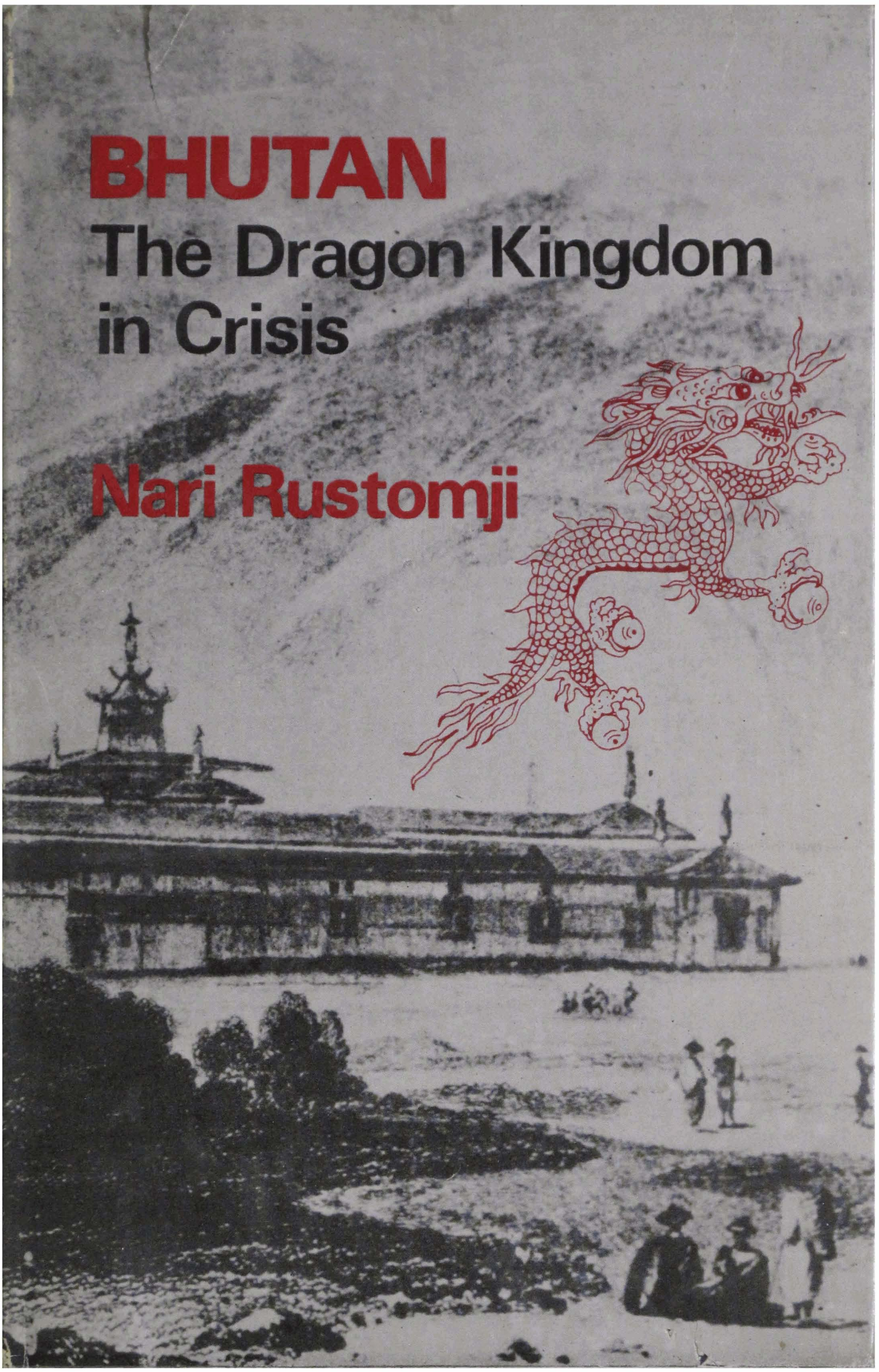
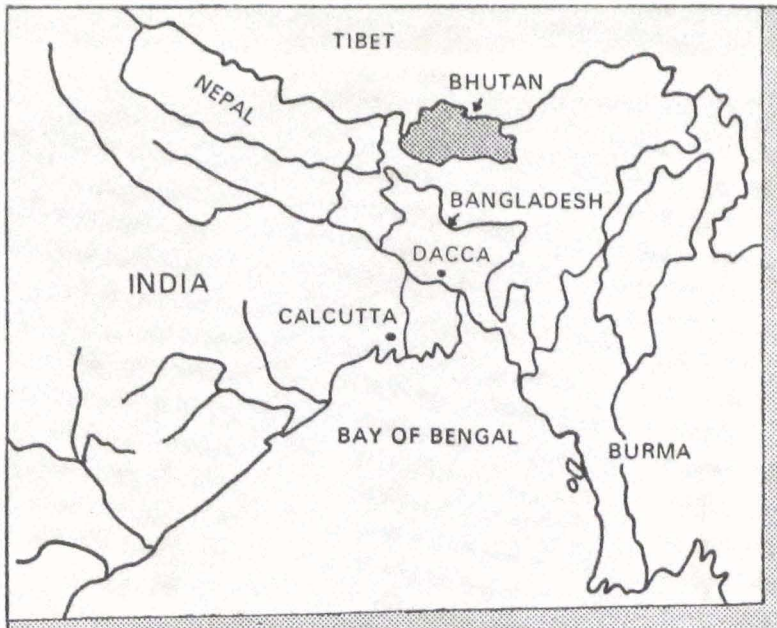
# BHUTAN

## The Dragon Kingdom in Crisis

Nari Rustomji






0 10 20 30 40 Miles

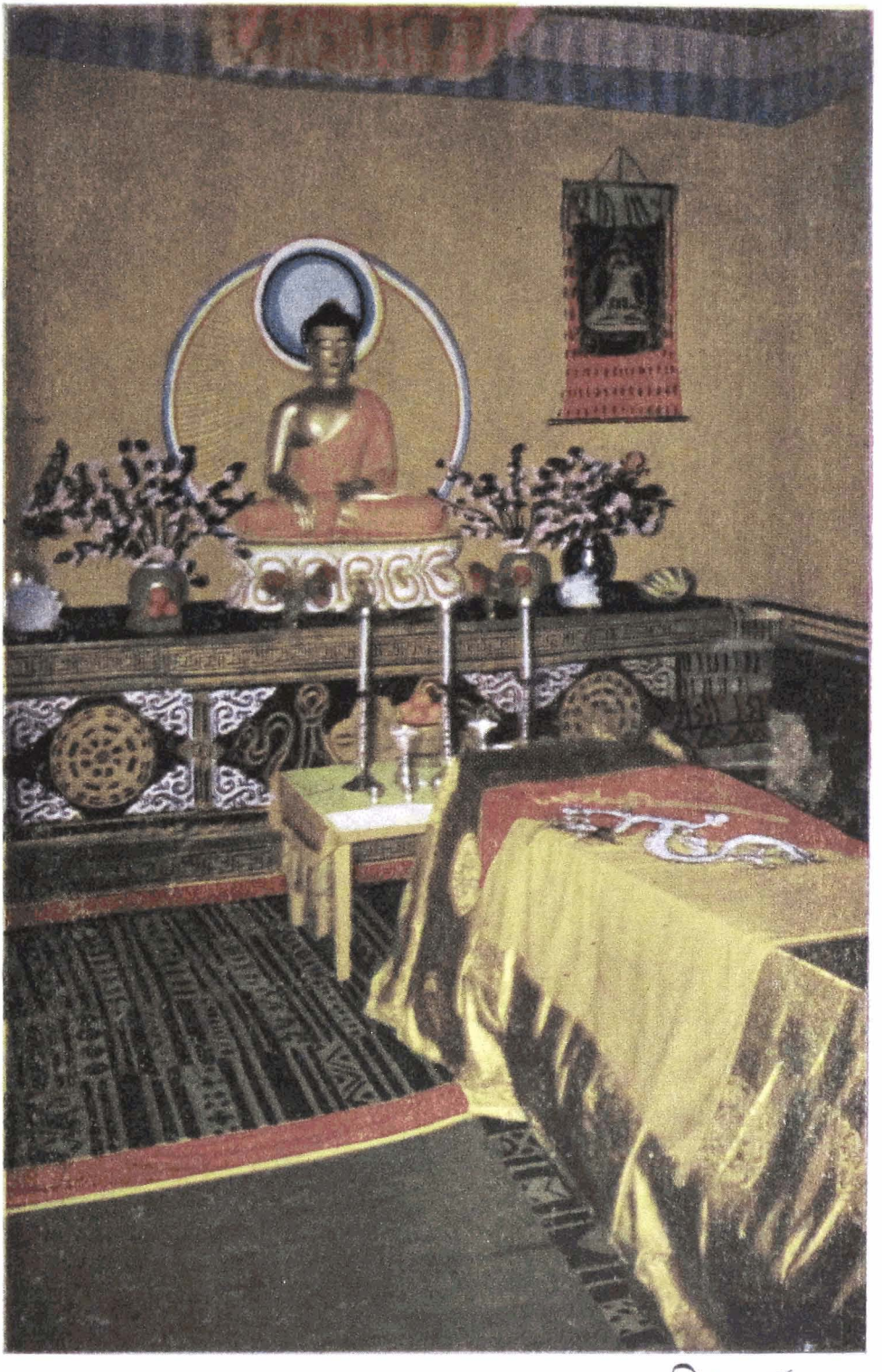
0 10 20 30 40 Km

N

T I B E T

LINGSHI
GASA
KUAKANGRI (24,740)
THUNKAR
CHOMO LHARI (23,997)
BUMTHANG
PUNAKHA
BYAKAR
LHUNTSI
TAWANG
CHUMBI
YATUNG
THIMPHU
Pele La
TONGSA
PARO
WANGDU PHODRANG
YANGTSE
HA
SHEMGONG
TASHIGANG
CHAPCHA
MONGAR
Sankosh River
Tongsa River
Ridak River
CHHUKHA
DONGSA
Torsa River
DEOTHANG
SAMCHI
SARBHANG
PHUNTSHOLING
GELEKPHU
Manas River
SAMDRUPOONGHAR

I N D I A



ཨི། །རྣམ་རྒྱས་ལ་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆེའོ།

Bier of Jigmie Dorji at Namseyling chapel

# BHUTAN

## The Dragon Kingdom in Crisis

NARI RUSTOMJI


DELHI
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD NEW YORK

*Oxford University Press*
OXFORD LONDON GLASGOW
NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON
IBADAN NAIROBI DAR ES SALAAM LUSAKA CAPE TOWN
KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE JAKARTA HONG KONG TOKYO
DELHI BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI



Printed in India by P. K. Ghosh
at Eastend Printers, 3 Dr Suresh Sarkar Road, Calcutta 700 014
and published by R. Dayal, Oxford University Press,
2/11 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002

To the memory of

JIGMIE PALDEN DORJI

an unfailing friend

# *Contents*

# *Plates*

Bier of Jigmie Dorji at Namseyling chapel (*Frontispiece*)

*Between pages 54 and 55*

1 Shabdrung Rimpoche (from mural)
2 Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, the first King of Bhutan, and eldest son Jigme Wangchuk (second from left), *c.*1920
3 Raja Tobgay Dorji, Prime Minister, with Bhutanese delegates after signing of the Indo-Bhutan Treaty, 1949 (Jigmie, his son, standing on extreme right)
4 Raja Ugyen Dorji, Bhutan Agent for Foreign Affairs, *c.*1906
5 Jigmie Palden Dorji, Ha Trungpa (Administrator of Ha), 1928
6 The Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot) and Rani Chuni Dorji at Namseyling, 1963
7 King Jigme Dorji, with the Queen, Rani Chuni and author (Dechencholing, 1955)
8 Princess Choki (centre), with Queen Mother (right), Jigmie Dorji and other family members (Bumthang, 1955)
9 Jigmie Dorji (centre), with brothers Ugyen Rimpoche (right) and Lhendup Dorji
10–11 *Sigpa Chedo* ceremony (1963) for the good fortune of Bhutan and the royal house. Symbolic images: of (10) the King and Je Khenpo and (11) the Queen Mother and Crown Prince
12 Homage to Jigmie Dorji as he is taken from Phuntsholing to Thimphu
13 The assassin under arrest
14 Brigadier Namgyal, Chief of the Army Staff, being led to trial
15 Brigadier Namgyal under escort after receiving sentence of death
16 Lhendup Dorji proceeding to Dechencholing to seek audience of the King
17 Reception party for the King at Calcutta (caricature)
18 King Jigme Dorji, with sisters Princess Choki (right) and Princess Deki
19 Shabdrung Rimpoche, reincarnate Lama, in author's home (Shillong, January 1963)
20 Lhendup Dorji
21 Tashi Dorji, sister of the Queen, *c.*1955
22 Installation of Crown Prince, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, as Penlop (Governor) of Tongsa

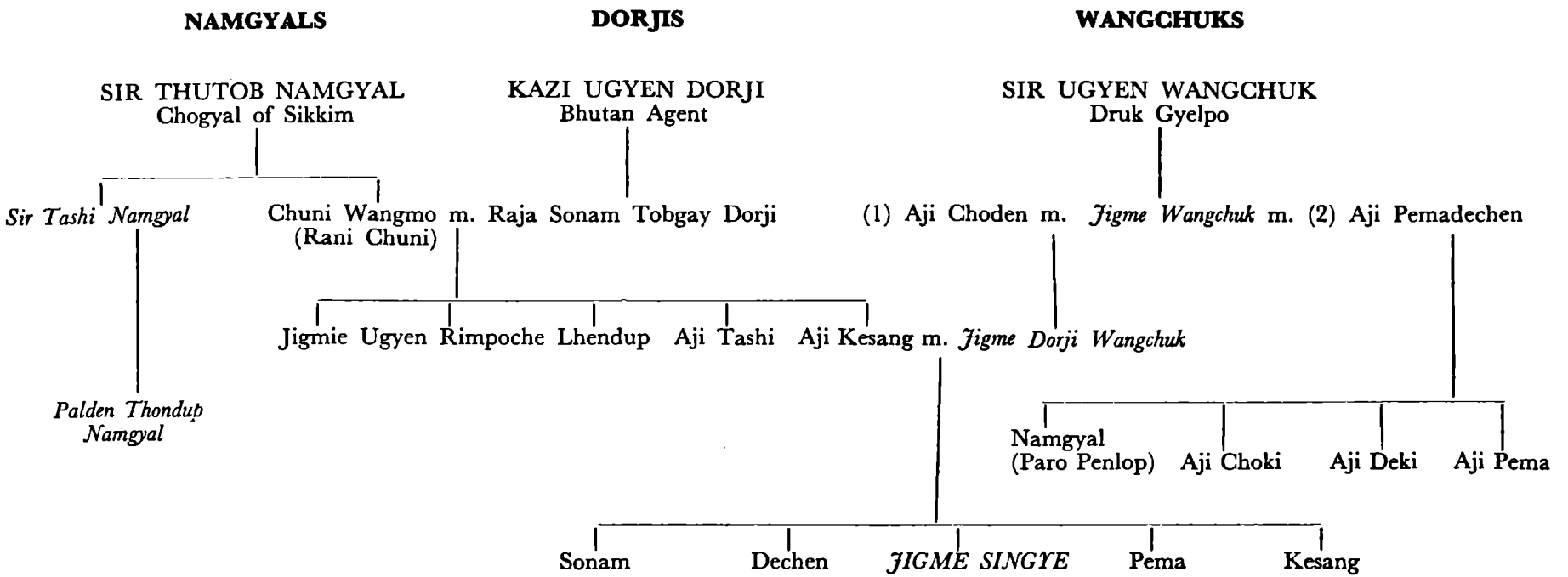
# *Note*

There is no standardized spelling for Bhutanese words in English and the reader will therefore find variations of spelling of the same word in different parts of the book. The author has adopted, in the main body of the text, the generally accepted spelling. In letters and quotations of others, however, he has retained the spelling of the original writer, even though it may not necessarily be the generally accepted form.

In the writing of this book, the author has not consulted official records. The accounts of events he has given along with the analytical comments are purely his own and do not reflect the policies and views either of the Government of India or of the Government of Bhutan.

The author's special thanks are due to Rani Chuni and Desmond Doig for the use of their photographs.

# GENEALOGICAL CHART




*Note—The chart is not exhaustive and is intended to illustrate only the main relationships in the record of events related.*

# *Prologue*

The life of a man is like lightning in the sky.

'The Order of Doctrinal Practice' (*chos-spyod-kyi rim-pa thar-lam rab-gsal*), fol. 7a–b

'I'm afraid I have some bad news for you, Nari.' It was the gentle voice of Her Excellency, Padmaja Naidu, Governor of West Bengal, on the telephone and the time was nine o'clock at night. 'Somebody shot Jigmie about half an hour ago in Phuntsholing. I've just had a telephone call to send doctors and nurses by plane. We are doing everything possible, but I felt I must inform you at once, as you both have always been so close.'

We were having dinner as usual, my mother, my wife and myself, at our flat in Calcutta when the call came through. Just three hours earlier Bhutan's Prime Minister, Jigmie Dorji, had rung me from Phuntsholing on the Bhutan–India border. The King was expected to be returning in a day or two from Switzerland. Jigmie had proceeded ahead to welcome His Majesty at Bhutan's capital, Thimphu, while I had remained behind to receive him at Calcutta airport and arrange for his onward flight by chartered plane to Bhutan. Jigmie was insistent that the minutest details should be checked to ensure the King's comfort during his brief stop-over in Calcutta. There was one particular cook who knew *exactly* how His Majesty liked his food prepared. I must search him out and make certain he was in attendance on the King's arrival. 'Now look, Uncle, you are responsible. Look after boss nicely and don't you let me down. See you soon—and if you can't be good, for God's sake be careful! Good-bye for now.'

At a quarter past ten, the telephone rang again. 'I'm sorry, Nari, I've just received another call. It's difficult to believe, but I'm afraid there's nothing we can do—it's all over.'

Nearly fourteen years have passed since that awful night of 5 April, 1964. It was not many years ago that I wrote a book around and about my work in the Himalayan hills.[1] I had

[1] *Enchanted Frontiers: Sikkim, Bhutan and India's North-eastern Borderlands* (Oxford University Press, 1971).

known Jigmie for over twenty years, and through him, I had come to learn much about Bhutan and her people. Of all this I had written, and written with enthusiasm and affection. With his death my story too came to a halt. By some strange process of empathy, my life seemed to have reached a temporary stop. It seemed inconceivable that anybody in the world could have had the heart to extinguish such a generous soul. I felt the same frustration as I had experienced a year or more earlier when the Chinese surged into the tribal areas of Assam. For the best years of my service, the years of my prime, I had devoted myself to my work among the hill people. Within the space of less than a week, the Chinese were pouring in on all fronts, and it seemed that all our labours had been in vain. Time has shown that I was wrong. The foundations we had laid were good, and, soon after the initial shock, the tribal people recovered faith. And so it was with Bhutan too. With Jigmie's death, the very name of Bhutan turned sour for me and I could not bear to write of events that recalled such heavy pain. It was his mother, Rani Chuni, who was the spur and insisted I should continue my story from where I had left off.

When I was a boy at school, my Headmaster, Humphrey Grose-Hodge, a distinguished classical scholar, brought out a special edition of one of Cicero's more lurid orations, entitling it *Murder at Larinum*. The object of the exercise was to demonstrate to his pupils that the study of Latin was not after all such a dreary chore and that fact was often stranger than fiction. The circumstances attending the Bhutan tragedy provide a striking parallel. Here too are to be found, in flesh and fact, all the ingredients of fiction—intrigue, surprise, suspense, passion, revenge. The difference lies in the conclusion, for the Bhutan drama ends not with a neat resolution of the tangled complications of the plot, but in the uncertainty of an unanswered question mark. I do not know whether the whole truth behind my dear friend's tragic death will ever be brought to light. The pages that follow may provide a clue or two for the researcher of the future, with the advantage of more objective and dispassionate study and the perspective of distance, to arrive at a balanced judgement.

# 1

# *Government: Spiritual and Temporal*

> The form of Government is two-fold, spiritual and temporal. The spiritual laws resemble a silken knot, easy and light at first, but gradually becoming tighter and tighter. The temporal or monarchical laws resemble a yoke of gold, growing heavier and heavier.
>
> 'The Code of Rules and Regulations of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal'

Until the visit to Bhutan of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi in 1958, Druk-yul, or the Dragon-Kingdom, as the Bhutanese call their country, had never come very much before the public eye. Apart from occasional reports of British political missions, mostly unavailable to the public and long out of print, there was little source-material for the general reader, who had only the barest idea of the whereabouts of the country and the politics of its people. There has however been a marked increase of interest in Bhutan during the last decade and a half, and particularly since her admission in 1971 to the U.N.O. With about a million inhabitants and a basically primitive agricultural economy, Bhutan's strategic position as a buffer between China and India gives her an importance out of all proportion to her population and resources.

The Supreme Head of Bhutan, until the early years of the present century, was the Shabdrung,[1] more popularly known as the Dharma Raja (the 'King who rules according to the Divine Law'), a lama who succeeded by process of reincarnation much in the manner of the Dalai Lama in Tibet. It was as recently as in 1907 that the first hereditary ruler of the country

[1] Literally, 'at whose feet one submits oneself'.

was installed and designated as the Druk Gyelpo, or Dragon King.

The name Bhutan seems derived from the compound, Bhot-ente, the 'ente' (i.e. borderland) of *Bhot*, by which term Tibet was known in former times. The Bhutanese however know their country as Druk-yul, the land (*yul*) of the Thunder-Dragon (*druk*). The country's association with the Dragon calls for a brief excursion into the evolution of the early sects of Buddhism in Tibet and its adjoining territories. It was the Indian saint Padma Sambhava (the 'Lotus-born'), known in Tibet as Guru Rimpoche ('Precious Teacher'), who was primarily responsible for the introduction of Buddhism into Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet in the eighth century, and one of the chief emblems of his power was the *vajrah*, the thunderbolt of the god Indra (in Tibetan, *vajrah* emerges as *dorji*). Padma Sambhava had, however, to contend with the guardians of the indigenous religion of the region known as Bon, with its heavy amalgam of superstition and demonolatry, and he found it necessary to make concessions to popular taste, in the shape of magical rites and ritual, to render his gospel more palatable. The sect of Buddhism that was born as a result of his ministrations came to be known as the Nyingmapa sect (*Nyingma* signifying 'ancient'), as this was the oldest of the Buddhist sects to take root in Tibet. With the increasing interflow of religious teachers between Tibet and India, other sects began also to emerge, including more especially the Kagyupa sect founded in the eleventh century by Marpa, renowned as the 'Great Translator'. Marpa, a Tibetan, had studied the ancient Buddhist texts in Pali under the Indian teacher, Naropa, who had in turn sat at the feet of the Bengali sage, Tilopa. The term Kagyupa signifies that the sect represents a school of 'oral (*ka*) tradition', in which the secret, mystical teachings are passed on from teacher to pupil by word of mouth Both the Nyingmapa and Kagyupa sects are known as the Red sects for the reason that their followers wear red caps, as distinguished from the Gelukpas (the 'virtuous' school), a later reformist sect, whose adherents wear yellow caps and are hence called the Yellow sect. It was the great missionary, Tsongkapa (the 'man from onion-land', the Amdo province bordering north-western China) who, towards the close of the fourteenth century, led

the reformation to stamp out the spiritual evils that were tarnishing the pristine purity of the Buddhist faith and founded the Yellow sect.

The Drukpa sect (*druk* signifying the 'dragon whose roar is as thunder') was an offshoot of the Kagyupa sect, and it is from this sect that Bhutan derives her original name of Druk-yul. Legend has it that when, in the twelfth century, the founder of the Drukpa sect, Tsangpa Gyalrey, was preaching to his disciples at Namkhiphu, some twenty miles west of Lhasa, they heard suddenly the sound of thunder in the winter sky. They took this to be a good omen and it was decided to found a monastery at the spot at which the prayer meeting was being held. The monastery was named Nam Drukgar ('thunder in the winter sky'), and the new sect the Drukpa, or Thunder-Dragon sect. Under pressure of the reformist Gelukpa sect, some of the older sects found themselves forced out of Tibet and sought fresh pastures for evangelical work outside their own country. The Drukpas, who had proceeded to Bhutan, were so successful in their missionary enterprise that the country of their adoption was soon established as the main stronghold of the Drukpa sect and came as a result to be named Druk-yul. The association of the Drukpa sect with Bhutan is yet further evidenced in the picturesque tradition that the tower-like pillars supporting the great porch of the second Drukpa monastery, founded at Ralung in southern Tibet, had been miraculously flown to Ralung from the 'south-east', that is from Bhutan. It is significant again that the royal seal of Bhutan depicts two crossed thunderbolts, flanked on either side by a thunder-dragon. The thunderbolt is, in Buddhist lore, the symbol of 'wisdom that is pure as diamond' while the dragon is included as the promulgator of absolute truth, resounding in thunder throughout the heavens for the whole world to hear and take heed.

If any single person could be regarded as the founder of Bhutan, it was undoubtedly Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, who made his appearance in Bhutan from Tibet some time during the course of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. A lama of the Drukpa sect, he was determined to establish the order on a permanent basis in the country of his adoption and quickly set about breaking down all opposition, eliminating all

rivals, and setting himself up as the undisputed Head of State. Although his main object was to enforce religious discipline, he was a person of multifarious interests and there was no field touching the administration in which he did not make his contribution. Rules of conduct were prescribed for all officers, religious and secular, and strict regulations laid down for judicial and revenue administration. It was Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal who was responsible for founding the more important of the monasteries and fortresses of Bhutan and dividing the country into administrative units, each under a local governor but owing allegiance to the central authority.

After his death, his successive reincarnations continued to exercise supreme religious authority, the secular administration being entrusted to their nominee, known as the Deb Raja (the 'King who dispenses bounty'), who was appointed on the recommendation of a Council of State. The administrative units were placed under officers of various ranks, depending on their size and importance. The most important of these units were the Provinces of Tongsa and Dagana in central Bhutan and Paro in western Bhutan, each under the rule of a Penlop (Governor). All major decisions were taken by the Shabdrung on the recommendation of the Council of State consisting of the Deb Raja, Penlops and other high-ranking religious and secular officers. The Penlops, however, dominated the proceedings of the Council, and even the Deb Raja, though theoretically the nominee of the Shabdrung, was in fact generally the creature of one or other of the senior Penlops, whoever happened to be the most powerful at the time. And owing as he did his office to the support of the Penlop, the Deb Raja functioned virtually as the Penlop's mouthpiece.

With an area of nearly 20,000 square miles, Bhutan is flanked on the north by Tibet, on the south by Bengal and Assam, on the east by Arunachal Pradesh and on the west by Sikkim. The economy is agricultural, the main crops being rice, wheat, maize and millet. The country is rich in forests, but the absence of good communications has hitherto come in the way of their effective exploitation. The forests of teak and *sal* along the southern foot-hills are within easy reach of rail-heads in India, from which the timber can be despatched to a ready market. The larger proportion of Bhutan's forests, however, has

hitherto been practically inaccessible, consisting as it does of conifers extending over mountain ranges rising to a height of 12,000 feet and more. It is not generally known that it is only within the last fifteen years that wheeled traffic has been introduced in the Bhutan hills.

While there is evidence of limestone, gypsum and other valuable mineral deposits in Bhutan that will provide raw material for the setting up of industries in the future, it is in the field of horticulture that the most significant advances have been made in recent years. The Bhutan apple has already started finding favour in India, and the climate is ideally suited for the cultivation of peaches, plums and apricots. With encouragement, guidance and assistance in procuring good foundation stock, the Bhutanese farmer has before him a very bright future as a prosperous market gardener.

Bhutan's greatest wealth, however, lies in her potential for the development of hydro-electric power. While there is at present little demand for power within Bhutan itself on account of the absence of large-scale industries, there is an unlimited demand from the power-starved industries of West Bengal and Bangladesh. And the harnessing of Bhutan's water-resources for the sale of power to her neighbours may well prove to be Bhutan's major source of revenue in the years to come.

The Bhutanese are mainly of Tibetan stock, save for the settlers in southern Bhutan who have immigrated during the course of the last century from Nepal and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. These Nepalese immigrants now constitute over a quarter of the population, and there are strict restrictions against their settling north of a specified middle line running from east to west across the entire country. The Bhutanese have seen how, in neighbouring Sikkim, the original inhabitants have been gradually outnumbered by Nepalese immigrants, and are determined to stop the process in their own country before it assumes unmanageable proportions. The Nepalese are a polygamous race and a household of three or four wives and a dozen to fifteen children is not an uncommon phenomenon. The Bhutanese have therefore just reason for apprehension that, unless restrictions are set on further settlement, the Nepalese will in course of time emerge, as in Sikkim, as the majority community and seek to exert political and

cultural dominance over their erstwhile hosts.

It was the present King's father, the late Jigme Dorji Wangchuk,[1] who established in 1953 the first Tsongdu (Assembly) in the country. The Tsongdu consists both of elected representatives and of nominees of the King and has been granted complete freedom of discussion. The King has the power to veto legislation passed by the Assembly, but has never yet found its exercise necessary. The proceedings are conducted in Dzongkha, which is the official language of Bhutan and has close affinities with Tibetan.

Bhutan's first contact with the British in India was in 1772, when she sought to intervene in issues affecting the succession to the throne in the Indian State of Cooch-Behar on her southern border. Cooch-Behar resented Bhutan's posture of overlordship and appealed for assistance to India's Governor-General, Warren Hastings, who promptly despatched troops to liberate Cooch-Behar from Bhutanese aggression. The Bhutanese thereupon sought the good offices of the Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama's counterpart in Shigatse, to intervene with the British on their behalf. The Panchen Lama despatched a charming letter to Warren Hastings pleading the cause of the ignorant Bhutanese 'who know not what they do' and requesting that their folly be condoned. This was the opportunity Hastings had been eagerly watching for, and he lost no time deputing his envoy, the able and talented George Bogle, to proceed to Shigatse through Bhutan with a view to exploring the possibilities of opening up trade communications with Tibet and beyond.

The history of Bhutan for the succeeding hundred years follows an almost invariable pattern. There are eighteen *duars*, or entrances, from the Bhutan hills to the plains of Bengal and Assam. It had been the practice of the Bhutanese from time immemorial to raid the plains of India through these *duars* and kidnap innocent villagers for sale in Bhutan as slaves. Successive missions were dispatched by the British in an endeavour to arrive at a settlement with the Bhutanese, but to no purpose. It was not until the conclusion of a full-scale war with the Bhutanese in 1865, resulting in their defeat and the consequent

[1] The late Prime Minister made it a point to spell his own name as Jigm*ie* so as to avoid the possibility of any confusion with the name of the King (Jigm*e*).

annexation of the *duars* by the British, that these annual depredations were eventually put an end to.

Although Tibet has been popularly dubbed as the 'forbidden land', the number of foreigners who had, until recently, been allowed access to Bhutan was even less than in the case of Tibet. While the British were able to establish a mission in Lhasa as early as in the 1930s, they were constrained to conduct their relations with Bhutan through a Political Officer resident at Gangtok in Sikkim, and it was not until 1968, two centuries after their first official contact with the British raj, that the Bhutanese were prepared to agree to a representative of the Indian Government being stationed at their capital in Thimphu. The Bhutanese have, throughout their history, been suspicious of foreigners and foreign influence. A predominantly religious State, they have feared the influx of foreign ideas and the impact these might have on their traditional religious practices and social usages. Even in the matter of marriage alliances, we do not find in Bhutan the tendency that had been prevalent in Sikkim for upper-class families to seek for their children brides and bridegrooms from the aristocracy of Tibet.

The ruling dynasty of Bhutan, the House of Wangchuk, dates from 1907, when the present King's great-grandfather, Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, who was then Governor of the Province of Tongsa in central Bhutan (Tongsa Penlop), was installed as the first hereditary ruler. The Wangchuks represent the more conservative and traditional element of Bhutanese society. The late King, like his father and grandfather, received his education in Bhutan at the hands of Bhutanese teachers, and he rarely left his country. He was essentially a country gentleman, with little love for the pace and complications of city life. Where there was business to be transacted outside the country, the Wangchuks found it convenient to entrust it to their accredited Agent, who was stationed in the important trade *entrepôt* of Kalimpong in north Bengal. Kazi[1] Ugyen Dorji, grandfather of my friend Jigmie, was the first Bhutan Agent to set up his headquarters in Kalimpong. A resourceful officer with an abundance of initiative, he quickly succeeded in establishing friendly and useful contacts with the British authorities in

[1] Kazi: a title more generally associated with the hereditary landed gentry of Sikkim.

Gangtok and the Tibetan hierarchy in Lhasa. Both he and his son, Raja Tobgay Dorji, played a significant role in drawing Bhutan out of her traditional isolation and conditioning her to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing era.

With the death of Raja Tobgay in 1953, Jigmie succeeded his father as Bhutan Agent at Kalimpong. He functioned, in addition, as Trungpa (Administrator) of Ha in Western Bhutan, the seat of the extensive family estates of the Dorji house. He had been appointed Ha Trungpa and granted the official red shawl of this office by King Jigme Wangchuk, son of Sir Ugyen, the founder of the Wangchuk dynasty. Jigmie was only nine years old at the time of his appointment as Trungpa, and the ceremony took place at Punakha, Bhutan's winter capital, on the very same day that Jigme Wangchuk was crowned King of Bhutan.

Jigmie was schooled in India and had opportunities of meeting a wide variety of people, as Kalimpong was in those days a centre of attraction for foreigners interested in political, ethnical, botanical and other branches of Himalayan research. He grew, as a consequence, increasingly cosmopolitan in outlook and was free from the narrower prejudices inherent in a more restricted upbringing. His vision of the Bhutan of the future was of a country unencumbered by the accumulated encrustation of the past, for he wanted it to develop and progress as a modern nation.

Jigmie was well aware that Bhutan could not continue indefinitely in the close isolation of former times. The countries around her were moving ahead in the development of communications and social services. Schools and hospitals were proliferating in the contiguous hill areas of India's North-East Frontier Agency (since re-designated as Arunachal Pradesh) on Bhutan's eastern border. On her western border, Sikkim had already launched, in 1952, a plan for economic development, with aid from the Indian Government. A network of road communications was being spread out in Sikkim to provide the infrastructure for the multiple educational and health projects that were springing up in the remotest regions of the country. There was not a month that some new project, whether bridge, hospital or power-station, was not being inaugurated by Sikkim's ruler, Chogyal Sir Tashi Namgyal, under the country's

Seven Year Plan. And all this could not go unobserved by the Bhutanese. Bhutanese traders were passing daily through Sikkim, driving their heavily-laden mules across the 14,000 foot Nathu La pass to Gangtok and then onward to Kalimpong. High-level Bhutanese, both officials and non-officials, were also aware of the extensive development programme under implementation in Sikkim and were beginning to realize the inevitability of change in their own country. Jigmie felt sure that there was danger in 'freezing' the *status quo*. It was becoming increasingly difficult to bar access to foreigners, and there would be unrest, external and internal, if Bhutan was not seen to be moving with the times. Bhutan also aspired to take her place as a member of the United Nations and it was imperative to this end that she should project to the world the image of a progressive country with concern for the welfare of her people.

Jigmie visited me often in Sikkim, where I was serving as Prime Minister from 1954 to 1959. He was convinced of the value of the development programme we had set into operation, but was aware also that there were powerful elements in Bhutan that would firmly resist any suggestion to change the old order. The old-timers in the civil service and the army would resent interference in traditional usages and not give their blessing to any move that might even remotely undermine their vested interests.

Jigmie was determined nevertheless to put an end to Bhutan's isolation and initiate the processes of change. And in this he enlisted my services for support and advice. To begin with, he sought the King's permission to invite me, in 1955, to the wedding of the King's half-sister, Princess Choki, with Jigmie's younger brother, Ugyen Rimpoche. The wedding was fixed to take place in the royal estates at Bumthang in central Bhutan, and, in the absence of motorable roads, it took us three weeks, by foot and horseback, to reach the scene of the celebrations. But the real purpose of Jigmie's invitation was that I might have an opportunity of meeting the King and letting him know first-hand of the work we were doing in Sikkim. Jigmie's was a lone voice in Bhutan and he needed moral support in his endeavours to bring Bhutan out of her isolation. The King and I had met some years before in Shillong, and, though his visit had been brief, we had taken a liking to each other. Jigmie was

hopeful that the renewal of our acquaintance might help in the removing of suspicions and apprehensions about Bhutan taking aid from India for the economic development of the country. In the event, we succeeded in obtaining the King's agreement not only to an extensive programme of road development but also to the sending of batches of Bhutanese students to educational institutions in India in preparation for specialized courses that would later equip them to serve their country as engineers, doctors and in other vital fields of administration.

I knew less about Bhutan then than I do now, and I did not sense the degree of apprehension that Jigmie's ideas were stirring among his people. And I sometimes wonder whether Jigmie was himself fully aware of the implications of his actions. The initiation of a development programme would result inevitably in an influx of outsiders. It would take several years for Bhutan to train up her own technical personnel, and there would be no alternative but to induct foreigners to give a start to the programme during the intervening period. The lamas in particular were apprehensive of the future. Bhutan had been founded by the Shabdrung as a religious State, and the lamas were, as a whole, respected more than the highest ranking civil officers. Even the King bowed low in respectful obeisance before the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot). Apart from the threat to religion, the lamas apprehended that their own influence and hold over the people would be undermined by the changes they saw looming ahead. A development programme would bring in its train a host of new forces. There would be a scramble for favours and contracts, and it would not be long before a class of *nouveaux riches* would arise all over the country, for whom the values of the old Bhutan would have little meaning or significance. The lamas would soon find themselves back-numbers, their authority and influence confined to the limits of their monastery walls. It is no wonder that they regarded Jigmie with suspicion, if not active distaste.

But apart from the threat to vested interests that Jigmie's policies seemed to herald, there was a feeling in some quarters that Jigmie and his way of life were not in tune with the time-honoured mores of the Bhutanese. The Dorji family, by virtue of their long residence in Kalimpong and intimate social contacts with the then predominantly European élite of the town,

had become anglicized to such a degree that they felt as much at home in a sophisticated western-style milieu as amongst their own people. Jigmie had married into the Tibetan nobility —the charming Tessla,[1] as accomplished in western modes as in the old-world courtesies of her motherland in Tibet. The marriage of Jigmie's younger brother, Ugyen Rimpoche, with the King's sister, Princess Choki, had not proved a success. Brought up in the busy and colourful trade-centre of Kalimpong, he found it difficult to adjust himself to the life of a country squire in the royal estates at Bumthang in the remote recesses of central Bhutan. After their separation, he married a Nepalese girl, Savitri, from an estate in Sikkim within a few hours reach of his hometown in Kalimpong. Jigmie's youngest brother, Lhendup, had married Glenda Wilkie, an Anglo-Burmese Calcuttan still in her teens. The fact that none of the brothers married in Bhutan gave rise to an impression that they did not entirely belong, that they had outgrown their Bhutanese shell. There were some who began to wonder where Jigmie's leadership might take the country. Roads, schools and hospitals were all very well, but was this to be at the cost of Bhutan losing her cultural identity? The Dorjis were undoubtedly an able and forward-looking family, but was there not the risk that their policy of modernization might erode, and ultimately bring to an end, Bhutan's ancient culture? For a traditionally conservative and religion-bound people, this was a genuine apprehension and they viewed Jigmie's well-intentioned endeavours to draw Bhutan out of her medieval shell with reserve and distrust.

Jigmie's genial nature attracted friendship, and he counted among his friends all breeds and varieties—Americans and Russians, Indians and Chinese, millionaires and jockeys, Sisters of Mercy and cabaret stars. It was his open and generous nature that was to an extent the cause of his tragic end. While he was friendly with Indians and the Indian Government, this was never at the cost of his country's vital interests. But his very closeness to India raised doubts in the minds of a people with the ingrained suspicions of the Bhutanese. The Bhutanese had closer racial and cultural affinities with Tibet, and yet Jigmie seemed to be going out of his way to draw them into the meshes

[1] Tessla, an abbreviation of Tseringyangzam.

of the Indian orbit. All the new roads he proposed to construct were being aligned to run southwards towards India from the main centres of Bhutan. Not a single road was planned to be constructed to the Tibetan border. Bhutanese students, again, were being sent to schools in India, at which they would learn English and Indian languages, whereas the springs of Bhutanese culture lay in Tibet.

It was well known that the British had in the past consistently encouraged Nepalese immigration into Sikkim, in the expectation that 'the influx of these hereditary enemies of Tibet would be their surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence'.[1] Could it be that the Indian Government was following the same policy as the predecessor Government and subtly utilizing Jigmie to draw Bhutan away from Tibetan and Chinese influence? Bhutan's relations with India were governed by a Treaty entered into shortly after the British withdrawal from India in 1947. This Treaty (signed in 1949) followed broadly the lines of Bhutan's Treaty of 1910 with the predecessor Government, which prescribed that Bhutan 'agreed to be guided by the advice of the British Government in regard to its external relations'. There were some elements in Bhutan that were not sure of the wisdom of Jigmie's seemingly unqualified friendship with the Indian authorities. Bhutan's neighbour, Sikkim, was being virtually administered by an Indian officer. There was an apprehension that Jigmie might not exercise sufficient firmness in resisting pressures to bring Bhutan more tightly under Indian control.

Jigmie was, of course, too astute to allow himself to be made anybody's tool. With the increase of Chinese pressure on Tibet, he saw that Bhutan had nothing to gain by aligning herself more closely with her northern neighbour. Better to maintain friendship with India than risk the heavy Chinese yoke. The flight of the Dalai Lama, with thousands of Tibetan refugees, was a clear pointer to the nature of the Chinese presence in Tibet. Jigmie felt it to be in Bhutan's interest that his King should reciprocate India's overtures of friendship. He was playing into nobody's hands, and his policies were based solely on considerations of Bhutan's survival. The Chinese had thrown out feelers to Bhutan more than once in their endeavours to

[1] See *Gazetteer of Sikkim* (Oriental Publishers, 1894), p. xxi.

bring Bhutan within the orbit of their influence. The Bhutanese owe it to Jigmie that he did not succumb to their enticements, but was firm in maintaining an independent stand for his country.

# 2

# *The Dragon King Enthroned*

---

> We now declare our allegiance to Sir Ugyen Wangchuk and his heirs with unchanging mind, and undertake to serve him and his heirs loyally and faithfully to the best of our ability. Should any one not abide by this contract by saying this and that, he shall altogether be turned out of our company.
>
> In witness thereto we affix our seals.

A major difficulty the British had experienced in their relations with Bhutan during the last century was in the ambiguity of the status and powers of the various dignitaries with whom they were required to deal. Between the Dharma Raja, the Deb Raja and the senior Penlops, there was constant shifting of responsibility and interminable delays in obtaining any decision that might be deemed to be authoritative.

Lord Curzon, as Viceroy, had set it as his fixed objective to bring Tibet within the political orbit of the Indian Empire. He viewed with grave concern the reports that reached him towards the latter part of 1900 that the Dalai Lama had sent an envoy to the Czar. The envoy in question was one Dorjieff, a Mongolian Buriat of Russian origin, who visited Russia occasionally and was suspected to be in the employ and close confidence of the Dalai Lama. It seemed on the face of it that the Dalai Lama was seeking to cultivate friendly relations with Russia, and Curzon was determined to take counter-measures to assert British authority. The unwillingness of the Tibetans to yield to British pressures in respect of boundary and other matters resulted eventually in the despatch to Lhasa in 1904 of the expedition under Colonel Younghusband to bring the Tibetans to heel.

Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, the Tongsa Penlop, had been helpful to the British in their efforts to enter into negotiations with the

Tibetan Government at Lhasa and had also tendered his whole-hearted cooperation to Colonel Younghusband during the course of the expedition itself. A shrewd diplomat and fearless warrior, he had, step by step, emerged as the most powerful of the various functionaries in Bhutan. His fortunes were further favoured by the circumstance that the Dharma and Deb Rajas had both died within the space of a single year and their offices were being discharged, on an *ad hoc* basis, by a lama of a rather retiring disposition, who occupied himself entirely with the spiritual affairs of the country.

For the British, anxious as they were that there should be a single authority with whom they could conduct relations, this was the obvious opportunity. Through their representative, Claude White, the Political Officer resident in Sikkim, they sedulously cultivated the Penlop, conferred upon him (in 1905) the title of K.C.I.E. at a solemn Durbar held at Bhutan's winter capital, Punakha, and finally gave their blessing to his installation in 1907 as the country's hereditary ruler.[1] The office of Dharma Raja was henceforward relegated to the background, increased prominence being accorded to the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot), who officiated as head of the monastic establishment. The Je Khenpo held office for only two to three years and was never therefore long enough in position to constitute a threat to the King's authority.

The other dignitary who had gained recognition from the British was Kazi Ugyen Dorji, to whom reference has already been made as the Bhutan Agent in Kalimpong. Curzon had been consistently seeking to open up communication with the Tibetan authorities, and took the opportunity of engaging the Kazi, who was accustomed to visiting Tibet for trade and other purposes, to write a letter to the Dalai Lama suggesting that a senior Tibetan official should be deputed to discuss frontier and trade questions with the British authorities. As there was no favourable response from Lhasa to this approach, Kazi Ugyen was next entrusted with a letter from the Viceroy himself, which he was to deliver personally to the Dalai Lama. This letter was also brought back from Lhasa with the seal intact, the Kazi reporting that the Dalai Lama had declined to reply on the grounds that the matter would require prior

[1] See Appendix I for document of the Oath of Allegiance.

consultation with his Ministers, lamas and, above all, the Chinese authorities. For services rendered in the promotion of good relations with the Tibetan and Bhutan authorities, the British conferred the titles of Rai Bahadur and Raja on Kazi Ugyen Dorji and, later, on his son, Sonam Tobgay Dorji, Jigmie's father.

While the King took direct responsibility for the internal government of the country, he left the handling of foreign affairs, which meant in effect relations with India, largely to his Agent in Kalimpong. The first incumbent of this office, Kazi Ugyen Dorji, functioned in a dual capacity. He was not only the Bhutan Agent, but also Administrator (Trungpa) of the district of Ha, in western Bhutan, and of considerable areas of the predominantly Nepalese-inhabited districts constituting Bhutan's southern frontier with India. He was later elevated to the rank of a first-class officer, with the designation of Deb Zimpon (Chief Minister). His son, Tobgay Dorji, was only seventeen at the time of his father's death, but he was nevertheless appointed Deb Zimpon at Bumthang by the King, Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, and inherited also his father's responsibilities as Bhutan Agent and administrator of the southern frontier districts. It is of some significance that on Raja Tobgay's death in 1952 his son Jigmie was not formally vested with all the insignia of his father's office. Protocol is strict in Bhutan and the rank of an officer is indicated, *inter alia*, by the style and colour of the official shawl conferred upon him by the King. Jigmie's father, Raja Tobgay, as an officer of the first rank, was entitled to sport the orange-coloured shawl worn by Penlops and dignitaries of the highest status. The shawl worn by Jigmie was the red shawl of senior officers of the second rank[1] and his official designation was the comparatively junior title of Ha Trungpa. Although, during his latter years, he was referred to as Lonchen (Prime Minister), his status, as indicated by his shawl and official designation, was no higher than that of any other officer of the second rank. Jigmie was himself modest by temperament, and I have heard it said that he himself requested the King not to invest him with any higher title, so that he could function on terms of greater informality with his fellow-officers.

[1] A senior officer entitled to wear a red shawl is designated in Bhutanese as *Drasho*.

It has to be remembered that the principal field of responsibility of the Dorjis, as Agents of their Government, had been in the sphere of foreign relations. The family had their base in Kalimpong, where they lived for most of the year in their charming residence known as Bhutan House. Kalimpong had, over the years, become established as the main market for trade between India and Tibet. Raja Tobgay was amongst the first Bhutanese to be admitted to a western-style school, and, as was to be expected, he sent his own children also to institutions run on western lines. Because of their broader-based education and easy familiarity with the English language, the Dorjis were considered best qualified to conduct Bhutan's relations with her neighbours. But apart from their responsibilities in administering the districts of Ha and the southern frontier, they had no specific role in the running of the internal affairs of the country, which remained the exclusive prerogative of the King. As long as Bhutan remained isolated from the rest of the world, the conduct of foreign affairs constituted a comparatively minor activity of the Government and the influence and status of the Dorji family were of a proportionately minor dimension. As Bhutan's stature in the comity of nations became gradually enhanced, and more so after her admission to the Colombo Plan, foreign affairs became a major field of activity, and the Dorjis, with their advantage of a Western education and experience of men and affairs outside Bhutan, emerged as their people's spokesmen both in New Delhi and also in the various international forums to which their country had recently gained admittance. Their increasing prominence in the public eye attracted not only attention but also envy. There were many who felt jealous of their growing eminence and began secretly to wish their downfall.

The seeds were being sown of the terrible tragedy of 5 April.

My own association with the Dorji family began as early as in 1942, when Jigmie and I were attending a training course at Dehra Dun in northern India for officers appointed to the Indian Civil Service. I had recently returned to India after an unbroken absence of fifteen years and felt something of a stranger in a country I had left at the age of eight for schooling in the U.K. I did not very properly conform to the traditional I.C.S. type. I was more interested in making music than in

hunting, shooting and fishing, and even preferred lime-juice to Scotch. In spite of these constitutional shortcomings, Jigmie and his cousin from Sikkim, Prince Palden Thondup Namgyal[1] (later Chogyal of Sikkim), took to me kindly and re-orientated me to the ways and manners of my own people. Jigmie and the Sikkim Prince had been admitted together with us young probationers to the I.C.S. training course by way of preparation for future responsibilities in their own countries, Jigmie as Bhutan's Agent and the Prince as Sikkim's eventual ruler. The three of us discovered in each other a temperamental affinity and took to each other almost at once. Jigmie and the Prince insisted that I should spend the vacations in their homes in Kalimpong and Gangtok, and it was not long before I was adopted by them as a member of the family and christened 'Uncle'.

Jigmie was one of the world's rare souls. He was not the academic sort and his bent was more on outdoor activities, such as football, shikar and racing. We shared little by way of common interests and my absorption in classical music and books must have been irksome to his essentially extrovert nature. But yet we felt drawn to each other and our friendship for the twenty-two years until his death was close, firm and unfaltering.

Bhutan House, the home of the Dorjis in Kalimpong, was a delightful retreat managed under the kindly and precise supervision of Jigmie's mother, Rani Chuni. Rani Chuni, sister of the late Chogyal of Sikkim, had married Raja Tobgay Dorji, whom she had presented with three sons and two daughters. My early memories of Bhutan House are of the laughter of children, riding ponies on the lawns, fireworks, party-games—all presided over with grace and dignity by the vivacious Raja and his highly competent Rani. Jigmie's was an unusual blend of qualities. Impulsive and quick-tempered, he was at the same time one of the most generous and gentle-hearted persons I have ever known. He was not religious in the conventional sense and had little faith in rites and ritual. But he knew the meaning of compassion and was sensitive to the pain and distress of others less fortunately placed. He was too forthright to be able to disguise his feelings, and a friend for him was a

[1] The Sikkim Prince's father (Sir Tashi Namgyal) and Jigmie's mother (Rani Chuni) were brother and sister.

friend for always. He was, by temperament, a simple person, happier in the company of his personal friends than in the more exalted circles of high officialdom. What he enjoyed were his weekends at the race-course and his mahjong sessions in the evenings. And the last afternoon I spent with him, two days before his death, was when he dragged me out to see a football match. He was completely lacking in political ambition and I believe he was sincere when he used to tell me that he was longing for the time when there would be a nucleus of young Bhutanese trained up to relieve him of his Governmental responsibilities so that he could retire and do the things he really wanted.

We kept contact with each other after our dispersal from Dehra Dun, on conclusion of the training course, to our respective fields of activity. Happily for myself, I had been posted to Assam, which has a border with Bhutan and is also easily accessible from Sikkim. Jigmie was the resourceful sort and could always find an excuse for paying me a visit. Under arrangements with Bhutan, the Assam Forest Department conducted elephant-catching operations along the Assam–Bhutan border, and were required to pay a share of royalty to Bhutan in lieu of the elephants that had strayed into Assam from across the Bhutan border. There were wrangles from time to time regarding the amount of royalty to be paid and I would be called upon to act as an honorary peace-maker between Jigmie and the Assam Forest authorities. Later, after the transfer of power to India in 1947, there arose the question of retrocession to Bhutan of some of the areas bordering Bengal and Assam which had been annexed by the British during the last century as a punitive measure for raids committed by the Bhutanese in British territory. The Government of India were of the view that, as a token of goodwill, Assam and Bengal might each consider surrendering to Bhutan a small slice of territory, however minute in area. Bengal bluntly refused to yield a square inch, apprehensive of the political repercussions. Sir Ronald Lodge, Chief Justice of the Assam High Court, was at the time holding temporary charge as Governor of Assam in the vacancy caused by the sudden death of Sir Akbar Hydari during a Christmas shoot in Manipur. He requested me, as his Adviser, to offer my views. After making a detailed study of all the old

records, I recommended to Sir Ronald that it would be a gracious gesture to cede the little enclave of Dewangiri, on the Assam side of Bhutan's south-eastern border, where the Bhutanese were accustomed to residing for a brief spell during the cold weather to escape the extreme rigour of winter in the high hills. The Assam Ministry was at first fearful of public reaction at the ceding of any territory, but the Chief Minister, Mr Gopinath Bardoloi, was a statesman of wide and liberal outlook, who was prepared to take a risk in the larger interests of promoting Indo-Bhutanese goodwill. Dewangiri was duly ceded to Bhutan, and the Assam Ministry did not fall!

After twelve years' service in Assam, I was posted (in 1954) to Gangtok, for appointment as the Dewan (Prime Minister) of Sikkim. It was then that my contact with Jigmie and Bhutan became closer and more intimate. I had the rare privilege in 1955 of being invited to stay with the King and Queen at their Palace in Dechencholing (near Thimphu), and a trek to Bumthang in central Bhutan to attend a royal wedding afforded me the most wonderful opportunity of getting to know the country, its people and its problems. The wedding was of the King's sister, Princess Choki, with Jigmie's brother, Ugyen, or 'Rimp' (short for Rimpoche) as he was known to his close friends. Princess Choki and Rimpoche were, however, temperamentally poles apart, and the break-up of the marriage within a month of the celebrations did not contribute to the strengthening of the bonds of peace and harmony between the Dorji and Wangchuk families. An alliance that had doubtless been intended to bring the families closer together failed utterly in its purpose and may well have been amongst the first causes of the rift to come.

I returned in 1959 to Shillong for a second tenure in my former post of Adviser to the Governor of Assam for the tribal areas bordering Tibet and Burma. Those were the uneasy years of tension along the international frontier with China, which eventually erupted in October 1962 in the full-scale invasion by the Chinese of the tribal areas of India's north-eastern borderlands. I remember receiving a telegram one morning that Jigmie would be stopping over at Gauhati in the Assam plains on the following day and that I must be sure to come down from my hill-top in Shillong to meet him, as he

wished to consult me on a matter of special urgency. I was busy and worried enough with my own troubles along our border, but went down as requested. Jigmie was in a state of near physical and nervous breakdown. The King had despatched him to New Delhi to seek arms and ammunition to equip the Bhutan army for defence in case of unavoidable involvement with the Chinese. The response from the Government of India had been practically nil, as the Indian defence forces were themselves desperately short of essential armament. The King had apparently expressed his displeasure to Jigmie in no uncertain terms on the failure of his mission. He ordered Jigmie to retrace his steps to Delhi forthwith and not present himself again before his sovereign empty-handed. Jigmie had never completely recovered from the effects of a serious lung operation he had had to undergo in Switzerland a few years earlier. Travel in Bhutan those days was by foot or on horseback along treacherous tracks passing through leech-infested jungle, and Jigmie was clearly showing signs of the fatigue and trials of his journeys back and forth. And the nervous strain of having again to report failure in his mission was also beginning to tell. There was nothing I could do to materially assist, but he seemed easier in mind after unloading himself of his troubles and anxieties, and I was glad to see him set off in a more settled mood to carry the dismal tidings to his monarch. This meeting, brief though it was, afforded me a significant insight into the fundamental basis of relations between Jigmie and the King. Although Jigmie was the older of the two and more experienced in the ways of the world, there was no question at all, when it came to the test, as to who held the reins. The King had, in 1952, married Jigmie's younger sister, Kesang, and the family tie had brought the two men into closer and more intimate relationship. But I could sense during our meeting at Gauhati that, for all Jigmie's affection for and loyalty to his King, there was also, deep within, a feeling of insecurity, perhaps even fear. Jigmie had often told me that, despite his outward appearance of power and importance, he was no more than a 'servant' of the King and it was up to the King to dispense with his services any moment he pleased. Jigmie was a man of practical good sense and suffered under no false illusions.

# 3

# *The Dorjis at the Helm*

I am wondering how I ever got tangled up with this Colombo Plan business. I am missing my old nomadic days.

On 30 March 1963, within a few months of the Chinese withdrawal from the north-eastern borders of India after the invasion of October 1962, I received, in a heavily sealed envelope delivered by a personal messenger, a letter[1] from Jigmie asking whether I would come to Bhutan and give him a helping hand. This was not the first time Jigmie had suggested my joining him in Bhutan. But on previous occasions, he had spoken or written to me only informally and I did not take him seriously. If ever he was in need of advice or assistance, he would come up to Shillong or Gangtok and I would do my best to help him sort out his problems. It was evident, however, that he was beginning to feel the need for a more formal arrangement, for the suggestions started becoming more insistent, though he hesitated to make a direct request. He had been consulting me regarding the strategy for Bhutan's admission to the Colombo Plan,[2] and I sent him a card of congratulations from Kashmir, where I was attending a conference, when I saw in the newspapers that the formalities were nearing finalization. His letter in reply gives an idea of how he functioned at the time, as also his feeling of need for someone to lean upon for support:

Dechencholing
Thimphu, Bhutan
5 July 1960

My dear Uncle,

Thanks for your card. Did you really get to Kashmir? No work in the N.E.F.A. or what? I can give you a job, come up here!! I hoped

[1] For the text of the letter and details, see *Enchanted Frontiers*, p. 299.

[2] i.e. Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-east Asia.

to leave here some time in June but the Boss[1] ordered me to stay on as there was a lot of work here—quite right too! I've been slaving away daily—quite a drastic change from my usual leisurely day.

If we can organize a labour force of 8,000, we will have a jeepable road from Phuntsholing (or Jaigaon) to Paro by the middle of May 1961.

I appreciate your card, Uncle, as you can realize how hard we had to work to pull this off. If the pressure keeps up, I'll soon be off my head. My only trouble is no uncle to go for advice and often take the strain! I miss you, Uncle!

My love to you and Mummy.

Yours ever,
Jigmie

Conditions in Bhutan were still primitive and Jigmie hesitated to make a request which, because of our close friendship, he knew I would not refuse even though it meant forgoing the amenities that are nowadays regarded as the normal appurtenances of everyday life—electricity, sanitation, telephones and the social round of clubs and cinemas. A situation had developed in Bhutan, however, which practically forced Jigmie's hand.

The King, wrote Jigmie, had suffered a severe heart attack and was still not out of danger. 'Doctors have said that he will not be able to do any work for the next six months to a year. Boss has ordered me to take over the administration, and you know how I hate work and responsibilities. I am now saddled with this job. We are all going through anxious times praying that God will make our H.H. well again in time.'

Although I had already received posting orders to Delhi, I informed Jigmie that I would readily accept his offer if he could settle the formalities with the Government of India. Jigmie lost no time in setting things into motion. My posting orders to Delhi were quickly revised, and my wife and I proceeded to pack our bags for Bhutan.

All this was just one year prior to Jigmie's assassination, and I have often wondered, in the hindsight of subsequent events, at my naïveté in plunging so foolhardily into this new assign-

[1] Jigmie always referred to the King as 'Boss'.

ment. I had served for ten years as chief executive in the administration of the tribal areas of north-eastern India and for five years as Prime Minister of Sikkim. Could I not foresee the reaction, in the narrow, highly competitive and highly sensitive circles of Bhutan, to such an unprecedented induction of a senior 'foreign' body? The truth of the matter was that I had never reconciled myself to the notion of being in any way an 'important' personage. The strain of steering N.E.F.A.[1] through the crisis of the Chinese invasion had cured me for ever of any cravings I might have harboured for power or personal advancement. It did not occur to me therefore that anybody would attach any more importance to my serving in Bhutan than I did myself. The first hint I received of the way people's minds were working was from an article in the *Statesman* (of Calcutta) giving full-page coverage to the announcement of my new appointment and making a more than casual reference to my previous assignment as Prime Minister of Sikkim. The Bhutanese authorities evidently wished it to be clearly understood that it was the King who had asked for my services and that I had not been foisted upon them by the Indian Government:

> On 1 September, Mr N. K. Rustomji, I.C.S., and at present adviser to the Governor of Assam, will become the first Indian Adviser to the Maharaja. Bhutanese are quick to point out that the Maharaja asked for the services of Mr Rustomji; there is no question of India foisting a Political Agent on Bhutan. According to them, the new adviser will be concerned more with development projects than with politics. Mr Rustomji is an old friend of Bhutan, having been Dewan in Sikkim for several years, when he visited the country on more than one occasion. It is no secret that his advice went far in making the transition from Bhutan's feudalistic past to its present eagerly progressive state as painless as it has been.[2]

Almost immediately after my appointment and indeed even before I had formally reported to Thimphu, Jigmie led a delegation to New Delhi for discussions regarding Bhutan's Five Year Development Plan and the training and equipping of Bhutan's armed forces. While handling the discussion on the

[1] North-East Frontier Agency, since redesignated as 'Arunachal Pradesh'.

[2] See Appendix II for full text of the report.

Development Plan himself, he took as his aides for the defence discussions three young Bhutanese Colonels who had been appointed to key positions in the Bhutan army on completion of a course of training in the Indian Defence Academy. As cadets under training, Ugyen Tangbi, Lam Dorji and Penjore Ongdi used often to visit me when I was serving in Sikkim and stay with me as my guests. I felt therefore a sense of pride and happiness to see them grown into smart young officers holding responsible positions in their country's service. Fresh as I was to Bhutan, I was not aware that there must be many senior officers of the Bhutan Army who would be casting envious eyes on the meteoric rise of these three youngsters to the highest positions in the country's defence forces. The Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Bhutan Army was at the time Chabda[1] Namgyal Bahadur, supreme command vesting in the King himself. An uncle of the King, though by a somewhat remote connection, Chabda Namgyal was one of the old-time officers, with no English and only rudimentary Hindi. A man of average ability, he felt ill-at-ease with the policy of inducting raw young men with a veneer of English-style education but practically no experience of soldiering, and promoting them to the higher echelons in supersession of their seniors and elders. The Quartermaster-General, Bacchu Phugel, was another old-timer, but much shrewder and deeper than the Chabda. He, too, was disgruntled when he got wind of a move for pensioning off some of the senior officers and replacing them with young men fresh from the recently established Military Training Academy at Ha in western Bhutan. Of all this undercurrent I was completely unaware during our brief sojourn in Delhi, where we were put through the routine drill of calling on V.I.P.s and being wined and dined in return.

One of the objectives of the Delhi visit was to probe the possibilities of Bhutan's admission to the U.N.O. When Jigmie raised the issue, however, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India deftly parried by branching out upon rather less sensitive subjects such as the virtues of poultry development in a country like Bhutan whose economy was essentially agricultural. India was in sympathy with Bhutan's aspirations and it was on India's sponsoring her application that Bhutan even-

[1] Chabda: rank corresponding to Brigadier

tually joined the United Nations as a full member. The Government of India had not yet made up their mind, however, regarding the precise timing for sponsoring Bhutan's admission and preferred to wait and watch for a while. I could sense Jigmie's impatience with the exigencies of all this diplomatic *politesse* and was prepared for the sharp little outburst as we broke after the discussions—'For heaven's sake, if "not now" was the answer, why couldn't he say so straightaway instead of wasting the whole morning over his f—— cocks!'

After the Delhi mission, Jigmie and I proceeded to Thimphu, Bhutan's capital, by the newly-constructed 120-mile jeep track leading from Phuntsholing on Bhutan's southern border with Bengal. The last time I had visited Thimphu had been in 1955, when the only access was by foot or on horseback and we had spent a week journeying from Sikkim, across the 14,000 foot Nathu La pass, through Tibet and western Bhutan.

On our current journey, we halted the night at Chasilaka, half way up the road from Phuntsholing and reached Lungtemphu, on the outskirts of Thimphu, the next afternoon. Lungtemphu was then the location of the Bhutan Army Headquarters and a Guard of Honour was awaiting us on our arrival. I naturally made way for Jigmie to receive the honours, but he insisted I should take the salute. 'It will be the first time, Uncle,' he remarked, jestingly, 'and probably the last!' He could not have known how prophetic was his jest.

One of the first matters that had to be decided after my appointment was my designation, and it was not until our discussions on this issue that I realized the ambiguity of my situation. As I had understood matters, my function was to advise Jigmie in the discharge of his responsibilities. Could advising Jigmie be held to be equivalent to advising the Government? And if so, had this arrangement the seal of the King's approval? The King was, admittedly, a sick man and had directed Jigmie to take over the administration. My appointment might be interpreted, however, as delegation of delegated powers and, on this ground, be held open to question.

By the time of my arrival in Thimphu, the King had recovered sufficiently to be able to receive me in audience. He must have approved Jigmie's choice, for, quite soon after my formal call, I was summoned again to the Palace and a retainer

was despatched to the guest-house to fetch my violin. Knowing that I was an ardent musician, the King had gathered together a group of his personal staff and desired me to play for them. I happily complied, including in my repertoire the tune of a Bhutanese song of blessing (*Lepe, Lepe*) which I remembered from my previous visit nearly ten years back.

I evidently passed the test, for it was not long before a formal order was issued, in the most picturesque and gracious Bhutanese phraseology, notifying my appointment as Loteu Dingpon (Privy Councillor), and conferring upon me the rank of a Drasho (senior officer). I had been accepted and could henceforward sport the red shawl worn by Jigmie and other high-ranking officers. I do not know of such a Warrant of Appointment having been issued before in favour of a foreigner, and quote its text (in translation) for the happy insight it affords into the leisurely and stately protocol of the Bhutanese Court.

To
The Most Excellent Shri Rustomji
The Incomparable One, who is richly endowed
with the glory of meritorious deeds

Some time ago, you came and set foot upon this soil to assist and guide the Government of Bhutan. You have been rendering the best possible service ever since; and while thus shouldering responsibilities, you have displayed energy and enthusiasm exceeding all bounds, so much so that you have earned our confidence in immeasurable degree. It is but to be expected, therefore, that we are absolutely confident and hopeful that you will continue rendering excellent service culminating in the best interests of the Government and people of Bhutan.

On this day, you are conferred with the official designation of Loteu Dingpon and simultaneously exalted to the rank of nobles with red scarf. You will, too, in full appreciation of this honour and consistent with the doctrine of karma, ever endeavour in all your future activities to promote the cause of the TRI-RATNA in general and the administration of this Kingdom in particular, so that your name and fair fame will surely remain amongst us as an ornament of adoration, ever resounding in our hearts and gratefully remembered by the people of this land of medicinal herbs. I would request you to keep this ever embedded in your mental sphere.

Thus recorded on the 3rd day of the 9th month of the Water-Hare Year corresponding to the 20th October, 1963.

Signed on behalf of His Majesty the King

The Palace complex, picturesquely named Dechencholing, is sited about two miles beyond Thimphu Dzong. Jigmie and I were to stay in the Palace guest-house, a four-roomed cottage, one room of which was occupied by the King's physician, Dr Craig. Dr Craig, on retirement from the Scottish Mission Hospital at Kalimpong, had plans to open a leprosy centre in Bhutan. On the King's illness, however, his services were requisitioned for attendance on His Majesty. Heart specialists from India, Switzerland and England were from time to time flown in to Thimphu by helicopter for consultations, while Dr Craig and a Bhutanese doctor, Dr Tobgyel, examined the royal patient daily and were kept constantly near at hand in case of any sudden emergency. Jigmie and I occupied one room apiece of the remaining three rooms, while the fourth room was kept spare for the occasional visitor. The advantage of staying in the guest-house was that it was next to the Palace and we were within easy reach of the King. A large room on the ground floor of the Palace was allocated for Jigmie and myself as our office, with an adjoining room for our aides.

There were no telephones, electricity or sanitary fittings in those days. A miniature hydel outfit had been installed some years back to electrify the Palace, but it had fallen out of order and nobody seemed sufficiently interested in the joys of electricity to have it put right. Most people managed well enough with the old-fashioned hurricane lantern, while the up-and-coming were taking, though rather hesitantly, to the dazzling splendour of the Petromax pressure-lamp. The traditional Bhutanese lavatory commode was something to be seen to be believed. The operator sat on an oblong wooden box, two feet high, fourteen inches long and six inches wide, with a narrow slit in the top panel. The structure was poised at the apex of a deep vertical hole excavated to reach down to a subterranean streamlet, which carried its rich cargo in leisurely course to the main river. The arrangement served admirably in normal, calm weather, but presented complexities on blowy, gusty days,

when an icy blast of wind would shoot up in a whirl from the subterranean depths to the chilling discomfiture of a defenceless posterior.

I was soon to find that most of the activity relating to the launching of Bhutan's Five Year Plan for economic development was centred not around the capital at Thimphu but in the broad, lush adjoining valley of Paro. The reason was not far to seek. The Bhutanese have, by long tradition, been allergic to the outsider. It was obvious that, for some years to come, Bhutan would have no alternative but to induct considerable numbers of outsiders, particularly technicians, for assistance in the processing of her developmental programme. With her traditional suspicion of the foreigner, she might well consider it politic to keep this influx of outsiders at some distance from the heart of the country, symbolized by the capital. Their seclusion in Paro would offer less opportunity to mischievous elements for interference in the country's internal affairs and collection of political intelligence. There was also the consideration that, if Thimphu was to be developed as a well-planned capital, it would be expedient to keep it clear of the jungle of mushroom hutments that must inevitably proliferate in the launching of the development plan.

Jigmie had selected a Sikkimese, Tashi Dahdul Densappa, a retired official of the Sikkim Government, as his key officer for superintending the development programme. He was designated as Secretary-General, Planning, and Jigmie's youngest brother, Lhendup, a dashing and headstrong young man lately returned from the States, was appointed to understudy him as his Deputy. Densappa was an officer of extensive administrative and political experience. His family had enjoyed a record of distinguished service to the Sikkim ruling house, and it was in recognition of his outstanding ability that, on his retirement as Chief Secretary to the Sikkim Government, he was prevailed upon to continue to make his services available, in an advisory capacity, to the Sikkim Government. Densappa was a scholar of no mean repute and one of the few living authorities on Tibetan and Sikkimese social and cultural usages. Despite his years and indifferent health, it was Densappa who was mainly responsible for getting the Bhutan plan off to a good start. Within a few weeks of my arrival, however, his term of appoint-

ment was due to expire and he asked to be relieved. An officer of strict principle, he sometimes found difficulty in keeping in rein his highly spirited Deputy. And being the shrewd man he was, he saw wisdom in dismounting gracefully rather than risking a toss.

The programme I had chalked out for myself was to spend my first year mainly in getting to understand the country's problems and picking up a working knowledge of the Bhutanese language. In accepting Jigmie's invitation, I had come mentally conditioned to devote the rest of my service career to Bhutan, and, had events not taken such an unexpected and tragic turn, would have happily continued in Bhutan as long as I might be wanted.

While Jigmie's brother, Lhendup, was being groomed to take charge of the Planning programme as Secretary-General, his sister, Tashi, had been entrusted to handle all business relating to the Colombo Plan[1] and to lead the Bhutanese delegation at the periodical meetings of that body. Tashi was an extremely able young lady with infinite drive. I had met her first, over twenty years back, when she was a student in the Lady Hardinge College in Delhi and she still retained her youthful spirit. Her competence and efficiency were recognized by the King, as was evidenced by the fact that she was generally deputed to officiate for Jigmie as Bhutan Agent during his occasional visits abroad. She had also been appointed by the King, some years earlier, as Governor of Tashigang in eastern Bhutan, an especially difficult assignment which she filled with credit and distinction.

There was a mass of statistical data to be furnished to the Colombo Plan Secretariat and Tashi quickly enlisted my services to get it into proper shape and to prepare a brochure on Bhutan for the ensuing Colombo Plan meeting at Bangkok. Our difficulty was that statistics on Bhutan were just non-existent. Even the figure of estimated population was no more than a wild guess, and as for detailed break-up of males and females, adults and children, there was nothing we could do but invent. But what was lacking in factual data was more than made up for by Tashi's dazzling personality. The Bhutanese are a handsome people, and when they dress, they dress to kill. Arrayed in their brilliant robes, their delegation lent colour

[1] Bhutan had formally joined this body in 1962.

and lustre to the proceedings, and it was largely due to the energetic initiative of Tashi that Bhutan could make her début on the international stage with such éclat and dignity.

But all was not dazzle and splendour. Tashi put in an enormous amount of solid, hard work both in preparation for the meetings and during the meetings themselves. Her letters from Paro to Thimphu give some idea of her tireless activity in organizing data for the event:

Paro, Bhutan
7 September 1963

Uncle,

Am going down to Calcutta for two nights—leaving Paro on 10th or 11th to prepare a few things for trip to Bangkok—and returning soonest possible to prepare things here for Australian guests. Sorry, Mr Smith is not from U.K. but is from Australian High Commission.

Must do the best I can for them. I'm so glad you are here Uncle to do all the Brain Work for my papers—Really! Look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Love,
Tashi

Paro, Bhutan
31 September 1963

Dear Uncle,

It's 8 a.m. and I have just received your letter and the eleventh Annual Report. Many thanks.

I am promptly sending back the Annual Report for you to continue with the Country Chapter. I completely forgot that you needed this book for our Country Chapter. I must be going crazy. So sorry to give you all this bother sending books back and forth. I'll have to look for another copy for Lumpy and Dawa to study. Development Wing had a copy but it cannot be found now.

I am enclosing one copy of the Questionnaire which Lawrence and Benita Dunne have just sent me after several reminders. After seeing it I feel like getting sick for this Meeting. Imagine having only fourteen days instead of four months to prepare this Questionnaire. I have just decided to accompany the party to Ha tomorrow and return after two nights there in the hope that I may get a few of the answers to the Questionnaire from Jigmie. Unless I get some co-

operation from all Departments I shall go to this Meeting feeling a complete fool!

Please excuse my typing. In the rush of packing I cannot find my pen. Wish you were coming to Ha too. Please, please come here as soon as you can. I leave for Calcutta on the 14th October. I shall get all *Sondeys, Mondeys,*[1] etc. driven away for your arrival here if you behave.

Thanks a lot for the speech you have made for me. Kindly do the needful over the Questionnaire. I shall now have sleepless nights over it. I have even stopped collecting books. I am wondering how I ever got tangled up with this Colombo Plan business. I am missing my old nomadic days. Figures, statistics, meetings, magic formulas for economic miracles and social services are completely against my temperament. Would you like to take over my job?

I hope you have good news of Avi.

Love,
Tashi

Paro, Bhutan
7 October 1963

Dear Uncle,

Enclosing herewith the Questionnaire. I am sorry the party taking my letters left this cover behind.

I would like you to please study this Questionnaire tonight. I am coming across tomorrow with Jigmie for one or two hours and shall get Jigmie to sit down with you and me for one hour to discuss this paper and how we should supply the required information. Here and in Ha there are too many friends and people hanging round him and too many engagements for Jigmie to be able to sit down quietly to discuss this.

I thought of going down in the middle of this month to Calcutta to prepare a few things before my departure to Bangkok on the 28th. But yesterday a message arrived to say that the Australian High Commissioner, his Colombo Plan Officer, and Mr Smith of U.K. are arriving Phuntsholing on 19 October, Paro and Thimphu from 21 to 25 October, returning on 26 October for Chasilakha. I wish they were coming earlier. I will have to stay to meet them for at least a few days of their visit. This leaves me hardly a day to be in Calcutta before taking off for Bangkok. Apparently Bakshi[2] knew about this

[1] i.e. mischievous spirits.

[2] Trade Commissioner for Bhutan in Calcutta.

and made a programme many days ago in September. He never cared to advise me about it or I could have asked Jigmie to request them to come a few days earlier.

Gathey's[1] 'femme' is getting worried about all the love you are sending him.

Yours sincerely
Tashi

Tashi managed to get off at last, and it was apparent from her card sent from Bangkok that she was kept no less busy at the meeting itself:

Royal Hotel, Bangkok
8 November 1963

Dear Uncle,

All is well here. Official meetings have just ended and from 11th the Ministerial meetings begin. On 16th we go for a trip to Chungmai —return to Bangkok on 18th—Hongkong 19th. Very, very busy everybody—some aid being offered but am told to wait for Ministers and Treasury Officers of donor countries to arrive. So far factories and Chukha projects are not taken up by them though I have mentioned them. Brochure not arrived yet and that wretched Pandit now says no pictures in brochure except cover map and His Majesty's picture. Everybody very kind.

Love,
Tashi

But the result of all this travail was a *ridiculus mus*, as was evident from Jigmie's very depressing letter to me after the show was over:

Olympia House
P 33 Mission Row Extension
Calcutta
20 December 1963

Dear Uncle,

The discussions and results of the last Colombo Meeting should

[1] Tashi's general factotum, who used to ply me with tea and dainties during my visits to Paro.

dampen anybody's enthusiasm including yours. The gist of the meeting is:

(1) They feel that Bhutan is moving much too fast.
(2) Nobody is particularly keen to give any help except expert advice, and also this is very important, nobody is willing to give any monetary aid whatsoever but they are all keen to advise us how to go about getting aid from other sources.

I gather we are going to be in contact with the Ford Foundation people—whether anything will come of it is hard to know.

Hope the heater has failed. If you don't come down for your baby, Avi will probably divorce you—serves you right too!

Jigmie

It was in the preparation of the brochure for the Colombo Plan meeting that I was made aware once again of a certain ambivalence of relationship between the King's family (the Wangchuks) and the Dorjis. Like most people, I had taken it for granted that the Dorjis were the power behind the throne and that the brochure should reflect the dominant role played by them in the running of the country's affairs. Tashi, however, insisted, somewhat to my surprise, that all this should be toned down before the draft was submitted to the King for his approval, and I sensed her apprehension that the high-lighting of the Dorjis' role in promoting the country's progress might not receive unqualified favour in royal circles.

Jigmie had established an office in Calcutta as a base for arranging equipment and stores for the implementation of Bhutan's development plan. A base in Calcutta was also useful for liaison with the various offices of the Government of India (such as Customs, Excise and Transport) with which the Bhutan authorities were required to be in day-to-day contact. Jigmie's idea was that we should spend four months of the year, from November to February, operating from the Calcutta office, and the remaining eight in Bhutan. This would have the advantage of affording some relief from the intense cold of Thimphu, situated at an elevation of over 8,000 feet, during the winter months. The shifting of headquarters during the winter months was no novelty in Bhutan, for, in former times, it had been the regular practice for the Governmental establishment to move in winter from the chilly heights of Thimphu to the lower and

warmer valley of Punakha. I decided however that, at least during my first year, I should see the winter through in Thimphu itself, as I wanted to have a first-hand idea of the country at all seasons. I also felt that, if I was to be of real use, I should not be kicking my heels in Calcutta when I could be gathering fresh and valuable experience in Bhutan.

Jigmie left Thimphu for Calcutta, according to plan, in November. I was now virtually on my own, as the King was unwell and only rarely received visitors. From time to time, when he suffered a particularly serious setback, a heart-specialist was flown in by helicopter from Calcutta to check that the treatment prescribed for him was proceeding on correct lines. His physician in attendance at Bhutan, Dr Craig, was soon to discover the embarrassment and complications of treating a royal patient in a country where only the King's word was law. While the King was on the whole a disciplined patient, he was also human and subject to sudden caprice. I remember the frustration and despair of Dr Craig when he was summoned to the Palace late one night to find the King complaining of acute, jabbing pains. It was only after a searching probe that Dr Craig was able to elicit the cause. The Bhutanese have a dish prepared of hornets, a special delicacy but *strictly* forbidden to the sick, whether commoner or King. Repentant, His Majesty confessed at long last that he had rather over-indulged himself on the hornets at dinner—and they were having their revenge.

It was clear from the findings of the medical specialists that the King would not live the normal span. The heart-attack he had suffered earlier in the year had been of such severity that it was a miracle he had survived at all. It was his exceptionally robust physique and indomitable will to live that had pulled him through. With luck and specialized medical care, he might stretch out his life for five years, perhaps six, but that was the limit of their expectation. He was enjoined to lead a completely quiet life, not subject himself to the slightest strain, and to proceed to Switzerland for further tests and consultations as soon as he felt strong enough to move. Before his departure, however, an important and elaborate religious ceremony, performed at only very rare intervals,[1] was ordered for the good

[1] Known as *Sigpa Chedo* in Bhutanese.

fortune of Bhutan in general and the royal house in particular. Four images were prepared, in the likeness of the King, his mother, his son and the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot), as symbolizing the continuity of the twofold Government, spiritual and temporal. All well-wishers of the country and the royal household were expected to donate an item of clothing for the ceremony. This need not be new, and should preferably be slightly soiled or even torn. (I remember donating my tweed coat and a rather well-worn, red woollen dressing gown.) The ceremony was a purificatory rite for the removal of all ills, and, on its conclusion, the apparel was distributed to the public, presumably thoroughly purged and purified.

The Queen and the Queen-Mother personally supervised the arrangements for the ceremony down to the minutest details, and I was invited to accompany the royal party to participate in the largely-attended prayer-meeting. With due performance of the ceremony and the conclusion of prayers for the averting of evil, the time was considered propitious for the King's departure. It was to be a quiet send-off and I reported myself at the Palace to bid him good-bye. By now, we had been seeing a little more of each other and I think he had taken a liking to me. He presented me, according to custom, with a Bhutanese dress-piece, and then, as he was proceeding towards the helicopter, turned back for a moment and said, quite unexpectedly, 'Good-bye again, Uncle, look after yourself—I shall be needing you when I come back.'

I was somewhat taken aback, as I had not hitherto had the impression that the King set any particular value on my services. Apart from the preparation of material for the Colombo Plan meeting and the interest I had taken in trying to improve the hospital and school at Thimphu, there was really very little I could show to justify my existence. My advice to the King had been regarding purely general matters, including certain structural improvements in the administrative framework. I had pointed out that the Development Wing of the Government at Paro was tending to function as a parallel Government and should be more closely integrated with the over-all administrative structure. With the King's approval, a circular was issued directing that all developmental activity should be channelized through the District Officers, the Thrimpons, and

that the Secretariat at Thimphu must be kept closely and regularly posted in respect of all important matters, such as the appointment of senior officers and the initiation of major schemes. But I was aware that my movements were always under close watch and that reports of what little I was doing to improve the medical, educational and other departments were being periodically carried back to the King. I think he approved my method of functioning. I tried as best I could to identify with the people in dress, language and behaviour so that they should have no feeling of a 'foreign body' in their midst.

In view of the King's uncertain health, Jigmie had been thinking for some time that a start should be made in constituting a Cabinet, and requested me to draw up for this purpose a broad scheme in outline, with tentative rules of business. This I duly completed. Jigmie was, however, reluctant to pursue the matter further with the King and requested me to seek an opportunity of doing so myself. I showed the proposal to the King during one of our meetings, but he did not evince much interest. As he suffered a slight relapse the next morning, I felt I should not take the responsibility of troubling him with official affairs until he was quite recovered. Jigmie had, besides, hinted to me that the lamas had most probably advised that the time was not propitious for any major constitutional change.

The King may have had his own reasons for deferring a decision on this vital issue. Several of Jigmie's nominees on the proposed Cabinet were persons beholden in some way or other to Jigmie and his family, and the King may have apprehended that the implementation of the proposal would constitute a shift in the balance of power to his own disadvantage. For whatever the reason, it was decided that the proposals should be shelved until the King's return from Switzerland, and since, in the meanwhile, the entire situation had changed with Jigmie's assassination a few months later, the question of their revival never arose.

# 4

# *Of Jesuits, Bears and Plottings*

Ite angeli veloces, ite ad gentem exspectantem.

The departure of the King was the signal for a general exodus of officers from Thimphu in search of warmer climes. For my part, I applied myself mainly to exploring ways and means of improving our medical and educational services. The U.K. High Commission and British Council had volunteered assistance in locating some trained teachers for us, and Jigmie asked me to bear-lead their representatives, Dick Ormerod[1] and Don Smith, to Punakha and Paro to afford them some idea of our problems and of working conditions in Bhutan. They reached Thimphu on a particularly chilly December afternoon, and after I had explained to them the mechanics of the Bhutanese commode, I left them to relax for a while in the guest-house to recover from the rigours of the journey. I was tickled, on my return, to find them both still huddled in bed in a desperate effort to keep warm. But my respect for Dick Ormerod rose enormously when I saw him reading in the original, beneath a mountain of blankets, Homer's *Odyssey* in preparation for the morrow's peregrinations.

Our trip to Punakha was something of a fiasco. Nobody seemed to have much idea of the time needed to reach Punakha and we kept being told, as we ambled along the rugged mountain track, that it was 'only one hour ahead'. The Director of Education, Mr Dawa Tsering (now Foreign Minister), suggested at one stage that we should break journey, light a big bonfire and sleep around it until next morning. Having heard there were bears in the area, I urged that we should push to our destination and so we groped our way by moonlight along the rock-strewn track, shouting at the top of our voices to scare

[1] U.K. Deputy High Commissioner at Calcutta.

away the beasts. It did not improve matters when Dick Ormerod fell off his horse as it stumbled in the gloaming. Our consolation was that it was Dick and not the cook, who was less expendable at a time when we were expecting shortly to reach our destination and would be eager for sustenance after our hard day's labouring.

Needless to say, nothing much materialized out of this visit, though a good time was had by us all. We were informed that it would be practically impossible to attract suitable teachers to serve in such inaccessible areas, with none of the even rudimentary creature comforts. Up to now, the only countries, apart from India, to have helped Bhutan with equipment or personnel were Australia and Japan. A few trucks had been supplied by the Australian Government, on condition that each vehicle must be conspicuously branded with the insignia of the donor country. And a young Japanese couple had stationed themselves in Paro, where they were carrying out some quite useful agricultural research. But otherwise, for all the fanfare of the Colombo Plan, the assistance received, in practical terms, had been practically nil.

A project upon which the King had particularly set his heart was the rebuilding of Thimphu Dzong (fort), and it was for me a fascinating experience to see still in operation the traditional building techniques of a thousand years ago. A *dzong* is a multipurpose institution, housing as it does not only the most important administrative offices but also the monastic establishment. The Thimphu Dzong was, moreover, the residence of the Je Khenpo, the religious head of the country. Previous attempts to repair the dzong had been to little purpose, as its very foundations seemed to have been gravely disturbed by a severe earthquake in 1897 that had caused serious havoc in Sikkim, Bhutan and north-eastern India generally. The King decided therefore that, instead of continuing patch-work repairs, the sounder course would be to dismantle all but the central portion, which was still stable and had certain special historic and religious associations, and rebuild the remainder afresh.

When the King had mentioned to Jigmie that he would be requiring funds for the new dzong, Jigmie readily agreed, expecting that the cost would not exceed eight to ten lakh[1] rupees.

[1] i.e. one million.

With the progress of construction, it soon became clear that this was a gross underestimate and that the amount ultimately required would be more in the region of a crore.[1] As Jigmie had already made a commitment to the King, he was determined to stand by it and had no alternative but to resort to rather unorthodox financial manoeuvrings to raise the requisite funds. In this he was assisted by his agent in Calcutta, Mr P. R. Bakshi, who had for many years been functioning also as Trade Agent to the Government of Sikkim. Mr Bakshi's career recalled the typical success story. Risen from small beginnings, he began life peddling his wares, Kashmiri rugs and fancy trinkets, on bicycle in the remoter tea-estates of Upper Assam. After accumulating a little capital, he started a small shop and also managed to operate a petrol agency. His break came in 1954, when he succeeded in securing the assignment of Trade Agent to the Sikkim Government. From this point, he never looked back. He soon established for himself a reputation for efficiency and absolute dependability in getting things done, whatever the complications. By dint of sheer hard work, perseverance and a born business instinct, he proved himself capable of meeting any challenge, and Jigmie succeeded, with his advice and assistance, in raising the funds required for fulfilling the King's dearly cherished ambition, the rebuilding of Thimphu Dzong.

It was during my lone sojourn in Thimphu that my wife, Avi, was having her confinement. We had been married just a few months before my Bhutan assignment, and Jigmie, who was largely responsible for applying the crucial matrimonial push, had flown to Bombay to join in the celebrations. Avi had returned to Bombay from Shillong for the latter period of her confinement and Jigmie was insistent that I should follow after to preside over the final proceedings. I wrote to him that I was just about getting into the swing of things in Bhutan and that there would be an inevitable setback if I were to leave at the very time when our work was gathering momentum. My letter, written I find on Christmas eve, throws an interesting light on our pattern of functioning during those early days:

[1] One crore is equivalent to ten millions.

Thimphu
24 December 1963

Thanks a million for your message about going to Bombay to see Avi. You were probably surprised at my reply as everybody seems to think I have no work here! So I thought I should let you know what I am doing with myself.

One of my interests has been, as you know, in trying to improve our hospital. Although the Development Department has, for the last three years, been reporting that they would shortly be building a new hospital at Thimphu, they have not yet finalized even the plan. You had agreed with my suggestion that, as the new hospital (planned to cost about Rs 18 lakhs) would take at least three or four years to complete, we should go ahead as fast as possible in improving the existing hospital so that it might adequately serve our requirements (as a hospital for the capital) during the intervening period. I personally feel that, with the improvements we are carrying out, this hospital will very adequately serve our needs for the present Plan period, quite apart from saving us about Rs 16 or 17 lakhs of expenditure. The X-ray room, laboratory and dental clinic will be completed within the next fifteen days, by when I am hoping Bakshi will have arranged for the installation of the X-ray equipment which has been lying unused all these years at Phuntsholing. We have also asked our engineers to repair the dentist's chair, drill and operating table, all of which had gone out of order through disuse or lack of attention. After the painting has been completed, the hospital will be practically as good as new, and I am sure you will be proud of it. (I have suggested to Dr Tobgyel that, as soon as the Thimphu work is finished, we might consider going ahead on the same lines with the hospital at Tashigang to serve the needs of eastern Bhutan. The building, I understand, is good, and it will be mainly a question of ensuring adequate staff, equipment and supervision.)

You will probably be wondering why it should be necessary for a person at my level to remain here to supervise what are, after all, only smallish projects. This is, I am afraid, inevitable under the existing procedures, where so much effort and patience is needed to get even a small thing done. To give you an instance, we once urgently required some carpenters, and so Sangey[1] and I personally went to see Zorichichap[2] for assistance. After much discussion, he very magnanimously

[1] Drasho Sangey Penjor, then Deputy Chief Secretary, later Bhutan's diplomatic representative accredited to India in Delhi.

[2] Zorichichap: an old-time Bhutanese officer, deputed by His Majesty to supervise the construction of the new Thimphu dzong.

offered to spare *one* out of the several dozens under his control. For three days the carpenter did not materialize, and, on a second approach being made to him, he generously stipulated that the carpenter would be sent in exchange for two drills to be supplied by the Bhutan Engineering Service! The drills were duly supplied, but again no carpenter materialized—instead a further stipulation that the B.E.S. tractor should be detained for six days to clear the site for the new guest-house! Were it not for the fact that Zorichichap is otherwise such a dear old soul and that I practise meditation every morning, I should really have lost patience!

Another instance of the way things move. The Officer-in-charge of the Yusipang orchard had no money to pay off his labour who had been working for him for two months and sends a message to the Director of Agriculture at Paro to sanction payment and issue orders on the Bhutan Engineering Service at Lumisampa to make the cash available. The Director signals to the B.E.S. to make payment in anticipation of sanction from the Development Department at Samchi, at the same time repeating the signal to the Adviser (i.e. self) with the request to prevail on the B.E.S. to take action. I go to Lumisampa and am informed that the B.E.S. have no cash at Thimphu and that there is no jeep to fetch it from Paro. The next day, the Director of Agriculture arrives from Paro and offers to send his jeep back to Paro—only to be informed that there is no cash at Paro either and that the money will have to be brought up from Phuntsholing. Arrangements are made to send for the money from Phuntsholing, but meanwhile there is heavy blasting on the road and the jeep bringing the cash is held up on the way. The labour are meanwhile thoroughly fed up, not having received any pay for two months. The only course is to obtain an advance from the Gyaltsi Khalwa,[1] to be reimbursed when the jeep carrying cash fetches up from Phuntsholing. The Gyaltsi Khalwa won't budge until I can arrange to obtain a written authority from Sangey, which I do after personally going to his house. In the final result, the labourers are at last paid—but the Director gets a sharp rocket from the Development Department for having requested the Adviser to assist! I could, of course, just play my violin and not care a damn whether the labour were paid or not, but I hardly think that's what I am here for.

I don't want to bore you, but these are just typical instances of the present system of working. Nobody responsible from the Development or Agricultural Department had, for months, paid a proper visit to the new Research Centre at Lutiphu or the orchard at Yusipang. And I understand from Doc Tobgyel, who has just returned from a visit to

[1] Gyaltsi Khalwa: the Treasury.

Samchi, that he is also now under instructions to move himself and his office to Samchi.

I had mentioned to you, in my very first report some months ago, that, unless there is a change in the existing procedures, the so-called Development Plan will be regarded by the ordinary villager as more of a nuisance than a benefit. Long before Bhutan's Five Year Plan was even thought of, the people had at least a reasonably good indoor hospital at Paro; with the coming of the Development Plan, they see this one institution that was doing some real good replaced by a lot of people pounding on typewriters. They are being summoned to dig roads from which they get little benefit in the absence of transport to put them to use. And they are called out to build houses for a lot of officers whose utility does not seem apparent to them.

I know you do not like reading long reports, but I am afraid I have to inflict them on you from time to time even at the risk of causing irritation, as I am sure they will! We can discuss all this when I come to Calcutta, which I hope to be able to do as soon as I feel the hospital work can look after itself. I have also just received a message that Clark and Billington[1] are due to be coming up on about the 30th of this month. I thought I should stay on here to size up what they are like and, in the event of their being suitable, discuss the question of their joining us as soon as we can find them accommodation.

(The airdrop at Honsu this morning was a great success—and the saving in transport costs through dropping at Honsu instead of Thimphu should look after my salary for the next couple of years—and more if the Bhutanese aren't *thoroughly* fed up with me by then!!)

My main concern was to push through the implementation of a few of our key schemes, including the electrification of the capital. I was also anxious to supervise personally the various new projects under the development plan and not let our officers get the impression that I was running away to warmer climes to escape the cold. I was fortunate to have with me in Thimphu, as friend, philosopher and guide, Drasho Sangey Penjor, and we spent much of our time together, both in and out of office hours. Jigmie, however, took a very dim view of my staying on in Thimphu in spite of his insistence that I should hurry to Bombay, and on my requesting him to deputize for me at my wife's delivery, slung back one of his sharp, characteristic bolts:

[1] Teachers who had expressed interest in joining the staff of the proposed Public School in Thimphu.

Come back immediately for yours and Avi's baby. I can't Proxy for you in this matter as I have not Proxied for you when it was made.

On Christmas day, Sangey and I decided to trek, by way of pilgrimage, to Cheri monastery, one of the most venerated in the country and situated about four hours march north of the main Thimphu valley. I was surprised that there was such scant mention of this monastery in the various accounts of Bhutan. It houses some of the finest paintings and icons that I have seen anywhere in Bhutan, quite apart from its historical associations with the first Dharma Raja by whom it was founded in the early seventeenth century in memory of his father. A day's visit was entirely inadequate for even a cursory inspection, and I hoped it would be possible to come again at some future date and feast upon these treasures at more ample leisure. I shall remember that Christmas day no less for the excitement of our return journey late in the evening. As we were plodding homeward in single file, tired and footsore, our worthy escort, Phup Dorji (Superintendent of the Palace Gardens), who was at the head of the procession, let out all of a sudden a hideous yell, '*thom, thom*' ('bear, bear'), and streaked ahead as one possessed. Terrified, we followed after him as fast as our legs could carry us, shrieking and making the most awesome noises in the hope that the beast would be scared away. Whether Phup Dorji actually saw a bear or not will never be proved. But none of us was over-anxious to provide bruno with his Christmas supper.

An occasional visitor to Thimphu was the King's half-brother, Drasho[1] Namgyal Wangchuk, now Minister for Commerce. He was then the Thrimpon (Chief Magistrate) of Paro and occupied himself mainly with the general administration of his district. Quiet and retiring by nature, he kept very much to himself, applying himself conscientiously to his official duties. As we shared the Palace guest-house between us during his visits to Thimphu, we came to know and like each other, and I found him, in my isolation, a most companionable friend. His mother, Aji[2] Pemadechen, younger sister of the Queen-mother, had decided to lead the life of a nun after the death of

[1] Drasho: see footnote on p. 18.

[2] Aji: an honorific title generally enjoyed by ladies of the royal family.

her husband, the late King. She was a woman of charm and wide interests, and I regularly called on her when she was in residence in Thimphu. I saw more, however, of Aji Choden, the Queen-mother, whose residence was only a few yards' distance from the guest-house where I stayed, and she seemed always happy to receive me. As she spoke only Bhutanese, it was an education for me to be in her company and I learnt much from her not only of the language but also of Bhutan's social customs and history. The King being her only child, mother and son were closely attached to each other and she undoubtedly wielded influence, particularly in the sphere of religious observances and the appointment of monks to senior posts in the religious hierarchy. Shrewd and practical, she had a mind of insatiable curiosity. Some of her questions often embarrassed me, as when she asked my opinion on my own dear friend Jigmie. She referred to him usually as Ha Trungpa (Administrator of Ha) and only very rarely as Lonchen (Prime Minister). I had always had the impression that Jigmie was fond of her, but it was evident from her questionings that she on her part had her reservations. It has to be remembered, on the other hand, that suspicion recurs as the dominant trait in the Bhutanese character in all the historical records that have come down to us to this time. Dynastic rivalries have been a constant feature in Bhutan's turbulent history and it is not surprising that the Queen-mother should have been anxious to glean from me any information that might be relevant to the security of her son and the ruling house.

Although Jigmie took me into confidence regarding most of his problems, there was one matter that he never disclosed to me and about which I came to know only after his departure from Thimphu. It is difficult to understand why there need have been so much secrecy or concern over the fact that the King entertained a mistress. Kings, too, are subject to human frailty, and there must be few normal males who have not at some juncture or other of their lives indulged in a season of extramarital sport. It can only be presumed that it was from his desire to spare his wife possible hurt that the King had enjoined the strictest secrecy over his little peccadillo, with a stern warning to all his subjects that the Queen must never know. Not long after the King's departure from Thimphu, the

secret, if indeed it ever was a secret, was out, for the lady gave birth to a son and invitations were openly conveyed to all important dignitaries in the capital to celebrate the happy event. Only I, it seems, was overlooked and denied the privilege of offering a scarf, in accordance with traditional practice, for the welfare and long life of the mother and her newborn babe.

It now at last began to dawn upon me that things were not going to be as simple as I in my innocence had originally imagined. Jigmie's brother, Lhendup, had recently been elevated to the post of Secretary-General in the Planning Department, but he had set his sights much higher and was not easily subject to control. Lhendup, so rumour went, had threatened to shoot 'the lady' if she should ever dare to make a public appearance. The lady, on the other hand, seemed rapidly to be gaining in influence and most of the senior officers were already beginning to pay her court. Far from her remaining in the secret obscurity of her home, I was soon to find her gracing a convivial celebration organized by the Army, where the wine flowed, to the accompaniment of song and dance, until the early hours of the morning. I did not know at the time, as we had not been introduced to each other, that she was one of a group of guests whom I was requested to give a lift back home after the party was over. She was Tibetan by extraction and of only slight education. She was plumpish in build and did not strike me as the style of woman to launch a thousand ships.

In January, I eventually succumbed to the pressures from all directions to take time off to see my newborn daughter. Even Jigmie's sister Tashi was enlisted to wear down my resistance and send me a shaming telegram to remind me of my marital responsibilities. As I was scheduled in any case to embark shortly on a world study-tour under a Ford Foundation Fellowship, I did not spend more time in Bombay than was demanded by paternal obligation. After the customary chopping and changing of decisions, we finally fixed upon Rashne as the name of our little daughter. And having accomplished this great labour, I felt free to hurry back to Bhutan for a final tour before setting off on my trip abroad.

My main purpose was to visit eastern Bhutan to examine the feasibility of establishing, with the help of Jesuit Fathers, a new

residential school, run on up-to-date methods, near and about the eastern Bhutan headquarters station of Tashigang. The inhabitants of eastern Bhutan are known as Shachups and do not speak the language of Thimphu and Punakha, which is more closely related to Tibetan and officially designated as Dzongkha. The Shachups are racially more akin to the tribes in the adjoining districts of Arunachal in India and had hitherto received scant attention from the Central Government. Through the co-operation and unremitting labour of the Jesuits, a splendid school has since been established near Tashigang to serve the educational needs of eastern Bhutan. In addition to the Jesuits, we also enlisted the good offices of the Salesian Order to establish a Technical Institute near Phuntsholing in southern Bhutan.

The inviting of these Christian orders to assist us in our work was an important decision and a significant departure from the Government's traditional policy of discouraging foreign missionaries. The Jesuits had indeed visited Bhutan as early as the seventeenth century, when they were afforded some facilities for starting a mission centre. The early Jesuits imagined that there might still be surviving, beyond the high Himalayas, some remnants of the Nestorian communities of the Middle Ages and it was with a view to ascertaining whether any Christian pockets could still be traced in the region that they undertook the arduous journey to the Tibetan plateau. A mission consisting of two Portuguese Fathers, Estevao Cacella and Joao Cabral, was despatched by the Malabar Provincial in 1626 to establish a Jesuit outpost at Shigatse in southern Tibet, and succeeded, despite many setbacks, in reaching Paro. The account of their travels and experience is of special significance, as they were the first Europeans to penetrate into Bhutan and be afforded opportunities for detailed study of the land and its people. We also have from them the first and only description by any European of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, founder of the deeply venerated institution of Dharma Raja. If, as seems probable, the Shabdrung lived between 1594 and 1652, he would have been thirty-two at the time of the Fathers' visit. (Some authorities place the Shabdrung's birth at 1534 and claim that he was nearing one hundred and fifty years of age when he shed his earthly vessel.) In an absorbing edition (*Early Jesuit*

*Travellers in Central Asia, 1603–1721*),[1] by the Salesian scholar C. Wessels, S.J., the personality and character of the Shabdrung as described by the Portuguese Fathers are vividly portrayed. Quoting from their account, Wessels records:

'He enjoys great regard for his gentleness, and not less for his abstinence from rice, flesh and fish, for he lives only on milk and fruits. At one time he passed three years in solitude living in a hut on a large projecting rock of a mountain without seeing or receiving anybody. With the aid of two ropes he drew up the necessary food to his inaccessible dwelling-place. He gave his time to prayer and in his leisure moments he made some images, one of which he showed us, an image of the face of God (*Imagem de vulto de Deos*) carved in white sandal wood, small but excellently made.'

He was also very accomplished in the art of painting; when Cacella showed him a picture of the archangel Raphael, he wished to make a copy of it and set to work at once. He enjoyed a great reputation as a scholar, and as such he was greatly respected by all the other great-lamas; for the same reason he always retained about him lamas from distant countries. The fact that the missionaries met him in tents here among the mountains was explained by the fact that people used to invite him to visit their districts, on which occasion he received great gifts of horses, cattle, rice, clothes and other articles, which formed his chief sourse of income. He lived with his lamas in these parts, where he was within easy reach of the others. For two months the missionaries followed the king in his progress from place to place among the mountains, after which they lived in his own house, which stood on the same mountain as his hermitage.

'The rocky soil really rendered the place unfit for habitation, but it had been chosen by the king with a view to protecting himself against another prince, the greatest of Potente,[2] who lived at eight days' distance and with whom he had been at war for some years. His name was Demba Cemba. The cause of their quarrel was that the Droma Rajah had refused to give him a bone of the body of his dead father, for which he had been urgently praying. On account of this same war the Droma Rajah did not reside in his town of Ralum, which was only at five days' distance.'

There are two more illustrations given by Cacella of the great reverence in which the Dharma Rajah, King and Great-Lama, is held. He is offered great presents by the people that at their death he may send them to heaven. When death draws near, the King is sent for,

[1] The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1924.

[2] i.e. north-western Bhutan.

and at the very moment of death he pulls out some of the man's hairs that he may help his soul to heaven. If he should pull it out before death, great harm would ensue.

As the months passed, the Fathers became convinced that, despite all the outward show of kindness by the Dharma Raja—his promise to build them a house and church at Paro and his granting them permission to preach Christianity—mission-work would have little chance of success. The Dharma Raja, however, was piqued at their desiring to leave Bhutan. 'Did not all the neighbouring countries know that they were his guests and that he considered this a great honour? Their departure would cast a slur upon him.'

The Fathers eventually managed to extricate themselves from Bhutan and reach Shigatse. The Dharma Raja did not forgive them and succeeded through his emissaries in rousing the lamas of Shigatse against the unfortunate Fathers by giving out that the main object of their visit was 'to pull down their pagodas and destroy their religion'.

Father Cacella died quite shortly after, in 1630, from illness combined with continous strain and fatigue. Father Cabral was recalled to Malabar and subsequently deputed to Ceylon. A later Father delivered in 1635 the following dismal verdict on the result of all the effort expended:

The risks are too great, the promise of success also is too uncertain, the King's only object is to obtain presents from the missionaries—therefore let the mission be relinquished.

Eight years later, Wessel goes on to tell us, there emerged a solitary Father to make yet another eloquent appeal to Europe in favour of 'Botente' and Tibet:

Want of men and money has compelled us to give up the mission, but we cannot leave the country entirely to itself. Great sacrifices have been made, Brother Bento de Goes has died in discovering it; after him Fathers Cacella and Diaz have passed away—let us not be less generous. The people are worth it, it is really good, and the state of things there is better than in Japan or Ethiopia. Let those who ask to be sent to these countries not forget the poor 'Bottos'. *Ite angeli veloces, ite ad gentem exspectantem.*[1]

[1] Go speedily, messengers of the Gospel, go speedily to the people that await you with expectation.

The appeal remained unanswered, and for three centuries and more, no missionary was found to take up the challenge of bringing to fulfilment Father Cacella's small but brave beginnings.

Jigmie and I felt that really dedicated people were needed for the establishing of educational institutions under the very rigorous living conditions prevailing in Bhutan at that time. While realizing that missionary orders might be motivated by the idea of proselytizing, it was our considered view that they would be unable to make much impact in a society where Buddhism had had such a strong and all-pervading hold for well over a thousand years. Unlike the hill tribes of Assam who, before the advent of the British, subscribed to none of the established world religions and could therefore be readily won over by Christian missionaries, the Bhutanese were Buddhists first and last and their entire lives were governed by the tenets of the *dharma* (religion). There was little risk therefore that the presence of Christian missionaries would constitute a threat to the established order or result in any clash of interests or loyalties. While Jigmie was responsible for inducing the Canadian Jesuits to involve themselves in the school at Tashigang in eastern Bhutan, the initiative in attracting the Salesians to set up a technical school near Phuntsholing in southern Bhutan was mainly mine. I had seen for myself the splendid Don Bosco Technical School established by the Salesians in Shillong and felt that this was the prime need for a newly-developing country which would soon be requiring a multitude of mechanics, carpenters, electricians, welders, masons and the like for manning the various new services to be set into motion under Bhutan's plan for economic development. I was anxious that the new generation of Bhutanese should retain a healthy respect for working with their hands and should not grow up in the illusion that the only aim of education was to secure a desk post in a Government office. I did not want to see in Bhutan a repetition of our tragic experience in India, where our so-called 'educated' consider it beneath their dignity to wield any tool more weighty than a pen.

After my visit to Tashigang and an inspection tour of the administrative headquarters at Samchi in south-western Bhutan, I proceeded to Calcutta to tie up the loose ends before embark-

ing upon my trip abroad. It was on my return to Calcutta that I was disturbed to learn of the serious tension that had arisen during my absence over the question of Army trucks operating between Thimphu and Phuntsholing. 'The lady' had evidently considered herself entitled to the free use of Government transport for trade and private purposes, and was availing herself of the privilege to such an extent that the movement of essential supplies between Phuntsholing and the capital was being seriously hampered. Jigmie found himself constrained at last to issue orders that the trucks should be transferred from the Army to the civil administration and not be utilized for any non-Governmental purpose save under formal authorization of the Transport Department. This seemed at the time to be an entirely reasonable proposition, but it angered the Chabda and the old guard of the Army who were going out of their way to win favour with the lady, and, through her, with the King. It was only much later, and in the light of subsequent events, that I realized the gravity of the implications. Jigmie's orders were executed by his subordinates with an excess of zeal, and the next time trucks were found operating without due authority on the lady's orders, the goods were summarily off-loaded and left lying unceremoniously by the wayside. While Jigmie intended no disrespect to his sovereign, tongues were beginning to wag. In an absolute monarchy, the favourites of the King enjoy a position of exclusive privilege, and an insult to a favourite is an insult to the King. Although the King was in Switzerland at the time, he had his sources of intelligence and there were doubtless mischievous parties who took the opportunity of exaggerating the facts to incense him against his Prime Minister. We came to know later at whose hand the assassin had received the weapon that fired the tragic shot on 5 April. But although the revelation caused such consternation at the time, a dispassionate appraisal of the sequence of events that preceded that fateful night would have removed all cause for surprise or shock.

# 5

# *Assassination*

---

And if, by any chance, I should not survive . . .

'I'm sorry, Nari, I've just received another call. It's difficult to believe, but I'm afraid there's nothing we can do—it's all over.' I informed Miss Naidu I would come up rightaway to Government house to avail myself of the special facilities for making priority telephone calls to Delhi and Switzerland. To the King, I sent a bare, factual telegram after failing to contact him by telephone:

Deeply regret to inform your Majesty of death at Phuntsholing of your Prime Minister Jigmie Dorji on Sunday night at ninethirty Stop He was apparently shot by some unknown person but no details are yet available Stop I am proceeding at once to Phuntsholing to enquire further Stop My most heartfelt condolences to your Majesties and children—Uncle Rustomji.

I next telephoned the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in Delhi, who had already received the news and was as overwhelmed and baffled as myself at this sudden turn of events. By now it was nearly midnight, and I packed a bag to catch the early morning shuttle-plane leaving Calcutta at 3 a.m. for the small outstation of Hasimara near the India–Bhutan border, from where half an hour's jeep drive would take me to Phuntsholing. As my wife had to stay behind to look after our baby daughter, my mother, ever-protective in times of crisis, insisted on accompanying me. Jigmie had been very fond of her, as indeed she was of him, and she was as distraught as myself at the terrible news.

On arrival at Phuntsholing, we proceeded at once to the side-room in the inspection bungalow where Jigmie had been laid out on the bare floor. His face was in perfect repose, show-

1 Shabdrung Rimpoche (from mural)

2 Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, the first King of Bhutan, and eldest son Jigme Wangchuk (second from left), *c.*1920

3 Raja Tobgay Dorji, Prime Minister, with Bhutanese delegates after signing of the Indo-Bhutan Treaty, 1949 (Jigmie, his son, standing on extreme right)

4 Raja Ugyen Dorji, Bhutan Agent for Foreign Affairs, *c.* 1906

5 Jigmie Palden Dorji, Ha Trungpa (Administrator of Ha), 1928

6 The Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot) and Rani Chuni Dorji at Namseyling, 1963

7 King Jigme Dorji, with the Queen, Rani Chuni and author (Dechencholing, 1955)

8 Princess Choki (centre), with Queen Mother (right), Jigmie Dorji and other family members (Bumthang, 1955)

9 Jigmie Dorji (centre), with brothers Ugyen Rimpoche (right) and Lhendup Dorji

10–11 *Sigpa Chedo* ceremony (1963) for the good fortune of Bhutan and the royal house. Symbolic images of: (10) the King and Je Khenpo and (11) the Queen Mother and Crown Prince

12 Homage to Jigmie Dorji as he is taken from Phuntsholing to Thimphu

13 The assassin under arrest

14 Brigadier Namgyal, Chief of the Army Staff, being led to trial

15 Brigadier Namgyal under escort after receiving sentence of death

16 Lhendup Dorji proceeding to Dechencholing to seek audience of the King


17 Reception party for the King at Calcutta (caricature)

18 King Jigme Dorji, with sisters Princess Choki (right) and Princess Deki

19 Shabdrung Rimpoche, reincarnate Lama, in author's home (Shillong, January 1963)

20 Lhendup Dorji

21 Tashi Dorji, sister of the Queen, *c.* 1955

22 Installation of Crown Prince, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, as Penlop (Governor) of Tongsa

ing nothing of the pain and agony of the shot. Miss Naidu was right. It was difficult to believe that such a vibrant personality had been stilled.

Jigmie's youngest brother, Lhendup, had meanwhile assumed full charge of the situation. The middle brother, Ugyen Rimpoche, had always been more interested in trade and had shown no inclination for Government service. The break-up of his marriage with the King's half-sister, Princess Choki, was not taken kindly by the King, and although, to outward appearances, relations between the two families continued much as before, Rimpoche's conduct was regarded as a slight on the royal house and never completely forgiven. But even if the King might not favour his entry into Government service, Rimpoche was temperamentally more suited to the freer life and independence of private business.

With his elder brother Rimpoche's unconcern for political prizes, Lhendup saw himself as Jigmie's natural heir. Jigmie's eldest son, Paljor, was in the U.K. and in any case too young and inexperienced to assume his father's mantle. Lhendup therefore quickly took charge, and, donning his shining ceremonial sword and majestic Bhutanese raiment, made it clear to the world that he had succeeded to his brother's office. Cornell-returned Lhendup had always been something of a playboy, and this was his moment of glory. With the King away in Switzerland and his eldest brother dead, he was supreme and savouring to the full the short-lived hours of omnipotence until the King's return. His triumphs had been up to now in the battlefields of Calcutta's night life, where there was none to rival his devastating good looks and singular flair. He had now ascended to a position of higher dignity, and heavy though was his grief at his brother's death, he was clearly relishing his new-found eminence.

We spent a day in Phuntsholing making preparations for escorting Jigmie's body to Thimphu and devising ways and means of tracking down the assassin. Indications were gradually coming to light that this was not the act of a lone fanatic but had been preplanned over a period of several months. There was talk that during Jigmie's visit to Thimphu a few weeks earlier there had been a plot to kill him immediately on his arrival at a reception prepared for him by the Army Chief,

Chabda Namgyal. By a stroke of good fortune, Jigmie went straight on ahead without breaking journey at the reception point and the assassin was foiled of his opportunity.

A second attempt was rumoured to have been planned at the border town of Samchi in southern Bhutan on the night preceding his death. After leaving Calcutta by air for Bagdogra on the north Bengal border, Jigmie had driven onward by car to the Bhutan district headquarters of Samchi *en route* to Phuntsholing. At Samchi he was scheduled to have a meeting with Mr Avtar Singh, India's representative accredited to Bhutan, who had come down from his headquarters at Gangtok in Sikkim specifically for this purpose. Jigmie, it was rumoured, had sensed that all was not well at Samchi, and apprehending that an attempt might be made on his life while he was asleep in bed, stretched himself on the floor for safety when he retired for the night.

The night passed without event, and his meeting with Mr Singh over, Jigmie moved on to Phuntsholing about seventy miles eastward by road. Everything appeared to be normal on his arrival at Phuntsholing. After completing his official business, he dined as usual with his friends at the inspection bungalow and then settled down, with his brother Rimpoche, Rimpoche's wife Savitri and some others, to a session of cards. He was sitting in his accustomed place at the head of the dining table, which had been duly cleared after the meal. Suddenly, at the precise moment that he happened to be flicking his cigarette lighter, there was a loud report and he lunged forward. The rest of the gathering thought for a moment that he was playing one of his customary party pranks until they saw a stream of blood spurting sharply from his body as he crumpled up, clutching at his stomach. But by now it was too late, and the assassin, who had fired the shot from a window ten feet to the rear of Jigmie's chair, had already fled away into the night. Savitri's hand was slightly injured as the bullet grazed her arm, but the others, including Rimpoche, escaped unhurt.

Jigmie's wife, Tessla, had meanwhile reached Hasimara near the Bhutan–India border by train from Calcutta. The news was broken to her on her arrival by car at Phuntsholing and she reached her husband's side only a few minutes before he passed away. It was clear from his last words that he was at a loss to

understand who could have shot him and why. But his prime thought was for the King. 'My King, my King,' he repeated, 'tell my King that I served him as best I could.' He also expressed a wish that there should be no wholesale vendetta in the traditional Bhutanese style. His final utterance, whispered almost inaudibly as he lay alone in the arms of his wife, the last light of life flickering to a close, was the Buddhist prayer, *Sangeyla chyapsum cheo.*[1]

With the requisition of police dogs from the Bengal Government, we set off on the assassin's tracks. After some time, the dogs seemed to have lost track of the scent and progress slackened. We could not in any case make much useful contribution in the pursuit and finally decided to return to Phuntsholing, leaving the dogs to the more skilful administrations of their handlers.

Jigmie's body had meanwhile been embalmed, as there was no certainty how long it would be before the cremation could take place, and we set off next morning, in solemn procession of jeeps and trucks, along the road to Thimphu that had been constructed mainly on Jigmie's initiative. Less than a year back, Jigmie had escorted me on my first journey up this selfsame road, both of us full of plans and hopes for the future. Little could I have imagined that our next journey together would be his last and that it would be I who, as though in return, would be escorting my dear friend to his final resting place.

Up to now I had been too overwhelmed by the shock of the assassination to be able to think much about its motivation. It was after we had reached Thimphu and received news of the arrest of the assassin that the climate abruptly changed and the atmosphere became suddenly charged with heavy tension. With my background as a professional administrator, I had been insisting all along that special precautions must be taken to ensure that, as soon as the assassin was caught, his statement was recorded forthwith before a competent magistrate before he could be influenced by interested parties to change his story. I had no idea at the time of the implications of my well-intentioned advice. What was my surprise to learn therefore that persons in the highest echelons of the Bhutanese aristocracy

[1] 'I take refuge in the Buddha.'

seemed greatly put out when they heard of the assassin's arrest and panic-stricken at the prospect of his statement being placed on record. The reason was not far to seek, for we were soon to learn of the assassin's shattering confession—that it was from none less than the Army Chief, Chabda Namgyal, the King's uncle, that the assassin had received his orders to fire the fatal shot.

Jigmie's mother, Rani Chuni, stayed most of the year at Kalimpong, but also owned a property in a quiet, lovely retreat at Namseyling, about ten miles short of Thimphu on the main road from Phuntsholing. It was here that we had taken Jigmie to lie at rest until arrangements could be made for the State cremation in the capital. I had known Rani Chuni ever since I was first invited to stay in her home at Kalimpong in 1942, and my respect, admiration and affection for her has grown with the years. Rani Chuni was alone in Namseyling when news of her son's death was brought to her by her daughter, Tashi. Jigmie was the dearest of her sons and I know how dearly he too loved his mother. I shall not easily forget the restraint and the calm fortitude with which she received her son's body from our hands and laid it in her private chapel for peace and rest. I knew that it could be only her faith, her religion, that sustained her and gave her strength at such a time. I was reminded of her brother, Sir Tashi Namgyal, the late Chogyal of Sikkim, to whom I had had the heavy duty, as Prime Minister of Sikkim, of breaking the news of his daughter-in-law, Princess Sangey Deki's death. His expression manifested neither surprise nor grief, only peace and serenity. Here too was spiritual acceptance as I had rarely found outside the Buddhist fold.

Rani Chuni's house was perched on the upper slopes of the Thimphu valley, and strategically well positioned for purposes of defence. News soon began to trickle through that it was not only Jigmie but all the leading members of the Dorji family who had been marked out for assassination—and would not even now be spared. According to the plot as originally framed, the deed was to be performed by two persons, and a grenade was to have been thrown amidst the assembled party. Something, however, had gone amiss in coordination, and only one of the assassins was available in Phuntsholing at the crucial moment

of the deed. Had the plot unfolded according to plan, the second assassin would have hurled a grenade into the gathering and the entire party surrounding Jigmie would have been eliminated at a single swoop.

As the ramifications of the plot began gradually to come to light, Namseyling was speedily fortified, with some trenches dug around post-haste on all sides. Lhendup had set off already from Phuntsholing to Calcutta to receive the King on his return from Switzerland, and Rimpoche, who had undergone a course of military training with the Indian Army, was entrusted with the arrangements for Namseyling's defence. The Dorjis apprehended that, at any moment, the Army Chief would order his troops to march onto Namseyling and make a clean sweep of the entire Dorji line. There was danger that the Chabda, with the Army's support, might even make a bid to overthrow the King. All persons close to the Dorjis therefore rallied to Namseyling's defence and sought refuge within its perimeter walls. For myself, I remained solitarily, in my solitary room in the Palace guest-house, trusting in the Almighty to keep me safe.

The tension mounted as news was received of the King's impending return. There had been excitement enough when the assassin, one Jambey, a corporal in the army, had divulged that it was the King's uncle, Chabda Namgyal who had ordered the act. But the Chabda was known to be an officer of phlegmatic temperament who was unlikely to have dared such a deed on his own initiative. Rumour was already afloat that, in giving his orders, the Chabda had confided to the assassin that they had the approval of the King. Whether in fact the King had approved the orders was, at the time, anybody's guess. But the very mention of the King's name raised the drama to a higher and more crucial dimension. The Bhutanese, as history shows, are a people who do not do things by halves. If a family is in disfavour, it is eliminated root and stock. Jigmie's assassination might well therefore have been the prelude to 'operation extirpation' and nobody was quite sure whose name was on the list.

The King too was not without his anxieties. If suspicions were being spread abroad, even though unfounded, of his complicity in the assassination, there would most certainly be

attempts to take revenge. His trump card was the Army, and that too only on the assumption that his uncle, the Chabda, remained loyal and was still in control; for there was no saying whether his authority had since been usurped by the three young Colonels in their impatience to rid themselves of the old guard.

The King, fully alive to the potentialities of the situation, lost no time in communicating orders that, pending his return, the Government would vest in a triumvirate consisting of his half-brother, Drasho Namgyal Wangchuk, Lhendup and the Chabda. In issuing the order, the King would have had no knowledge as yet of the assassin's statement implicating the Chabda in Jigmie's assassination. A circumstance to the King's advantage was the presence in Thimphu of a detachment of the Indian Military Training establishment. Although limited in number, it was under the command of an officer who was known to be in the close confidence of the King and could be safely relied upon, in the event of a show-down, to bring the full weight of the force to bear in the King's support.

The King took the precaution, on reaching Calcutta from Zurich, of executing a document appointing Lhendup as Regent in the event of his death. He was still a very sick man, and there was, besides, no certainty how the situation would develop on his return to his Kingdom. There were already rumours afloat that the King's life was in danger. The morning of the King's expected arrival in Thimphu saw the senior civil and military officers of the station assembled at the helipad on the outskirts of the capital, with a Guard of Honour of the Bhutan army lined up to do the honours. The critical hour was drawing near, and in the fear and frenzy of the moment anything seemed possible. Jigmie's brother Rimpoche also reported at the helipad for the reception, discreetly armed. If Jigmie could be shot, it might well be his turn next or his brother Lhendup's. And if the Chabda had designs to harm the King, Rimpoche was ready to fill him with lead before he could accomplish his purpose.

But the main target of attention was the Chabda, as it was he who held the key to the secret of the deed. With what countenance, we wondered, would we see him receive his sovereign? With an expression of guilt? Or with assurance and pride as in

a deed well done? Or in fear because of the awful blunder? For the assassin had talked too much. His mouth was to have been stopped with a bullet immediately after the act. But everything had not proceeded according to plan. Somebody would have to pay.

As the tension of waiting was beginning to tell on everybody's nerves, we heard at last, in the far distance, the chop-chop of a helicopter coming our way. It was not long before we were all looking up to the sky as the chopper loomed into view. Our doubts would soon be resolved. We would watch if the King was in anger or in sorrow, and would judge for ourselves whether his expression was of grief or guilt. But our waiting was to no purpose. The helicopter passed us by and took its course directly to the Palace helipad at Dechencholing, where the King was received, quietly and without ceremony, by his brother and his personal bodyguard. He was the shrewdest man on earth and was taking no unnecessary risks. And there was relief all round that the King was at last safe back in his Kingdom.

The crucial question now uppermost in everybody's mind was whether the King would agree to the arrest and trial of his uncle, the Chabda, who, as was common knowledge, had given the order for Jigmie's assassination. My own situation was delicate. Although staying at the Palace guest-house, I daily visited Namseyling to spend some time with Jigmie's mother, Rani Chuni, to console her in her grief. *Amala*, as we called her (Sikkimese for mother), came of the Sikkim royal family. As a young woman with a mind of her own, she had married Raja Tobgay Dorji in the face of fierce opposition from the Sikkimese aristocracy, who considered it derogatory for a Sikkimese Princess to be given in marriage to a Bhutanese 'commoner'. The Sikkimese ruling house had traditionally contracted matrimonial alliances with the nobility of Tibet, and although Tobgay Dorji functioned as the Bhutan King's Agent for foreign affairs and had been conferred the title of Raja by the British, he was not of royal stock and, in any case, they regarded the Dragon-Kingdom as something of a backwater in comparison with their Denjong (the Sikkimese name for their country), hallowed in Buddhist lore and scriptures as the sacred Valley of Rice.

With each day that the Chabda remained at large, the

tension grew, and the delay in ordering his arrest was assumed by some to point to the King's sympathy with the perpetrators of the crime. But the King was not to be hustled. Whatever decision he might take, he realized the imperative necessity of carrying the army with him, as precipitous action against its commander might well lead to a military revolt. He was watching and biding his time. His tactical caution was, however, misunderstood, and the tempestuous Lhendup, unable to keep patience, resolved to approach the King for audience. Protocol in Bhutan is rigid and even the highest in the land have to await their sovereign's summons. On receiving confirmation that he would be granted audience, Lhendup flew by helicopter from Namseyling to the Palace helipad at Dechencholing, escorted by his chosen henchmen, each heavily armed in case of treachery from any quarter. For if the Chabda had struck once, he could strike again. On arrival, he entered the Palace alone and was ushered to the royal presence. His escort, waiting outside, had been enjoined to keep strict watch lest any harm should befall their master. But the interview passed without incident. After urging that the principal parties involved in the assassination should be arrested without further delay, Lhendup re-emerged from the Palace to rejoin his much relieved escort and return to Namseyling.

The date and time of the Chabda's arrest had to be kept a closely guarded secret, as it was not possible to foretell with certainty how the army would react. I was called one morning by the King and instructed to get myself prepared. 'Uncle, I have decided to arrest Chabda. There may be trouble from the army, and I'm getting the Palace Guard lined up just in case. You'd better get a few things packed. If there's trouble, leave the guest-house and come in here. It will be safer in the Palace with the guards.' Less than an hour later, I crossed Chabda as he was walking up, alone, from the outer gate of the Palace towards the main entrance. We exchanged a few words as usual and went our respective ways. Within a few minutes he entered the Palace, was arrested, handcuffed and placed under detention. Not a murmur was raised in protest, and the army remained loyal to its King.

With the Chabda's removal from office, Ugyen Tangbi, one of the three young Colonels, was appointed in his place, with

the designation of Wangpon (Chief). Ugyen was a solid officer, slow-moving but stable. The King quickly proceeded to build him up and it was not long before he was numbered among the King's closest confidants. With the army firmly under control, the King's main fears were set at rest. The Dorjis too felt easier in mind after the Chabda's arrest, though they could not conceal their unhappiness at the reports that the suspects were being unusually pampered during their confinement instead of being treated as common criminals.

With fresh and startling facts coming daily to light as the investigation into Jigmie's assassination proceeded, the atmosphere was becoming charged to exploding point, and it was considered politic to hurry on with Jigmie's cremation ceremony before events took a more dramatic turn. Jigmie's body was accordingly brought from his mother's house at Namseyling and laid in state in the same enclave between the Dzong and the river Thinchu[1] within which his father's last rites had been performed eleven years earlier. The arrangements for the ceremony were quickly set in motion and Thimphu was soon humming with activity as huts started springing up for housing the invitees to the funeral rites.

The then Minister of State for External Affairs, Mrs Laxmi Menon, and the Foreign Secretary, Mr Gundevia, attended the obsequies as representatives of the Government of India, and their presence afforded a convenient opportunity for discussions with the King regarding the shape of things to come. Lhendup, with his sights set for Prime Ministership, hinted that I should relieve him of his post of Secretary-General and was disconcerted when I gratefully declined. When next I met the King, he asked me—and it was the first time he had put me such a question since my assignment—'Uncle, when you finish your time in Bhutan and go back to India, will Gundevia be your boss?'

I could sense from his tone that it must have been suggested to him that a Government of India official could not be implicitly relied upon for advice, as he would be answerable, in the final resort, to his own parent Government. Gundevia had himself remarked to me that, as my appointment had been

[1] Popularly known as Wangchu.

primarily at Jigmie's instance, I might find it embarrassing to function under the changed set-up.

My own feeling was that it would be ungallant on my part to back out at this juncture. Many years earlier, when Jigmie was undergoing a critical lung operation in Switzerland, he had written to me to look after the King in case anything happened to himself. It is a letter of much significance, as it dispels the absurd insinuations that have sometimes been made regarding Jigmie's loyalty to the King. Ending his letter, he wrote:

> Look after yourself, Uncle and if by any chance I should not survive, please, Uncle, help my H.M. and Bhutan as much as you can.

If, on Jigmie's death, I had abandoned Bhutan, as so many had supposed I would and should, it would have been a grievous betrayal of my dear friend's confidence. I was well aware that, in the strained atmosphere of torn relations between the two families, there was little I could achieve in concrete terms. But it would have been cowardice to shirk the attempt. I was in any case to proceed abroad shortly on a Ford Foundation Fellowship and a decision on my continuance in Bhutan could more appropriately be arrived at on my return in the light of the developments that might take place meanwhile. I was equally clear in my mind that it would not be in the fitness of things for me to join in the stampede for prizes of office. If I was needed on my return as friend, philosopher and guide, I should happily offer my services in such capacity.

The funeral itself was a medley of genuine heart-felt grief, religious devotion and uninhibited conviviality. Strict protocol was observed, and friends of the family, including the Sikkim royal house, presented scarves, offered condolences and lit lamps. There were others from whose expression and conduct one could infer that the ceremony was little more than a necessary formality. Jigmie's eldest son, Paljor, flown back from the U.K. for the occasion, was quickly taken under Lhendup's wing and as quickly infected by his uncle's boisterous élan. Grief gave place before long to feasting and revelry. Buddhism, I knew, held death to be a release, but, for myself, I would have preferred a greater measure of restraint and prayerful quiet while my dear friend's ashes were still warm and awaiting immersion beside the river-bank.

The funeral rites completed, all attention was focused on the investigation into the assassination. Jigmie enjoyed a wide assortment of friends, one of whom, an Englishman by the name of Edward St George, besides sharing Jigmie's interest in racing, was a barrister and helped out with legal advice whenever required. Soon after the assassination, Edward flew out to Thimphu from London, and his services were enlisted by the Palace for assistance in the processing of the trial. A team of investigators had been appointed by the King, but it soon became apparent that facts were coming to light which might prove a serious embarrassment. Besides the Chabda, the Quartermaster-General, Bacchu Phugel, had also been arrested and placed under detention in a strong-room within the Palace compound. Although the Chabda gave the formal order, it was the Quartermaster-General who was suspected to be the real brains behind the plot to assassinate Jigmie. Cunning and ambitious, he was known to have been hostile to Jigmie, mainly on account of the new policy of inducting young blood into the Army and cutting away the dead matter that was impeding its progress as an effective fighting arm. Unlike the Chabda, who conducted himself with a certain dignity and reserve, the Quartermaster-General was the loose-tongued sort who could not be trusted to be discreet. He had already said too much. I was not surprised, therefore, on being awakened early one morning, to learn that he had been found stabbed in his cell during the night. A dagger, it was rumoured, had been 'inadvertently' left in the strong-room. Whether he took the hint or was killed has not yet been conclusively divulged.

It was becoming apparent, as the investigations proceeded, that if disclosures that might prove embarrassing in high places were to be averted, the trial must be concluded with the least delay and persons who knew too much executed or otherwise put out of the way. Under Edward St George's adept stage-management, the charges were framed, evidence recorded, arguments heard, and sentences delivered and executed within what must constitute a record for a case of such public import. Edward had without doubt earned his keep.

For myself, I had already postponed my trip abroad once and the time had come to finally leave. It was with mixed feelings that I drew myself away. I did not wish to abandon my

friends if I could still be of help to them. And yet, as I took off from Calcutta airport, I felt a sense of infinite relief that I would be free for a while from the tensions and strains of the preceding months. A few hours later, in Hong Kong, I heard on the radio that the Chabda and the assassin had been publicly executed by a firing squad on the army parade-ground at Thimphu. But I knew full well this was not the end of the drama.

# 6

# *'A Colossal Insult'*

---

> Anyone who insults me in my own Kingdom must pay for it —pay and many times over.

Kyoto, Honolulu, Santa Fe—these I shall certainly remember. But when other memories fade, I shall hear still, floating back, the echoes of music from Edinburgh, Glyndbourne, Lausanne, Salzburg, incomparable Salzburg. God bless Mr Ford for affording me this much needed respite and expansion of the mind and spirit after the constricting, albeit fulfilling, years in my mountain retreats of Shillong, Gangtok and Thimphu. The scope of my study tour was the survey of projects (mainly in the fields of forestry and dairying) that would be relevant to a predominantly agricultural, developing country. I also wished to study, with reference to my experience of work among the tribal communities of north-eastern India, the United States administration's policy *vis-à-vis* the American Indians and their integration with the mainstream of the country's culture. Even more important, to my mind, was the opportunity afforded to see the world on the move. A former Governor of Assam, Sir Andrew Clow, had once made the very pertinent observation that I.C.S. officers posted for protracted periods to the Lushai (now Mizo) hills tended towards eccentricity and the loss of a sense of proportion. This would apply equally to all places where an intelligent and active mind cannot be kept in healthy circulation through the infusion and stimulus of fresh ideas. My study tour reminded me that my own little world was not the only world and that my attitudes and approaches could do with some reshaping in the context of the radical changes that were taking place all over the world.

It was during my return journey, in Zurich, that I made contact again with Bhutan and her stormy affairs. For four

months I had almost deliberately isolated myself from Bhutan, and it was with nothing less than shock that I learnt, in Switzerland, of the extraordinary turn events had taken during this period. The King was on a visit to Zurich for a medical check-up. What was unusual, however, was that the Queen had remained behind in Bhutan and he was accompanied on this occasion by his mother, apart, of course, from members of his personal staff. When I called on him in his flat, he gave me a résumé of the unhappy developments since my departure from Bhutan. Things were not going well, he told me, either internally or with the Government of India. Lhendup had been tactless with the officials of the Government of India at a time when Bhutan needed friends and a breathing space for recovery and the restoration of stable conditions. The King was also distressed that mischief was being sought to be created by meddlesome people between himself and the Queen. He had tried his best to spare the Queen hurt and had exercised more discretion and restraint in his *affaire de coeur* than others in his position might have cared to do. He did not say much more, but advised that I should await his instructions in Calcutta before moving up to Thimphu on the conclusion of my tour.

The King's Secretary, Lawrence Sitling, filled in for me the details of the King's brief summary. The Queen, according to Lawrence, had all this time known nothing of the King's *affaire*, and her family had also thought it unwise to cause her needless distress by enlightening her. As long as the King was discreet, there was no need for undue worry. The issue, however, assumed a totally unexpected dimension when investigations into the assassination unearthed the identity of the pistol that fired the fatal shot. The pistol, it transpired, had been loaned to the assassin by the 'lady'. And, as if that were not serious enough, it was a weapon that had been gifted to her by the King.

The Dorji family were, not surprisingly, angered and unnerved by this startling disclosure. What had been regarded up to now as a casual liaison suddenly presented itself in a different light altogether and the King's involvement with the lady was seen as a dangerous threat. The 'lady' had given sons to the King, and the Tibetans are a scheming, ambitious people. The succession was in jeopardy and it was no longer safe to leave the Queen in ignorance of the hazardous state of affairs.

That the King should present a pistol to a favourite was no crime, and he need have had no notion of the use to which the weapon would be put. But tempers had risen and the gravest suspicions were aroused. The King had become, overnight, a security risk, from whom nobody could be considered safe. The Crown Prince, it was decided, must be secretly and speedily smuggled out of Bhutan before he too was snuffed out of existence. And it was considered derogatory to the self-respect and dignity of the Queen, apart from the hazard to her life, to remain any longer under the same roof as the King. The unhappy Queen, beset by problems on every side, decided to move for a while to her mother's house in Namseyling for quiet and peace of mind.

Everything, it seemed, was in a state of pandemonium, with recurrent brushes over issues of the most trifling nature between Lhendup and the King. The King found it increasingly difficult to control his self-appointed Prime Minister and the point was soon reached when he felt relieved to avail himself of the opportunity of visiting his doctors in Zurich to be free from the tensions and turmoils in his kingdom.

I used to drop in to visit the King from time to time at his *pied à terre* in Zurich, but we talked mostly of the lighter things of life—my shopping list, the trinkets I had picked up for my wife on the London pavements, the Bhutanese cuisine in his Zurich establishment, the well-worn, solitary pair of Bata shoes in which I had tramped the streets of Japan, U.S A. and Europe. I could sense that there was more he wanted to tell, but that he was holding it back until he felt the moment was ripe. He arranged one evening that we should go to the theatre together and see a German rendering of 'My Fair Lady'. He had a puckish sense of fun, and the choice of the play was not, I thought, entirely fortuitous.

The Kremlin, the Hermitage, Samarkand,—and then back at last to Calcutta and the complex involutions of the Bhutan drama. I had had a foretaste already at Zurich of what to expect, but what I came to hear now was beyond all my imaginings. It was apparent that plots had been set on foot, after the disclosure of the pistol's identity, to take swift vengeance on the 'lady'. According to one of the many sensational rumours afloat, the King had himself issued secret orders to his

Army Chief, before leaving Bhutan for Switzerland, to 'accidentally' do away with the lady as having been the cause of so much distress in his home and crisis to the country. Bewildered, and in fear that her life was in danger, she hurriedly gathered a handful of her attendants and proceeded towards the frontier with the intention of slipping away from Bhutan and seeking asylum in India until the King's return. The crisis was gravely and irremediably precipitated when an over-zealous official despatched instructions to the border checkpost that the lady and her entourage should be forcibly detained and not allowed, under any circumstances, to cross the Bhutan–India frontier.

The instructions were subsequently countermanded, but too late, after the damage had already been done and the party had already been arrested, searched and detained. The King had taken the precaution to arrange for all important developments to be cabled to him in Switzerland and was incensed beyond measure at the report that advantage was being taken of his absence to intimidate and humiliate his favourites. He had placed his special trust in his young Army Chief, Wangpon Ugyen Tangbi, and had it conveyed to him by cable that he was authorized, indeed ordered, to resort to whatever action he deemed fit, to the extent of taking life if necessary, to maintain the King's honour. It was apparent from the King's message that he entertained fears for the safety of his half-brother, Drasho Namgyal Wangchuk, for he made it clear to Tangbi that he would be held personally responsible for his well-being. He also wished it to be conveyed to Drasho Wangchuk that he should remain in Bhutan until his own return.

Jigmie's sister, Tashi, was expected in Calcutta from Hong Kong the day following my own return, and I proceeded to the airport, as was my wont, to welcome her home. Within minutes of our meeting, I was taken by storm. Was I so green as not to be aware of the inner motivations behind her brother's assassination? Had I not cared to know that the most extravagant presents had been offered by royal relations to the Chabda immediately after the deed as reward for services rendered? It was common knowledge that the investigations had been perfunctory and the trial a mere mockery. One of the main culprits was the 'lady', and it was contrary to all canons of justice that she of all persons should have been let off scot-free. The execu-

tion of the Chabda in such indecent haste was a deliberate ruse to suppress the truth. Tashi had attempted, until the very end, to get the execution stayed. She had personally intercepted the guard as the Chabda was being led to the execution-ground and pleaded for time in the hope that he would yield at last and unlock the secret that he, and he alone, held. The Chabda, it was reported, had admitted that he had been assured he would under no circumstances be sentenced to death for plotting the assassination, but only imprisoned for a token period and later released. The inference was obvious. And was it not strange that the bullet that had killed Jigmie had mysteriously disappeared before ballistic tests could be carried out to establish that it had been fired from the pistol loaned by the infamous lady. Far from prosecuting the lady, the King was not even lifting a finger to control her growing influence. She was holding court at Bumthang in Central Bhutan as though she were herself the Queen and had been seen wearing the Queen's ceremonial head-dress, surmounted by its great orb of gold. This the Queen had presented to the King in order that the gold might be melted down and utilized for preparing the sacred symbol to be affixed, in memory of her father, on the roof of the new Thimphu Dzong. Edward St George, who had claimed to be Jigmie's friend, was siding now, complained Tashi, with his enemies. The proceedings of the trial[1] were a parody of the facts, so much whitewash, fabricated by Edward to exculpate the 'lady'. The King was a man of loose morals, with neither conscience nor sense. It was madness for the Queen, after all that had happened, to even think of continuing in any relationship with her husband.

I could see that the months of strain had taken their toll. I had known Tashi as a sensible, generous-hearted girl. As the elder of Raja Dorji's two daughters, it was Tashi who had been originally earmarked for marriage to the heir to the Bhutan throne. But she had always been headstrong and wilful in spirit, and her father, Raja Dorji, was rumoured to have hinted to the young Prince that he might find in the younger sister, Kesang, a gentler and more tractable life's partner. It was Tashi's well-intentioned, protective concern for the Queen that had generated all this wild hysteria. She had convinced herself

[1] For proceedings of the trial, see Appendix III at page 130.

of the King's unreliability, and, being a determined young woman, would leave no stone unturned to save, as she supposed in all good faith, her endangered sister.

Following soon after Tashi from Hong Kong came Lhendup from Bhutan. Whenever Jigmie moved in Calcutta, it was unobtrusively, like any private person, with nothing of pomp and ceremony. With Lhendup, there was flamboyance and pageantry. Pilot-cars, escorts, police outriders. screaming sirens—all Calcutta must be made aware that Bhutan had arrived. But for all the outward splash and splendour, I could sense that Lhendup too, no less than his sister, was suffering from serious nervous strain.

The King, he protested, was not cooperating, with the result that he was finding increasing difficulty in discharging his official responsibilities. The King had demonstrated by various acts that he had lost trust in him and was bent on causing him humiliation. For the Queen's sake, he had borne it all with patience. But what had hurt and shocked him and his family most were the King's two final acts before leaving Bhutan for Switzerland. He had ordered that the Army Chief, Tangbi, would not be subject to Lhendup's control but would remain directly responsible to the King. And secondly, a directive was issued to all officers warning them, in terms of an old Bhutanese proverb, that 'there could not be two heads on a single yak' and that if any person dared to set himself up as a parallel head in Bhutan, he would be totally exterminated together with all the members of his family. These two acts, in Lhendup's view, were clearly indicative of the King's lack of confidence in his chief executive, and it had become impossible for him to continue functioning under such open humiliation. He had taken the decision therefore to call on the King in Zurich and speak out his mind to him. If the King had reservations about his manner of functioning, he was prepared to resign. This was indeed the only honourable course, as he had no wish to cling to office if he was not wanted. He had reached this decision after protracted discussions with his colleagues. They had tried to dissuade him from entertaining thoughts of resignation as this would render their own position in Bhutan even more perilous. They saw in Lhendup a prop and support for themselves, and were convinced that his services were indispensable to the

country in this hour of crisis. They were fearful, moreover, of the King's wrath over the lady's arrest and they had pleaded with Lhendup to explain their predicament to the King so that on his return to Bhutan they might not be victimized and unjustly punished. But if Lhendup failed to appease the King, they saw no alternative but to flee the country, as there would be danger to their lives in remaining at their posts and facing the consequences of the King's ire.

There was a strange amalgam of the dramatic and the fantastic in Lhendup's personality. Despite all the tension, intrigue and tragedy of the situation, he had thought fit to invite Shirley MacLaine for a holiday in Bhutan to relax in the unsullied peace of the mountains and absorb the quintessential spirit of the holy Buddha. Within seconds of confiding in me that he had come to the end of his tether and could stand the strain no longer, he was away like the wind with the scintillating Shirley to his customary convivial haunts.

It was about this time that I visited Gangtok on a call from the Chogyal of Sikkim, and I thought I would take the opportunity to drop in, on my return journey, at Kalimpong to pay my respects to Jigmie's mother, Rani Chuni. It was during this visit to Sikkim that I came to learn of a high-level meeting that had been called at Bhutan House in Kalimpong and attended by senior civil and army officers of the Bhutan Government, including the three young Colonels. The King, as was expected, had struck, and final counsel was being taken by Lhendup with his colleagues regarding the next move. It was clear from the King's cable to Tangbi that his wrath had been terrifyingly aroused and that no one whom he might suspect to have betrayed his trust would be spared. There was only one hope now, a slender hope, the Queen. If the King was to be appeased at all, the Queen, and the Queen alone, might win him over.

I called on Rani Chuni at Kalimpong after my visit to Gangtok and found her, to my sorrow, distraught and showing signs of the terrible strain through which she was passing. What had particularly pained her was that the King had never even written her a line of consolation on the loss of her son. Lhendup and his officers had dispersed from Kalimpong on the conclusion of their deliberations, and she was utterly alone. Her anxiety was for her daughter. The Queen, it seemed, had resigned

herself to let bygones be bygones and to rejoin her husband in Switzerland if that would be helpful in bringing about a reconciliation between the two families. But it was the King who was now demurring. In response to the Queen's suggestion that she should join him in Zurich to attend on him in his sickness, he had declined the offer, replying that her visit was not necessary 'if it was on his account'.

I returned to Calcutta from Kalimpong to find Lhendup busily finalizing his plans to contact the King. He proposed telling the King firmly of the impossibility of his functioning effectively if the King lacked confidence in him. He felt it only fair that the King should take his time in coming to a decision. But if the King had made up his mind that he no longer needed Lhendup, there was no point in Lhendup staying on in Bhutan. The telephone lines between Calcutta and Switzerland were kept buzzing, but there was no confirmation that the King would grant Lhendup audience. Lhendup's strategy had been to report to his colleagues the King's reaction to his talks, after which they would decide their next plan of action. What had not been provided for in the plans was the contingency that King would refuse Lhendup audience, leaving everybody and everything in a state of perpetual suspense.

After arranging for his Secretary to escort Shirley to Bhutan on a guided tour, Lhendup took leave of us to make his peace with his sovereign. For all his outward bravado, he realized, deep within, that he had shot his bolt. 'I will probably not be coming back to Bhutan, Uncle,' he confided to me at our parting, 'please do whatever you can to help things out.'

It was at this critical juncture that I received in the post a letter addressed to me as 'Uncle Rustomji'. The letter was from Switzerland and in the hand of the King. It was to inform me that he had received news of the 'lady's' arrest and that he was not amused:

I need not tell you what an insult it is for me (about which I care very little) but also it is a colossal (*bom, bom*[1]) insult for my country (which means everything for me). I am not going to take this insult lying down. Anyone who insults me in my own Kingdom must pay for it—

[1] A dig at my over-fond bandying of the adjective *bom* (Bhutanese for *huge*) in my efforts at prattling in Bhutanese.

and pay many times over. I know Lumpy's ulterior motive and I always tried my best to avoid trouble—but here I am. Anyway I will tell you the whole story when I see you. I only want to tell you that I will need your help more than ever now and I know you will not be lacking.

In a hurry. Excuse the mistakes.

Sincerely,
Jigme

Cham
8 November 1964

It was clear from the King's letter that an upheaval was imminent, and an upheaval of the most serious dimension. Lhendup, we heard, had not succeeded in obtaining audience of the King, and the King's response to the Queen's tentative offer to join him in Zurich had also not been encouraging. There was nothing to be done but to await the Royal Presence.

The ground prepared, the King announced his return. The Secretary-General and Foreign Secretary to the Government of India flew over from Delhi to receive the King at Calcutta and hold discussions regarding the most recent developments. Although the King has a residence at Calcutta, where the Queen and children were staying at the time, it was arranged that the whole family should be invited to Government House as the guests of West Bengal's Governor, Miss Padmaja Naidu.

The airport reception and the car cavalcade to Government House presented problems of protocol on account of the strained relations between the King and Queen. The Queen carried herself with the most perfect dignity and composure as we awaited the aeroplane's landing. There were few who could have guessed from her appearance the emotions within her troubled and anxious heart. The King had given ample evidence of his displeasure, and she must have been worried as to how he would respond at their meeting on the tarmac. Soon after the plane came to a halt, the King emerged, walked down the stairway, spoke a few affectionate words to his children and stepped into the waiting car. On arrival at Government House and after the King and Queen had been shown into their apartments, the Queen suggested that I should stay on with the family to lunch, to lighten the strained atmosphere as I rather supposed. We had not been together for more than a few minutes before the King fished out from his bag a porcelain

bust of Beethoven which he had spotted in a Zurich music establishment. No gift could have pleased me more and I wondered how, despite the pressure of his heavy State and family worries, he could have thought of remembering the composer of my heart.

As we sat to lunch, I was touched by the Queen's gentle and constant concern for her husband's health and comfort—small acts, as when she personally adjusted and readjusted the ceiling fans to the precise speed that was to his liking. The King's manner was in marked contrast and he showed an almost callous indifference to her wifely attentions. I had seen them together in happier days and thus felt the pain the more.

The atmosphere was not helped by the news from Bhutan with which we were suddenly assailed. Two of the young Colonels, the Commissioner of southern Bhutan, the senior civil officer in charge of Phuntsholing and a handful of junior officers had fled Bhutan by night to seek asylum in Nepal. They had evidently got scent of Lhendup's failure to contact the King and explain the circumstances of the 'lady's' arrest. They had no doubt that the King would demand retribution for the insult in full measure. He had issued clear and unqualified orders to the Wangpon, his Army Chief, that he was authorized to take life, should that be necessary, to maintain the King's honour. For all his loyalty to the King, the Wangpon was basically an officer of gentle temperament. He lacked the ruthlessness to carry out orders involving spilling of blood, and, seeing in discretion the better part of valour, decided to flee the country with his colleagues.

The Press, which had no knowledge of the motivations behind the officers' exodus, ran wild with excitement. This was too good an opportunity to be missed, and the flight to Nepal was seized upon as the basis of report upon report of the most far-fetched fantasy and exaggeration. The officers had planned a coup, but had taken fright at the last moment as their plots and schemings had leaked out to the King. They would now seek the support of China to oust the present regime and get themselves reinstated in office. Foreign powers had also had a hand in the Bhutan imbroglio. Bhutan was just the sort of arena for the C.I.A. to pick upon to set into motion its wide-ranging ramifications. Reports appeared in the Press of mysterious, fair-

skinned foreigners, undoubtedly American spies disguised as Bhutanese, spotted receiving the King at Calcutta airport on his return from Switzerland. They were clearly up to no good and out to undermine the cordial relations subsisting between Bhutan and India. The comedy was, of course, that the only persons to receive the King in Bhutanese dress, apart from his family, were his Private Secretary, the Deputy Chief Secretary —and myself! I was amused to receive from an old friend, Desmond Doig, a photograph of the airport reception which he had hilariously touched up by the inclusion of pistols and quaint, old-world armoury (see plate 17). A brilliant artist and Editor of the *Junior Statesman* of Calcutta, Desmond had had a long and intimate association with the Himalayan Kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim and is better informed about their problems than most pressmen I have met. His caricature cleverly parodies the absurd hysteria of the hour.

The King was more than content at the outcome of his meetings with India's Secretary-General and Foreign Secretary. The subjects discussed related mainly to defence and Bhutan's entry into the U.N.O. The King was happy to receive a firm assurance that India had an interest in Bhutan's stability and that he could count on her support in the critical days ahead.

After a final medical check-up, the King prepared to leave for Bhutan. He decided to go ahead alone in the first instance and send a summons as soon as he felt the time was ripe for me to follow. I felt uncertain at first whether the Dorji family would welcome my returning to Bhutan to aid and advise the King. There was extreme bitterness at the King's refusal to meet Lhendup and give him an opportunity to explain his position. It seemed that I, an old friend of the Dorjis, was shifting loyalties and lifting my eyes to the rising sun. Half seriously, half jocularly, the Queen brought out one evening a copy of the Buddhist scripture, the *Dhammapada*. She asked me to open it at random and place my finger, blind-fold, on the opened page. To everybody's jubilation and my sad discomfiture, my quivering finger struck a passage warning of dire danger on my impending excursion to the Dragon Kingdom!

My advice to the Dorji family had been, throughout, that their true, indeed their only interest lay in the restoration of good relations with the King. The Queen, I recalled, had held

the King in deep veneration in the past, and it was hardly conceivable that he could change his nature overnight. The irresponsible aspersions that had been cast on his character and his moral life were provocation enough to rouse any human being's wrath. A rumour was being spread that the King was mad. No self-respecting person could let that pass, least of all a King. His mother, his step-mother, her children, had been vilely slandered as accomplices in Jigmie's assassination and as persons of loose habit. Could they expect the King to smile?

The Queen appreciated that my advice was well meant and that I was not simply 'changing sides' for motives of personal gain. My feelings for her, her mother and her family grew indeed even stronger and deeper after the tragedy of Jigmie's death. The grief we shared in common had drawn us closer together. And I was relieved when I found them come round to the view that my joining the King might be helpful in paving the way for future reconciliation between the two families.

# 7

# *The King Takes Charge*

---

As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind:
Even so the wise are not perturbed amidst praise or blame.

*Dhammapada*

Within a couple of days of the King's departure from Calcutta, I received his message by wireless asking me to join him immediately in Bhutan. In view of the extreme urgency, a special helicopter was commissioned to fly me into Thimphu and I set off at once, armed with my violin and escorted by my ever-faithful Garhwali major-domo, Bhopal Singh Rawat, who had also shared with me the hazards of the Chinese invasion in N.E.F.A. The King was awaiting my arrival near the Palace helipad. He seemed happy to find me answer his summons so swiftly and we went into immediate consultations. It had not taken long for the King to assess the situation and he had soon satisfied himself that the administration could function well enough in spite of the vacuum created by the flight of the army and civil officers to Nepal. He considered nobody indispensable and was fully confident of his ability to run the affairs of State himself. As the world abroad was impatient for news of the latest developments after the King's return, I flashed back to our Calcutta office a note for the Press, communicating the King's decision to resume full responsibility for the administration. It was a strange feeling to hear on the radio that night, as we sat huddled in the freezing cold of a winter's night in Thimphu, 9,000 feet high in the mountains, the momentous announcement drafted only a few hours earlier after a brief consultation on the Palace lawns. As this note set the final seal on the doubts and uncertainties regarding responsibility for the administration after Jigmie's death, it will be of interest to the reader to see it in the form it was originally issued:

25 November 1964

Press should be informed that situation in Bhutan is fully under control(.) Enquiries that have been carried out indicate that the two army and four civil officers who left the country some days ago did so under an exaggerated sense of fear of action to be taken against them on the King's return from Switzerland for dereliction of duty during his absence(.) It has not, however, at any time been the intention of the King to take summary or excessive action against his officers and there was no occasion for them to flee the country pending the King's return(.) Their sudden departure necessitated the tightening up of security measures along the frontier including the checking of travellers leaving or entering Bhutan(.) The checking officers have, however, been instructed to ensure that the least possible inconvenience is caused to *bona fide* movement of traffic(.) The reports that several arrests of high-level officers have taken place are not correct(.) The Deputy Secretary-General[1] was questioned at the traffic check-post in accordance with general security arrangements and was in due course allowed to proceed to his headquarters where he has resumed his duties(.) The Quartermaster-General has been placed under house-arrest pending further enquiries(.) It is not, however, correct that Colonel Lam Dorji the senior army officer now in Bhutan is under arrest(.) The three civil officers placed under arrest pending further investigation are temporary officers of two to three years' service in Government(.)

The King has taken steps to replace the officers who have deserted their duties(.) Mr Jullunder Pradhan has been placed in charge of the office of Commissioner for southern Bhutan(.) He had already functioned in this capacity over a long period of years prior to his appointment in 1962 as Adviser for southern Bhutan(.) He has joined his duties as Commissioner with effect from 25 November(.) The King has placed his brother Drasho Wangchuk in charge of the Army in addition to his civil duties(.)

The King had thought fit last year on medical advice to entrust the administration largely in the hands of his Prime Minister(.) With the progressive improvement in his health he has decided to resume full responsibility for the administration(.) This will necessitate some changes in the Governmental apparatus, including changes in respect of the office of Prime Minister(.) Mr Lhendup Dorji who for some months was functioning as Acting Prime Minister is at present in London(.)

The temporary dislocation caused as a result of the recent events

[1] Mr Dawa Tsering, now Foreign Minister.

is being set right and the offices of Government are functioning normally(.)

Having announced his decision to resume full responsibility for the administration, the King next applied himself to the question of ensuring a smooth continuity in affairs of State in the event of his death. He was a practical man and was well aware of the uncertainties of his health. There was risk moreover that the threats of vendetta that were being bruited about might be sought to be put into operation, and he wished it to be known that, if he were put out of the way, it would be his half-brother, Drasho Namgyal Wangchuk, and no other, who would function as the Regent. After requesting me to prepare a draft document to this effect, he set off without more ado for the warmer valley of Paro. But not without finding time to make contact with and address his troops, when he compared the flight of the civil and army officers to the 'dropping away of a few rotten grains from a bag of rice'.

The King's nomination of his half-brother as Regent was an astute move, aimed as it was at indirectly safeguarding his own life. For any faction in opposition to the King's policies would gain little advantage by his elimination if it was to be his brother who would act as the Regent on his death. The King's brother bore, like the King, the stamp of the old, traditional Bhutan through and through. Although he had completed a course of training at the Indian Academy of Administration in Mussoorie, his sense of values remained essentially unchanged and he was allergic to the wilder extravagances of the younger generation. With Drasho Wangchuk as Regent, there would be little to be gained by the supporters of Lhendup and his group, as his attitudes and policies would not be much different from the King's.

Drasho Wangchuk was a quiet young man whose reserved manner belied his innate intelligence and capacity. Sensitive by nature, he had gone out of his way to befriend me during those lonely days in Thimphu when Jigmie and the King had left the capital for Calcutta and Switzerland. And despite his close relationship with the King, he was punctilious in observing the strict forms prescribed by custom for showing his monarch respect. I had observed him more than once standing for long periods at the outer gate of the Palace, his official shawl in hand

and with head bowed, awaiting the King's summons. It was, I think, these qualities of discipline and restraint that commended themselves to the King and raised him in his estimation. And it is to his credit that, for all his loyalty to the King, he was no less considerate and respectful to the Queen at a time when it was public knowledge that relations between husband and wife had become strained and there were but a handful who had the courage to continue rendering her the courtesies due to her station.

After completing my work at Thimphu. I proceeded to Paro as instructed by the King. It was during our meeting in Paro Dzong that he informed me of his intention to promote his brother to the office of Paro Penlop (Governor of Paro). This was a significant move, as the post of Penlop was regarded, according to precedent, as a stepping-stone to the throne. The King had himself been appointed Paro Penlop by his father, but the post had remained unfilled on his vacating it for the throne in 1952. The appointment was, therefore, a visible symbol of the King's confidence and favour, as also a booster to the hopes and morale of the Wangchuk family, who for some time now had been chafing under a sense of eclipse.

A feeling had been building up for some years that the King's half-brother and half-sisters were not being accorded the same importance and privileges as Jigmie's family. Jigmie's brother Lhendup had been sent to the U.S.A. for studies, and was promoted at a very young age to the highest post in the Planning Department, the post of Secretary-General. His sister Tashi had been afforded opportunities to gather experience by travel abroad and was regularly deputed to lead Bhutan's delegations to the various meetings of the Colombo Plan. While the Dorji family were coming very much into the limelight on the international scene, there was little notice or mention of the King's brother and sisters, and although I never heard any complaint from the King himself, I had sensed a feeling of resentment in his mother and step-mother that the Dorjis were stealing the show.

There can be no question, however, that Jigmie made every effort to give the King's brother and sisters the best possible opportunities to equip themselves for public office. Although the former was never enthusiastic over entering Government

service, Jigmie insisted that he should be deputed to undergo the Training Course for I.A.S.[1] officers that he had himself attended twenty years earlier. It was Jigmie again who urged the King to place his sister, Princess Deki, in charge of the department of Cottage Industries. Jigmie had taken a very fond and personal interest in the upbringing and education of Drasho Wangchuk and Princess Deki and had brought them up in his home in Kalimpong as members of his own family.

With the conferring upon his brother of the rank of Penlop, the King appointed him also as Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. There could be no doubt in anybody's mind now that the King was in full control. Although still a very sick man, he gave audience every day to his officers and was soon in firm grasp of all the vital areas of the administration.

I could see, however, that the King was deeply unhappy over the estrangement from his wife. Those of us who had known their relationship before the troubles found it difficult to believe that such a devoted and ideally matched pair could fall asunder. It was the sort of relationship one read about in story-books, in children's fairy-tales of Princes and Princesses who lived happily ever after. And I did not fail to notice that, in the dim, sparsely-furnished room in which the King was residing in Paro Dzong, he still kept the Queen's photograph at his bedside, the only photograph to be seen in his bare, cold chamber. He confided to me how pained he felt on account of the estrangement in his family. As for the affairs of State, he had complete confidence, he assured me, in his ability to set things right. It was the 'family problem', as he put it, that was causing him concern and anxiety. The Queen, he felt, had been badly advised and her mind poisoned against him for no just reason. The persons involved in Jigmie's assassination had been duly tried and punished. Even the Chabda, his own uncle, had been executed. And yet slanderous accusations continued to be hurled against his mother and others dear to him. His own character was being assailed and pressure was being brought to bear on him to recall and grant pardon to officers who had deliberately worked behind his back during his absence in Switzerland. The King felt sure that it was Tashi, the Queen's

[1] Indian Administrative Service, successor to the I.C.S., Indian Civil Service, of pre-Independence days.

sister, who was mainly responsible for prejudicing the Queen's mind. Tashi had been heard to be openly declaring that Jigmie's assassination must be avenged, whatever the cost and effort. It was Tashi who had been the brains behind Lhendup's puerile plottings, and as long as she had the ear of the Queen, there could be little hope of reconciliation.

The King's assessment was of course wholly correct. Whoever may have been the persons ultimately responsible for Jigmie's assassination, Tashi made no secret of her own convictions. It was the King himself who was the arch-villain, with his mother and his mistress as his tools. Something had gone wrong in the mechanics of the plot, or else the whole Dorji family would by now have gone Jigmie's way. The King, Tashi averred, had lost both his mind and morals, and she was determined that her sister, the Queen, should be protected from his cunning, murderous machinations. How could we all be so blind to the truth she saw so clearly? We were all pawns, poor paltry pawns, in the King's master-plot, we had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear. Tashi spoke out, loud and defiant, as though with oracular authority, and her voice was heard by the King. The Queen, the gentle Queen, grief-stricken at her brother's death and uncertain of her husband's love, found herself tragically torn in her loyalties. The King had been a good husband, she had borne his children and revered him deeply, Now, day by day, his image was being systematically tarnished in her mind, and the members of her own family, flesh of her flesh, were sowing seeds of fear for her own safety.

With the completion of my immediate commissions in Bhutan, the King requested that, on my return to Calcutta, I should bring my influence to bear in the direction of restraining the spate of slander that was poisoning relations between himself and his wife and setting back the restoration of the country's stability. I did as I was bidden, but Tashi was not the woman to be easily balked. Her moods and moves were unpredictable from day to day, and the next we heard was that she had flown to Kathmandu for parleys with the Bhutanese army and civil officers who had sought asylum in Nepal. The Press were avid for details of the motivation behind the flight to Nepal, and the expatriates were only too ready to oblige. The notices[1] that

[1] See Appendix IV for report in *Indian Express*, New Delhi, 17 December 1964.

appeared in the newspapers after their Press conference were an utterly absurd concoction of exaggeration and libel, and made us despair of ever succeeding in bringing about a reconciliation between the two families. The King was reported to be demented and incapable of independent action. His 'Indian' Adviser had been responsible for the pronouncements regarding the rehabilitation of the Governmental apparatus, and the King had had no hand in them. The King was, in fact, no more than a helpless puppet, pulled by the strings of the intriguing, scheming Indian Government. The King had made a statement to the Press[1] that the recent developments had been of a purely internal nature and that there was absolutely no foundation in the allegations that had come to his notice that the developments had been engineered by the Government of India or any foreign Government. This was a statement that had been put out by his Indian Adviser and did not represent the King's views.

The Government of India, alleged the expatriates, had long resented the Dorjis' insistence that Bhutan should play her rightful part in the comity of nations as a fully sovereign country. Had it not been for India's determination to strangle Bhutan's emergence in the international arena, Bhutan would by now have established diplomatic relations with all the more important foreign countries and would have been receiving massive aid from them directly for her economic development. India realized that the Dorjis would not lie back tamely and allow Bhutan to be denied her rightful status. India's policy had been therefore to sow dissension between the Dorjis and the King and create fears and suspicions in the King's mind so that he would eventually feel it unsafe to suffer them to remain in his kingdom. There were even hints that it was the Government of India that was responsible for the intrigues that culminated in Jigmie's assassination. Jigmie was a tough man to deal with and would, from India's point of view, be better out of the way. The King on the other hand was an invalid, with little knowledge or experience of international affairs, whom India could with less difficulty bend to fall in line with her 'imperialist' policy.

The hand behind these defamatory reports was not far to

[1] 11 December 1964.

seek. And everybody by now knew full well that when the King was determined to strike, he struck hard and with unerring aim. I had always been fond of Tashi, ever since I first met her, over twenty years earlier, when she was a young medical student in Delhi. She had a wonderful sense of fun and the most generous of hearts. I have no doubt that she felt inspired by what she regarded as a sacred mission and was not motivated by personal ambition. She genuinely believed in the rightness of her cause and was constitutionally incapable of compromise. Soon after her return from Nepal, she invited my wife, myself and a handful of her closest friends to lunch at her flat in Calcutta. To all outward appearances, she was her usual gay self, witty, buoyant, irrepressible. But for the first time in many months, there was no talk of politics, Bhutan, Kings or Queens. She had taken a weighty decision, but there was not one amongst us who guessed what was in her mind. Early next morning, unknown to us all, she left by air for Nepal, and for ten years, passed out of our lives. She realized, I think, that she had said too much. The King would not forgive her easily, and she would feel a greater sense of security in Nepal, with whom Bhutan had as yet no reciprocal arrangements for extradition. Though we differed in our approach to Bhutan's problems, there is no gainsaying that she had courage and determination more than any man. And I missed her dearly as a friend.

The Queen, as was to be expected, was eager to hear from me on my return to Calcutta the latest developments on the Bhutan front. She had handed me, prior to my setting off for Bhutan, a list of persons about whose safety and well-being she felt concern, and I was to signal back a message to her, through an agreed code-word, to confirm that all was well with them. This was the first time I had ever played such a cloak-and-dagger role, and, James Bond-like, I meticulously performed my part, though not without a little trepidation. The Queen was apprehensive that everybody thought to be well-disposed towards Lhendup and herself would be harassed and put under detention by the King's officers. News had already filtered through that the persons arrested and confined in the dungeons of the Dzong were the very people who had volunteered to protect her family in Namseyling after Jigmie's assassination. On the first news of the Colonels' flight to Nepal, several arrests

were indeed made on mere suspicion, as it was not possible to carry out immediate and thorough investigations at short notice on every case. Even the Deputy Secretary-General of the Planning Department was summarily detained as he was driving by night along the main Phuntsholing–Paro higway. Most of the arrested persons were, however, quite soon released, and I communicated to the Queen the King's assurance that the innocent had nothing to fear.

A bare few minutes with the Queen were sufficient to tell that her feelings had tragically hardened. The arrest of persons who had demonstrated their loyalty to her family at grave personal risk both hurt and angered her, and further fanned her suspicions. The King, she felt, was going out of his way to intimidate and humiliate her family's supporters and retainers, without a thought in the world for her wishes or position.

To add to the causes of friction, there was difference of opinion between the parents regarding the education of the Princesses and the Crown Prince. The children had been admitted to schools in England, but were soon beginning to miss their home. The King's schooling had been in Bhutan, under Bhutanese teachers. He was afraid that if his children were kept away from Bhutan for too long in a foreign environment, they would later find difficulty in adjusting themselves to conditions in their own country. Jigmie's wife was from Tibet—Tseringyangzam, or Tessla as we called her, of the renowned Tsarong family. Lhendup's wife was Anglo-Burmese, while Rimpoche had married a Nepalese girl from Sikkim. Two of Jigmie's sons were also courting girls from foreign parts. Their upbringing and education outside Bhutan seemed to have resulted in their preferring foreign brides. The King had once mentioned to me that he would be happiest of all if his children married in Bhutan. His first preference was that his children should be brought up and schooled in their own country, but with the help of foreign tutors for subjects that could not adequately be taught by teachers from Bhutan. The Queen on the other hand had decided to send the children to school in England in order that they should be removed from the tensions, intrigue and dangers that had overcast Bhutan since their uncle's assassination.

My return to Calcutta enabled me to resume my efforts to

locate, contact and prevail upon personnel to join me in Bhutan for manning the institutions we had in view in our programme for the country's development. Amongst the various projects on which we were then working, my particular interest was in the establishing of two good general-purpose schools (at Thimphu for western Bhutan and Tashigang for eastern Bhutan) as well as a Technical Institute near Phuntsholing in southern Bhutan. The setting up of the institutions at Tashigang and Phuntsholing was in the safe, expert hands of the Jesuit and Salesian Fathers. Land had already been made available and funds allocated by Government under the development plan. I knew that the Fathers were dedicated to their work and that, provided we afforded them the necessary facilities and co-operation, they would not fail us. I was apprehensive, however, of what would be the psychological and political reaction if the Thimphu school were also to be entrusted to a Christian order. Bhutan had been, for centuries, a Buddhist State with a religious head. It might be misunderstood if a Christian missionary order were allowed to set up a school at the capital itself, the nerve-centre of the spiritual life of the country. The lamas were a powerful and influential force. They were already somewhat unsettled by the rapid changes overcoming the country. Their religion was sacrosanct, and they would resent any step that might be seen as an encroachment on their own preserve, the responsibility of imparting religious instruction at the central seat of Government. We had decided therefore that the school at Thimphu should be managed exclusively by the State Education Department.

The first requisite was a competent Principal, with experience and an imaginative outlook. I had had glowing reports of Jack Gibson, Principal of the Mayo College at Ajmer,[1] and invited him to visit Bhutan, hoping to lure him to our venture. I introduced him to the King and there was immediate rapport. Apart from his academic record, Jack was an all-round, outdoor type, with a refreshingly youthful enthusiasm for trekking, fishing and the wide open spaces. But he had evidently become too attached to Ajmer to cut himself away from his roots and make a new start in Bhutan. He was also getting on in years and felt

[1] Originally established to provide a sound educational foundation on the model of a British public school for the sons of the old princely order.

we should find a younger man. 'If I were twenty years younger, Nari, I should not have given the matter another thought—I should have leapt at the offer.' He was good enough to assist in locating teachers for us from the better public schools in India, but those whom we thought might be suitable were disinclined to accept our offer when they came to know of the very rigorous living conditions in Thimphu and the almost complete absence of amenities. It was a sad disappointment to me that, through our inability to position a really dynamic and forward-looking Principal, the Thimphu school did not progress on the lines we were planning as swiftly or effectively as we had hoped. We had, however, taken great care in the selection of a good, commanding site and in constructing buildings in harmony with Bhutan's traditional architectural features, and had at least the satisfaction of knowing that sound foundations had been laid for the future.

With the departure of Lhendup and Tashi from India, the Queen was left free to think out matters for herself, and our hopes of a reconciliation brightened when she took the momentous decision to return with her children to Bhutan. We knew how fond the King was of the children and how much they admired and loved their father. With the children as a uniting bond, there was a chance that the feeling of estrangement might be ended and the former relationship restored. On her return to Bhutan the Queen stayed mainly at her Palace in Paro, the King residing in the dzong nearby. While they met occasionally and exchanged words, their relations remained unhappily strained and there was no longer the warmth and familiarity of younger days.

Apart from the priority we were according to the establishing of soundly run educational institutions, in the field of health services too, there was urgent need for a specialist to draw up schemes for tackling the problem of leprosy, which had assumed serious proportions in several regions of Bhutan. I had received reports of a German doctor and his wife who were carrying out outstanding work in the treatment of leprosy in Bihar, and after visiting their centre in Purulia, I succeeded in persuading them to come and assist us in Bhutan. I was also in contact with a plethora of consultants for the processing of industries based on Bhutan's rich mineral deposits of limestone and gypsum.

Bhutan's hydro-electric potential is enormous and there was one scheme in particular, involving the damming of the river Wangchu (known as the Raidak at its lower stretches in India) that offered limitless possibilities. I was pressing that the investigation and implementation of this project should be quickly taken up so that Bhutan might earn revenue by selling power to the electricity-starved industries of West Bengal. Horticulture, dairying, animal-husbandry—the field of development was infinite, and I was kept more than fully occupied planning the implementation of the manifold projects we had in view.

Another of the responsibilities I took upon myself was to brief the Press. Misleading and mischievous reports were from time to time being put out in the newspapers that required to be immediately corrected by issuing Press notes or holding Press conferences. The world in general was abysmally ignorant of even the most elementary facts regarding Bhutan and I did my best, through personal contacts at various levels, articles in the papers and broadcast talks,[1] to project a balanced image of the country so that her problems could be viewed in proper perspective.

I commuted monthly between Thimphu and Calcutta, with periodic summonses from the King when he required my presence for consultations. I had advised the King that there was advantage in our maintaining a certain distance. Malicious reports had been spread abroad that the King was a mere figurehead, acting on the dictates of his Indian advisers. It would be unwise to allow any impression to gain ground that the King had dispensed with his chief Bhutanese aides only to replace them with Indians. We came to an understanding therefore that I should arrange my tour programme according to the exigencies of the situation, the King summoning me for consultations on an ad hoc basis.

The King was not a regular correspondent, but on the few occasions that he penned a letter in his own hand, his style could be clearly seen to evoke the man. He wrote in a strong, round hand, with precision, clarity and a delightful sense of fun. I received one day, on landing by helicopter at Phuntsholing, a roll of Bhutanese cloth, securely wrapped according to custom in strong hand-made paper and heavily sealed. I did

[1] See Appendix V.

not at first attach much importance to the parcel, as the presenting of a piece of cloth as a gesture of welcome is, in Bhutanese custom, a matter of quite normal routine. When later I unpacked and unrolled the package, I was surprised to find, cunningly secreted inside, a sealed envelope addressed to 'Uncle Drasho Rustomji'. The King had had no formal education in English outside his own country, but he wrote nevertheless with amazing fluency, in an individual and distinctive style:

9 March [1965]

My dear Uncle,

I was most happy to get all your sincere and interesting letters and am very grateful to you for them all, but of course, as usual I did not reply!

Everything is going off well in Bhutan, except for the King's family problem which doesn't seem to be making any improvement! I am satisfied with the Dzong and the School work. The site which you chose for the School is most beautiful and the building is also Bhutanese in every way—just as I want it to be. I think our new beloved School is going to be one of the jewels of Thimphu Valley—or at least we should make it one of the real jewels for the future of Bhutan!

Wangchuk[1] is doing well and he seems to be quite popular among the soldiers—at least that is the impression they gave me. Tashi has written a most interesting article on the reorganization of our Army! Anyway, I am inviting a not-very-friendly press reporter to Bhutan as he promised to write the true facts if he is allowed to visit Bhutan. In a whisper, it seems dear old Miss Tashi has been feeding him with Bhutan news.

Since I left Calcutta I have been keeping very well. When I left Cal. it seems I forgot to take my stomach trouble with me! But I did not forget to bring my boil with me.

Uncle, there are a few things about which I need your advice, but there is no hurry, so come up whenever it is convenient to you—or whenever you want to get away from your wife!

General X of the Border Roads is coming here on the 12th and General Y is coming on the 25th. I am looking forward to meeting X as he will be more useful to us than Y! Thimphu is quite pleasant now—when there is no wind. We had some snowfall on the 6th but it did not last long.

[1] Drasho Wangchuk, the King's brother, who had been placed in charge of the Army.

Give my love to Mummy and your wife. I hope both of them are keeping well.

Love
Jigme

It was through my continual journeyings back and forth between Bhutan and India that I could gain some further insight into the strange and tortuous motivations behind Jigmie's assassination. The hold of the lamas over the people had always been strong in Bhutan, even after the replacement in 1907 of the institution of Dharma Raja, a religious ruler succeeding through reincarnation, by a hereditary monarchy. There was indeed a school of thought that had never been totally reconciled to the lapse of such a time-honoured institution, and the pious zeal of the orthodox encouraged them to rediscover a succession of reincarnations, although none of these was accorded official recognition or allowed to survive longer than could be helped. Jigmie had told me more than once that, as far as he was concerned, the institution of Dharma Raja was as dead as the dodo, and that he would not under any circumstances permit its resuscitation. His loyalty was, first and last, to his King, and if any young lad was luckless enough to be identified as a potential Dharma Raja, the Bhutanese were adept in fixing an 'accident' to hurry him to his Nirvana. Jigmie's most anxious concern during the Chinese aggression of 1962 had been that the latest reputed reincarnation, a little boy of about six residing under the watchful and protective guardianship of a venerable lama, Gompatse Rimpoche, in the Tawang area of N.E.F.A., just contiguous to Bhutan, should not be abducted by the Chinese and set up as their puppet, a perpetual threat and challenge to the authority of the rightful ruler. I was at the time Adviser to the Governor of Assam for N.E.F.A. and remember receiving Jigmie's frantic S.O.S. enquiring of the little lad's whereabouts. We succeeded, happily, in locating the Gompatse together with his precious charge and bringing them both down to stay with us in the safer environs of Shillong. The young reincarnation was later taken for studies to the Tibetan settlement of Dharamsala, presided over by the Dalai Lama. The manoeuvrings in certain orthodox quarters to restore him to his traditional dignity in Bhutan are, needless to say, not given official encouragement.

It was Jigmie's misfortune that he was unconscionably blunt and forthright in the expression of his views. He was by nature a direct and spontaneous person, with no 'holier-than-thou' façade. If he had been more discreet, more of a diplomat, his life would not have come to such a tragic end. But then he would not have been Jigmie either. His spontaneity was the essence of his character. While he observed the forms and ritual of his religion, it was more out of habit than from serious conviction. It never occurred to him that the jocular, sometimes facetious tone in which he spoke of the lamas and their institutions might give cause for offence. What was said by him in jest, however, was taken by the lamas in all seriousness, and they felt gravely disturbed. In the Christian world of today, the 'virgin birth' and the 'immaculate conception' are accepted as stock themes for music-hall banter, and no one bats an eyelid in their telling. In the religious aura of Bhutan, such frivolity would not be lightly regarded, but would be interpreted as heathen blasphemy There were already large sections of the community, apart from the lamas, that were hostile to Jigmie and apprehensive that their own vested interests would be adversely affected by the changes necessitated in developing the country along more modern lines. They were not slow to spread the word that an evil force was at large in the country. The subject was raised in the Assembly, when the Je Khenpo[1] hinted, without directly mentioning Jigmie's name, that while he had heard that there was such a phenomenon as the 'twenty-one evil omens', he now found that this terrible curse had become manifest, in flesh and blood, in their very midst.

The ground was thus being carefully and systematically prepared so that public reaction in the event of Jigmie's assassination might be not of grief at the loss of a patriot, but relief at being freed from a cancerous affliction. Jigmie was being progressively denigrated as an unbeliever who despised the country's time-hallowed institutions, an ambitious upstart seeking to set himself up as a supreme dictator. How could it be, people whispered, that the King was falling constantly ill? They had known him always as a strong, healthy man, with virile outdoor habits. His passion was trekking in the high mountains, hunting, riding, archery, football. It was strange indeed that

[1] Chief Abbot, see page 17.

anyone with such a robust constitution should so suddenly, and for no apparent reason, fall a victim to illness. And people began to wonder.

The Buddhism of Sikkim and Bhutan inherits much of the magic and superstitions of the old Bon religion that was its predecessor in Tibet and adjoining regions prior to the missionary enterprise of the Indian evangelist, Padma Sambhava. Amongst such superstitions is the belief that illness, even death, can be brought upon a person if his name is inscribed in a certain form and secreted at a chosen place within the precincts of a particular monastery. A rumour was spread abroad that Jigmie had deputed one of his trusted servants to have the King's name so secreted under the wall of Talo monastery,[1] but that the secret had somehow leaked out and the King's life providentially saved by the performance of certain very special religious ceremonies. It was clear now why the King was constantly suffering from illnesses. And what was the reason for flying in so many foreign doctors? Indigenous medicines should have been efficacious enough, and if reinforced by the prayers of the lamas, would have quickly restored the King's health. What was it that the doctors kept injecting into the King's body? Could it be that they had been bribed to kill him off by poison? And why was it that no one was allowed to see the King? With so many clever, foreign doctors around, it was strange indeed that they could not get him well if they were really serious about their business.

And so the rumour spread, and tale after tale was fabricated to give body to the lie. Long-forgotten incidents were raked up from the past and given a sinister twist. People recalled how, some years back, the King was out hunting and his attendant let off a shot 'by accident' from behind. The bullet grazed past the King and it was a miracle that he was not killed. The attendant must surely have been 'planted' by somebody. Everything seemed to be fitting into a pattern. The King's life was clearly in grave peril. No wonder he had decided to hurry away to Switzerland lest he should come to further harm. And what else could be expected of any loyal servant but to destroy the venomous serpent before it could strike again?

[1] Situated high in the mountains west of Punakha, Talo monastery houses the casket in which rest the ashes of the first Dharma Raja (Shabdrung).

There were also allegations that the King had been kept as a virtual prisoner in his Palace, in the style of the Kings of Nepal during the regime of the Ranas. While there was not, of course, any physical confinement, an impression was sought to be created that the King and his family had been placed in a position of total dependence on Jigmie for finance; that it was by virtue of Jigmie's largesse rather than as of right that funds were made available to them for travel, medical treatment, hotel expenses and other such purposes. Was it not a matter of humiliation for the King and his family to have to approach Jigmie for expenses, when the State was theirs by right?

The question of access to the King was another issue that occasioned talk. It was Jigmie who mainly controlled the flow of visitors to Bhutan and had a decisive voice in arranging interviews of foreigners with the King. This, people whispered, was an indirect way of ensuring that the King should hear and know only what Jigmie thought fit, and came in the way of the King gaining experience of dealing with foreigners and making his own assessment of men and affairs. It has to be remembered on the other hand that Jigmie's principal official role was Agent to the Bhutan Government. It was incumbent on him therefore to handle all affairs relating to foreigners, and in doing so he was doing nothing more than discharging his bounden duty. To insinuate that he was circumventing the King's authority would certainly not be correct. He was punctilious in taking the King's orders on even minor matters and he reminded me time and again that it was the King who was 'the boss'. And even his mother, despite her advancing years, always showed the deepest respect to the King and spoke of him in terms of great respect and admiration.

With the Queen and the children back in Bhutan, there was hope that time would heal and the families draw closer together again. Although the children stayed with the Queen, they visited their father often and he found happiness in their company. But as long as suspicion lurked on either side, there could be no basis for reconciliation. The Queen was a woman of practical good sense, who was not blind to the ways of men. She had conditioned herself to overlook her husband's *affaire*. But she found it not so easy to overcome her apprehensions for her children's safety. If, as was rumoured, the original plan had

been to eliminate the entire Dorji family and not Jigmie alone, might not the life of her son be also in jeopardy? The Queen had told me of an ancient prophecy about the Crown Prince and his succession to the throne. The lamas had long, long ago prophesied that a future King of Bhutan would be born in the Thimphu valley. From this it was clear that it had been divinely ordained that her son would succeed to the throne.

The Queen also related to me the strange dreams told her some months back by her son and her daughter, Princess Sonam Choden. Shortly before the Queen's departure from Paro to Namseyling upon learning of the King's *affaire*, the Princess had seen in a dream a figure clothed in a white robe and riding a white horse, who kept repeating 'something is going to happen, something is going to happen'. Again, during the time of the execution of the Regency document, her son saw in a dream a vision of Bhutan's Guardian Deity appearing in splendid, scarlet aspect. The next morning, a *Geshe* (Doctor of Divinity) happened to call on the Queen, and on hearing from her the description of the deity as related by the Prince, prophesied it to be an exceptionally auspicious omen.

Life for the Queen in Bhutan was a trial that only a woman of her courage, devotion and strength of will could have borne. The senior officers found excuses for not paying the courtesies due to the Queen for fear they might lose favour with the King. Except for the company of her children and a few of her close friends, the Queen lived in virtual isolation. She interested herself in the compilation of a history of Bhutan, spent time in religious discussions with learned and highly enlightened lamas, and entertained her personal guests from India and abroad. She resided mostly in her Palace at Paro, paying occasional visits to her mother at Namseyling or Kalimpong. Her life had fallen into a set pattern, a sad monotony, that she bore with patience, resignation, and, perhaps, even a faint hope for a kinder future.

# 8

# *Revenge—or a Royal Charade?*

---

> The Hurkaru:[1] There are various rumours afloat that the career of Tungso Penlow has come to a sudden and untimely end *more Bhootanico*. He, as our readers will remember, reached his dignity by a murder and usurpation, and he has been ousted, it is said, by the arts of the assassin. One rumour states that his old and inveterate enemy the Deb Rajah has caused him to be murdered. Another states that he has been poisoned by the orders of the Paro Penlow. The Paro Penlow looked upon his great rival as the only obstacle to peace and his own supremacy. The rumours, however, require confirmation.
>
> 'Hundred Years Ago',
> from the Times of India, 11 December 1865.

It was a cold winter's evening of November 1965. The Queen had just reached Kalimpong from Calcutta on her way to Bhutan where she was taking her children for their holidays, when we were shocked to hear that there had been an attempt on the King's life. The King, it was reported, was camping at Kyichu monastery, only a few miles from Paro dzong. While walking out into the night to answer a call of nature, he was suddenly startled by an unusual sound, like the click of a switch. Suspecting there was mischief afoot, he had the presence of mind to throw himself flat on the ground—and only just in time to escape being struck by an exploding grenade. The King fired his revolver in the direction of the sound, but the miscreant had already got away. The marks of the explosion were later found traced on the monastery wall, and it was plain from these that, had the King remained standing instead of throwing himself on the ground, he would certainly have been killed.

A police dog was immediately flown from Calcutta to Paro

[1] 'Herald', a Moghul term for officers employed to carry messages.

and rushed to Kyichu monastery. The dog did not take long to pick up the trail of the fugitive, and followed it along a circuitous track through the hills and forests until it wound its way down to a small shop in Paro bazaar. The owner of the shop was one Gomtsering, and he had a guest, Shatu, staying with him who had, many years back, been in the employ of the Dorji establishment as a cook. Almost immediately after the incident, Gomtsering and Shatu were arrested, under orders of the King, together with several others suspected of having links with the Dorji family.

The Queen, on hearing the news, left Kalimpong at once for Bhutan. On arrival at Paro, she was distressed to find a number of her old family retainers under detention, and, worse still, to hear that her sister, Tashi, was under suspicion of having plotted the deed. The cook Shatu, it was being said, had been employed by Tashi in the recent past for various miscellaneous chores, including the selling of wares on commission basis. It was public knowledge that Tashi was violently and fanatically anti-King. It was assumed therefore that she had deliberately left India anticipating that, in case the attempt on the King's life failed, the King would without doubt endeavour to get her extradited to Bhutan for trial and conviction for treason. In Nepal, she would be comparatively safe. The Nepal authorities had not felt happy over the Indian Government's granting of asylum to Nepalese dissidents. They would not be likely therefore to accede readily to any request from the Indian or Bhutanese authorities to hand over political refugees seeking asylum in Nepal.

The main reason for Tashi leaving India had in fact been to assist in the rehabilitation of the officers who had fled to Nepal from Bhutan. Though self-willed and stubborn, Tashi was, like her brother Jigmie, kind and sensitive at heart, and felt a deep sense of responsibility for assisting the expatriates to settle down with their families in their new and unfamiliar environment. After failing in his attempt to gain the audience of the King in Switzerland, Lhendup had moved on to London, where he proceeded to drown his sorrows amidst the high life of the metropolis. It was left to the compassionate Tashi to tend to the wants of the expatriates and sustain in them a feeling of confidence that they had not been 'dropped' and forgotten.

It was Tashi's misfortune that she had so openly and blatantly vowed vengeance on the King that, even had there been no connection between her and the alleged assailant, her name would have been the first to fall under suspicion. She was without doubt the most strong-willed and daring of the Dorji family. Lhendup had visibly basked in the short-lived glamour of playing Prime Minister, but he had not yet outgrown the immaturity and arrogance of youth, and when it came to serious business, his inner weaknesses soon showed through. Tashi knew no fear and was marked out as the only person in Bhutan who would dare to take up cudgels with the Dragon-King himself.

With the Queen's brother, Lhendup, already in disfavour, the suspicion of her sister Tashi's involvement in the attempt on the King's life rendered the Queen's situation well-nigh untenable. The King ordered, as was only to be expected in such a serious matter, a thorough investigation and intensive cross-examination of all persons suspected, however remotely, of complicity in the plot. The cook Shatu, it was rumoured, had confessed that he had been engaged by Tashi to assassinate the King. The technique of investigation in Bhutan was, however, known to follow the traditional, oriental modes, and stratagems could be devised without much difficulty to loosen recalcitrant tongues. The Queen avowed her conviction that the cook's confession had been extorted under pain of torture. She pleaded with the King that he should be re-examined in her presence, and the King conceded her request. On re-examination in the presence of the Queen, the Home Minister and thirty of the People's Representatives from the National Assembly, Shatu disclaimed Tashi's involvement and finally broke down under strain. Rumour had it that he was in fact playing cards with his friends in Paro bazaar at the time of the bomb explosion. To force him to utter the truth, he was administered an ancient and macabre Bhutanese oath that boded dread ruin and disaster for the perjurer and his descendants. But he swore none the less, solemnly and unflinchingly, that he had no knowledge of the incident and had not met Tashi for over ten years.

The attribution of the plot to the Dorji family was all but inevitable under the accepted Bhutanese code of ethics. Jigmie, the head of the Dorji family, had been assassinated by allegedly pro-King elements. What then would be more normal and

natural than for the Dorjis to avenge the assassination by killing the King? This was no unholy deed. It was, on the contrary, an act of piety and Jigmie's legitimate due. Bhutanese history abounds in tales of family vendetta of just such a sort, and it should have caused no surprise if an attempt was made to take revenge on the King. The surprise was that the attempt should have failed.

It was indeed the failure of the attempt despite such ideal conditions that gave rise to the suspicion that the attempt was not an attempt at all but a charade cunningly enacted by the King's party to cast further obloquy on the Dorji name. The original intention of the plotters of Jigmie's assassination, it was recalled, had been to eliminate not merely Jigmie but the entire Dorji family. But someone had blundered and the act remained only half-done. What remained now was to complete the sequence by damning the good name of the Dorji family beyond all repair so that they would be debarred once and for all from public office. If it could be made out that they had stooped to plotting the King's assassination, there would no longer be any question of their claiming any place in the affairs of State. The King would feel himself entirely unfettered and could consolidate his position yet further by placing only his own trusted retainers in all positions of responsibility.

Whether from conviction or in Tashi's defence, the Dorjis expressed the gravest doubts regarding the whole Kyichu incident. If the intention had really been to kill the King, the circumstances were so favourable that failure was just not conceivable. It was night, the guards were evidently not alert, the King emerged alone out into the open, presenting a clear target—it was as easy as shooting a sitting duck, it was impossible to miss. It was all obviously a made-up affair. As for the police-dog, nothing was simpler than to lead the animal to whomsoever one planned to frame. And the object of the charade was transparent. There would be a surge of sympathy for the King, and if there were still people suspecting him of complicity in Jigmie's assassination, they would quickly forgive and forget.

While there are strong reasons for suspecting the circumstances of the Kyichu incident, it has to be borne in mind that, at the time of the alleged attempt, the King's position within Bhutan was already substantially secure. The public as a whole

had little sympathy for the expatriates in Nepal and the King was sufficiently firmly in control to take whatever action he might consider necessary without having to conjure up any case for justification. For the expatriates, on the other hand, every day that passed saw the King more strongly entrenched and their hopes of returning to Bhutan grow dim. If they were to strike at all, now was clearly the time.

The period following the Kyichu incident was as tense as any since Jigmie's assassination. Security measures were tightened to the extremest limits and all persons connected with the Dorji family kept under continual and strict watch. The distance between the King and Queen now perceptibly widened. The Queen seized every opportunity to convey to the King her unhappiness at the victimization of her friends and supporters. They were being harassed and detained without the slightest cause, she complained; they were being ill-treated, starved and tortured in prison cells, thrown out of employment, slandered and subjected to the most humiliating indignities. The King took the plea that the measures he had ordered were nothing in comparison with the actions the Dorjis had pressurized him into taking against persons suspected even remotely of complicity in Jigmie's assassination. But in any case, it was the King's prerogative to decide how to act and he took strong exception to family interference in his own domain of administration. He wanted to make it clear that if the Queen still entertained hopes of reconciliation, she must once and for all cut off contact with her sister Tashi and others engaged in anti-State activities. She must also cease needling him over matters affecting the conduct of State affairs.

My own role as a mediator was now becoming increasingly delicate. Although I was fully aware that persons associating with the Queen were looked upon by the King with suspicion and disfavour, I called on her regularly and my relations with her and the Dorji family remained as intimate and friendly as they had been at any time. I had always had a deep respect and affection for Jigmie's mother and I never missed an opportunity of calling on her, whether in Namseyling, Kalimpong or Calcutta. Whatever had been the tragic turn of events, I wished her to feel secure in the knowledge that she still had friends. The King, too, had up to now reposed sufficient confidence in

me not to be disturbed by my continued association with the Dorji family. He realized that if I was to be effective as a mediator between himself and the Queen, I should feel free to visit and maintain relations with the Dorji family as before.

The incident at Kyichu brought about a distinct turning-point in the King's attitude. All the old suspicions seemed to have been aroused afresh, and with redoubled force, and it became clear from his behaviour that he preferred to keep some distance from persons with known sympathy for the Dorji family. He was less easy of access and gave the appearance of wanting to avoid any conceivable risk. This was indeed an understandable attitude, assuming the King had sufficient grounds for suspecting that the hand behind the attempt at Kyichu was in fact the hand of Tashi.

I remember the Queen sending me, during one of my visits to Paro, a packet of letters which she wished me to deliver to Glenda, her brother Lhendup's wife, on my return to Calcutta. This was during the investigations into the attempt on the King's life, when names of suspects were daily coming to light in the course of the protracted cross-examination. One of the letters I was carrying was addressed to a young Chinese, Willie Tham, a close friend of the Dorji family, who was also suspected of involvement in the plot. The King had ordered that he should be summoned to Paro for cross-examination, but the wily Willie had evidently got wind of the trouble ahead and took wing to Hong Kong before I had even reached Calcutta to perform the Queen's commission. In the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion and tension, I have no doubt that the King's officers must have harboured suspicions regarding me as a carrier of seditious documents from the Queen to potential mischief-makers. And as officers responsible for the safety of the King, they had every right to do so. At all events, I was feeling I had outlived my utility and that, after the Kyichu incident, no effort of mine would have much effect in bringing the King and Queen closer together. Suspicions and fears on either side had grown too deep and I could see little hope of reconciliation in the foreseeable future.

It was moreover clear to me that, in an atmosphere so charged with intrigue, plotting and counter-plotting, it would

be impossible for me to continue functioning as an officer of the Bhutan Government and at the same time maintain my relations of affectionate friendship with the Dorji family. I was not prepared to break with my friends, and so the only honourable course for me was to return to my old pastures in Assam. The King was aware of my predicament and realized no less that, in the complexity of the situation, my continuing in Bhutan could serve little useful purpose. There were too many bodies around the King who were jealous of power, and my intimate ties with the Dorji family would, with reason, be held out as grounds for treating my advice with reserve, if not active distrust.

My last Christmas in Bhutan was spent with the King at his annual camp on the river Manas along Bhutan's south-eastern boundary with Assam. We went fishing during the mornings and spent the chilly evenings chatting and trying to keep warm around a stupendous camp-fire in the forests. On Christmas eve, we were visited by some Swiss friends of the King, Dr Olschak and the Gansser family, who were on the last lap of a three months' trek through Bhutan. It was a merry evening, and by popular request, I played carols on my violin for the delectation of our sturdy company of Bhutanese camp-followers.

We found time for discussions during the festivities, but it seemed that only one subject now interested the King, his country's admission to the U.N.O. The Tsongdu (Parliament) had already passed a resolution on the subject earlier in the year, which his brother, the Paro Penlop, had placed before India's Prime Minister on the King's behalf. The King now proposed taking up the matter personally with the Prime Minister as he felt there would be serious resentment in the Tsongdu if India declined to sponsor Bhutan's membership. The King valued India's friendship and was anxious to avoid a confrontation on this issue. But his prestige amongst his people would suffer if they felt he was unable to fulfil their expectations. The expatriates in Nepal had already proclaimed that the King was a pawn in India's political game and that it was thanks only to the Dorji family's weighty influence and firmness that Bhutan had not already been sold out to 'Indian imperialism'. It was essential for the King to demonstrate to his people that his influence with the Government of India was no less and that

he could also take up the cudgels in support of his country's rights.

He enquired of me, half-seriously, what he should do if India did not accede to his request. It would be embarrassing for him to return to his capital empty-handed—'I think it will be best for me. Uncle, to spend the rest of my days quietly in my hunting-lodge in Manas!' He wanted me to make it clear to the Government of India that while he himself had no use for the Chinese, there were others, including the expatriates in Nepal, who would not think twice about coming to terms with and taking aid from China. As for his 'family problem', he seemed to have given up all hope of a reconciliation. His half-sisters, Princesses Choki, Deki and Pema, were now taking turns at serving as hostess when he received guests and he appeared content enough with their administrations.

It was with a feeling of sadness and foreboding that I left him in his camp on the conclusion of my visit. He seemed a lonely man, who knew his end was near. From Manas, I proceeded to Bombay to preside over the birth of my second daughter, Shahnaz, and to prepare for my return to Assam.

My final farewell to the King was a touching occasion that I shall not soon forget. The King had invited my wife, my brother and myself to lunch with him at his camp near some hot-springs about four miles ride from Paro. He sent horses for our party, and, as a mark of special honour, his own personal mount, splendidly caparisoned, for my wife. It was a family picnic, with only his mother and his half-sister, Princess Deki, besides ourselves. He seemed relaxed and happy, and we enjoyed the informality of the outing, the idyllic surroundings, more than any ceremonial State banquet. And when I paid my last formal call on him at Paro dzong, he embraced me affectionately and asked me not to forget to revisit Bhutan and keep in touch.

# 9

# *Final Testament*

> It is as if the Sun of this Kingdom's happiness has set at noon and night fallen during the day. The Nation is overwhelmed with immeasurable grief.[1]

I was not sorry to leave Bhutan. I had been fortunate in my service career to have been assigned to posts where I could find fulfilment in hard and rewarding work. The Bhutan interlude was not a happy one. Within a few months of taking up my duties, I lost a very dear friend and saw the break-up of what had been a joyful home. The atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue was not conducive to constructive work. By temperament I am no courtier, and felt no elation waiting upon Kings and Queens. I was still comparatively young, and when accepting Jigmie's summons to Bhutan, I was prepared to give of myself in sweat and service to her people. When I found this no longer possible, I was glad to take my leave.

When I next revisited Bhutan, six years later, it was to pay my last respects at the King's funeral in 1972. I had had no wish during all this time to revive memories that were so full of pain. But I kept in touch with my friends from Bhutan and was happy to receive them when they visited me in my home in Shillong.

I met the King only once after my departure from Bhutan in May 1966. It was four years later, at Bombay, where he was stopping over for a few days before proceeding to Switzerland for medical treatment. He invited my wife and myself to lunch with him at Government House, where he was staying as the Governor's guest. I took for him as a present, according to custom, a gold ring inset with a stone of coral. I explained that

[1] King Jigme Singye Wangchuk—Royal Proclamation, 7 October 1972.

I had chosen coral because of its well-known therapeutic properties. He slipped the ring on his finger as soon as I gave it to him and we talked of old times. He had visibly aged since I had seen him last. His face was drawn and his complexion sallow. The light had gone out of his life. I thought back to the day I met him first as a young Prince, twenty years ago, so full of freshness, vitality and beauty. Jigmie had brought him for a visit to Shillong and our happiness could not have been more complete as we passed the days picnicking amid the pine-forests. When I met him next in 1955, he was King, and he played host to me with his lovely wife in their charming Palace at Dechencholing. Their style of life was simple, but it was in perfect taste, with no ostentation or straining to impress. The Queen was first and foremost a housewife, who took infinite pains in the orderly running of her establishment and keeping her garden trim. And she saw to it, with wifely devotion, that her husband was at all times decorously attired, his tunic ironed with scrupulous care and not so much as a crease or speck on his shirt.

When we met in Government House at Bombay, his clothes were unkempt and soiled. It was obvious that he lacked attention, that he was lost without the Queen's loving care and tender ministrations. They had by now fallen almost completely apart, and the 'lady' was playing an increasingly dominant role in the King's affairs. She evidently entertained ambitions, for she no longer moved in secrecy. She travelled in the style of the great, with full panoply of escorts and pilots, and flying the royal standard. Of money she had no lack and she was known to be seeking popularity by dispensing presents lavishly to all who paid her court. While she frequently visited the King at Thimphu and Paro, her permanent residence was at the palace built for her by the King at Gelekphu in central Bhutan. Ministers and senior officials found it politic to pay formal calls on her and it was not long before she came to be addressed as *Aji*, an honorific generally reserved only for members of the royal family.

But for all her influence and rise to eminence, the King, it was clear, had no thought to change the line of succession. Though he pandered to the lady's whims, as is the way of kings and commoners alike, his first loyalty was to his elder children —and the pride of his life was his son. And so, to set all doubts

and suspicions at rest, the line of succession was formally and publicly proclaimed. The King was well aware of the serious nature of his illness and that he would not survive for many more years. He took therefore a series of measures to ensure that, when death came, there should be a smooth change-over to the Crown Prince and that the stability he had endeavoured so strenuously to establish should not be endangered.

Kings are not known to lightly yield their rights, divine or otherwise. There was consternation therefore when, on the King's initiative, a resolution was moved in the Tsongdu that the King must abdicate should he ever cease to enjoy the confidence of the House. While the resolution was commended as a generous response to democratic sentiment, there were many who apprehended that it cut at the sanctity of the monarchy and heralded the institution's certain dissolution. The King's motive was not far to seek. There were many persons now out of office, he knew, who would be impatiently wishing his death in the hope that they might be restored to their former positions of power and influence. Some of his existing officers were also apprehensive that, on the King's death, the expatriates in Nepal might attempt to stage a come-back and take revenge on all who had remained loyal to the King. The resolution was a tactful and timely warning that if, under pressures, his successor were to replace the set-up he had inherited, it might well be at the cost of the throne. The King was sure enough of his popularity to be confident that the Tsongdu would never vote him down. His apprehension was that his young son might find himself unable to resist the pressures placed on him after his father's death to dismiss the old guard and reinstate the expatriates from Nepal and their supporters. The resolution was a clear signal that it would be in everybody's interest to continue the *status quo*. For if the expatriates were to return and be elevated to positions of power, it would be open to the Tsongdu to move a vote of no confidence against the King himself. As an added precaution, the Tsongdu resolved that, in the event of the Crown Prince succeeding to the throne on the death of his father 'before attaining the age of twenty-one', the country would be administered by a Council of Regency of four members, 'namely one representative of the Monks Body, one representative of the public, one representative of the

Government and one member of the Royal Family'.

Another astute move of the King was to induct his two eldest daughters, Princess Sonam and Princess Dechen, into the Governmental apparatus and appoint them as his personal representatives in the key departments of Planning and Finance. The Ministers in charge of these departments were henceforward required to submit all cases of importance to the Princesses for final approval. Apart from acting as a check on abuse of authority by the Ministers, the new arrangements enabled the Princesses to become progressively familiarized with the intricacies of the administrative machinery. Where necessary or in difficulties, they could always seek their father's guidance. But they were intelligent young ladies with minds of their own, who quickly found their feet and amply proved their competence.

It was in March 1972, four months before the King's death, that I received a telegram from the Queen giving the glad news that the King had decided to appoint his son as Governor of Tongsa (Tongsa Penlop) and inviting my wife and myself to attend the ceremony of installation. I realized the import of the King's decision and the Queen's very natural wish to share her joy with the friends who had stood fast by her in her years of distress, isolation and uncertainty. For the appointment of her son as Tongsa Penlop set the seal once and for all on the vital question of succession. For some time now, the King had been seen to be systematically grooming his son for the throne. The young Prince was called to sit regularly with the King when he was giving audience and was also invited to be present during meetings of the Royal Council. He was often deputed to officiate for the King on public occasions and accompanied his father on most of his State visits. He was rapidly gaining in self-confidence and self-assurance, and the King was evidently of the mind that, with his own health fast failing, it would be in the interests of his country's stability that the question of succession should no longer be a matter of doubt or speculation. No clearer indication of his intentions could be given to his people than by the elevation of the Prince to the office of Tongsa Penlop, the ultimate stepping-stone to the throne.

It was shortly after the ceremony of installation that my wife and I stopped over for a night at Bhutan House in Kalimpong

to pay a call on Jigmie's mother, Rani Chuni. It was then that we heard from her of the extraordinary transformation that had recently come over the King. The King, she told us, had fallen suddenly and seriously ill at Phuntsholing while on his way to Switzerland for a further medical check. On hearing of his illness, the Queen had set off at once from Thimphu to Phuntsholing to look after his needs and nurse him back to health. He was deeply moved by her anxious solicitude, and for the first time in all the years of estrangement, his expression and manner betokened sorrow that he had been the cause of so much pain and unhappiness to her. He was evidently feeling that there was time yet, while there was still breath in him, for atonement, and his appointment of the Crown Prince as Tongsa Penlop was a first step to set the Queen's mind at rest regarding the future of her son. With the succession of the Crown Prince assured and the two Princesses placed in charge of the two key portfolios of Government, the family could feel secure. The 'lady' may have been over-liberally provisioned with money, property and symbols of status, but if she entertained ambitions for her children by the King, they had been suitably set at rest by the King's latest edict.

The obsession under which the King had been weighed down for so long seemed to be gradually lifting and his old self struggling for liberation from the dark cloud that had been its baneful habitat. His feelings for the 'lady' were not dead, and it would have been callous to drop her from his life after the many years of shared experience. But now at last he was beginning to recognize these feelings for what they were worth, as distinct in quality from the love he had borne to the Queen and she to him, a love compounded of understanding, sympathy and a sharing in common values, a love that was not marketable but founded on true affection and mutual respect.

It was not long after my meeting with Rani Chuni at Kalimpong that news was received of the King's death at Nairobi. The news did not come to me as a surprise. The surprise was that he had survived so long. I remembered the heart specialists warning us nine years earlier that five years was the most we could count on for the King's survival. He had enjoyed a four years' reprieve—and it was clear by his last actions that he knew his time was up.

He had derived some benefit from treatment at Nairobi during a previous visit and decided to give Nairobi a further trial when he fell seriously ill almost immediately following the installation of his son as Tongsa Penlop. As I came to learn later, he had always wanted, ever since he was a boy, to go to Africa to shoot a lion. One of his attendants did indeed set off from Nairobi for a lion shikar, but the King was much too unwell to venture out himself.

Whatever might have been his motive in choosing Nairobi, the composition of the party accompanying him was a pointer that he sensed the end was near. He was accompanied by his mother, his son, his two personal physicians and three Ministers. The 'lady' also succeeded, at the last moment, in getting herself included in the party. The Queen and the Crown Prince requested the King to fly directly to Switzerland, where the best treatment would be available. The King, however, was adamant in his decision to proceed first to Nairobi and later to Switzerland, should that be necessary. On arrival at Nairobi, he recovered his health to some slight extent, and a cable was received by the Queen that he was feeling better and planning to set off on a short safari with his son. But he gained only a brief respite, for a second cable followed to announce that he had died.

Although my relations with the King had never been as intimate as with the Queen and the Dorji family, he had shown many kindnesses to me and I felt it to be my duty to pay my last respects to him as he lay in state at Thimphu and offer my personal condolences to his family. The Queen was gracious enough to order the necessary arrangements for my visit, and my wife and I were deeply touched by her many acts of thoughtfulness for the comfort of our journey and our stay. We were met at the railway-station of Hasimara, on the Indian side of Bhutan's southern frontier, by her brother, Rimpoche, besides the protocol officer and her principal A.D.C., Major Rinchen, and, after breakfasting with Rimpoche at his home in Phuntsholing, were airlifted by helicopter to the capital. Early next morning, we proceeded to the chalet by the river where the King's body was lying in state. Splendid, colourfully embroidered tents had been erected around the chalet to accommodate the multitude of lamas who had assembled to offer prayers

throughout the day and night for the late King's soul. All was peace and quiet, save for the solemn drone of the Bhutanese horn, the deep intonation of the lamas' prayers, and the gentle fluttering of prayer-flags.

We were received at the entrance of the chalet by the four Princesses and escorted to the presence of the young King, his mother and his grandmother (mother of the late King). After we had offered silk scarves as a token of respect for the late King and his family, we were served, according to custom, with tea and refreshments. The King's body was encased in a stupa[1] beautifully draped in rich, silk brocades. A shelf had been fitted along the four sides of the stupa on which butter-lamps were kept burning and food and drink placed at regular intervals as sustenance for the departing spirit. As we partook of the refreshments offered, we talked informally and freely, without any sense of embarrassment or restraint on account of the proximity of the late King's body. I had by now become perfectly conditioned to the Buddhist attitude towards death. Here was no occasion for lamenting and sorrow. The soul had been mercifully freed from the shackles of the body and could aspire now to a higher level of consciousness. No good would be served by grieving overmuch, and if we had regard and affection for the departing soul, we must show it not by tears but by helping it forward with prayers on its destined course.

Custom prescribed that the King must be regularly served with meals according to his taste and habits until the time of the final rites of cremation. Dishes particularly relished by the King were prepared and served to him at the precise hours he was accustomed to eating his meals when alive. Members of the family, friends, officers, retainers, all took turns to offer food to the King as a last act of respect. His favourite brand of cigarettes had also to be included, as there was nothing he enjoyed so much in life as a quiet puff between the courses.

The dishes were allowed to remain around the stupa for half an hour, the time the King normally took over his meals. They were then removed and offered to the numerous personnel engaged in the various religious ceremonies. The expense of offering meals to the King for a single day amounted to about

[1] Stupa: structure (generally of stone) sanctified as a memorial to great events or people.

four thousand rupees. Except in the case of offerings served by a State delegation or by very wealthy personages, the practice was for a number of persons to group together and share the cost, each paying according to his capacity or rank. As the consumption of food by the King was purely notional, it was of course the lamas and attendants who stood mainly to gain, and the contribution was in effect a graceful device for having prayers offered to the King without the appearance of any monetary payment.

The King had been thorough in providing for all possible eventualities on his death. He had arranged that one of his trusted retainers should marry the 'lady', and she was furnished with a property in Thimphu so that she might settle down with her new husband to a life of ease and inconspicuous domesticity. But the King anticipated also the tensions, intrigue and risks that her presence in the capital might give rise to after his death, and had the foresight to bequeath to her, in addition, an extensive and commodious estate in Nainital, nestled in the lovely hills of Uttar Pradesh in India, to which she might resort in case of any future untoward development in Bhutan.[1]

With the King's death came the close of a tragic chapter in Bhutan's history. It is ironic that he died at a time when the Queen was beginning to feel that her long years of patience were at last being rewarded—that the King was recovering his faith in her devotion and that, had he survived, they would have come together once more as a happy, united family.

[1] The King's apprehensions were, in the event, proved justified—see Appendix VII.

# *Epilogue*

> Whoever was heedless before and afterwards is not so, such a one illumines this world like the moon freed from clouds.
>
> *Dhammapada*

The reader may by now have arrived at his own judgement on the motivations behind Jigmie's assassination and the mysteries of that moonlit night at Kyichu. For myself, while I have set forth the sequence of events to the extent they came within my knowledge, far be it for me to claim I have uncovered the truth. The Bhutanese, better than any people of whom I have had experience, know how to keep a secret. When the King decreed that his *affaire* should not be divulged to the Queen, his word was law, and for many years the Queen was unaware of the strange happenings within her own home. Bhutanese methods may be ruthless, but they are effective. The King had ordered, I was told, that anyone suspected of even whispering the lady's name would pay with his life. Whether he would have carried out the threat is another matter, but the fact that he made the threat was itself enough.

The Bhutanese have, throughout their history, been suspicious of foreigners, and there have been few outsiders who have been able to win their confidence completely. Their procedures are *sui generis*, and even the most important orders are often not committed to writing. When so much of business is transacted by word of mouth, it is difficult to fix responsibility for decisions and the historian is left in a vacuum of uncertainty and conjecture. With the King's death, the main source of intelligence was lost and it is doubtful whether the whole truth behind the tragic drama will ever come to light.

I have myself thought hard and deeply, but still seek light. If any impression has emerged from all my searchings, it is that the King was a good man, but was in a quandary of baffling and contrary choices. In his youth, he leant heavily on Jigmie for advice and guidance. But he had independence of mind, and, from his earliest years, was headstrong and unpredictable.

His impetuous nature evidenced itself more than once during his visit to the U.K. in 1950, when he was sent out by his father to familiarize himself with the western world and its ways. Jigmie was deputed to accompany him and used often to tell me of his difficulty and embarrassment in restraining the wayward impulses of his royal charge. In a mood of nostalgia and homesickness, the young Prince once took it into his head that he must indulge in a bout of archery on the Bhutanese New Year Day. This was in the heart of London, amidst the noise and crowd of busy Piccadilly Circus. Bows and arrows had quickly to be procured, which done, the Prince in gay abandon shot an arrow through an unoffending neighbour's bedroom window. The young man next felt it incumbent upon him, as a point of honour, to recover his arrow. But instead of proceeding by the front door, ringing the bell and making a polite request, he scaled up the drain-pipes, entered burglar-wise through the window, to re-emerge, triumphant and whooping, with the errant missile. It was with feelings of unalloyed relief that Jigmie led back his wild charge to Bhutan at the end of his mission, the fair name of Bhutan and the royal house untainted!

A letter Jigmie wrote to me on his return to Bhutan after a visit to Shillong with the Prince in 1948 throws revealing light on the young man's headstrong and erratic temperament:

Camp—Sarbhang
Bhutan
29 December 1948

My dear Uncle,

Just a line to say hullo and thanks for everything; we people had a grand time in Shillong. I hope you've had a good tour and a successful duck shoot[1] and I hope it's ducks you've shot too. By the way, we got here safely and then went to Hathisar. Your D.F.O. (Divisional Forest Officer) a Mr Barruwa (no relation of — I don't think), a grand chap, lent us his elephant for 3 days and M.K.[2] thoroughly enjoyed himself shooting—I only went once on a backaching ride and got nix. Drasho on the other hand was quite successful and in the excitement

[1] Sir Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam, had invited me to spend Christmas with him in Manipur, where we went to shoot duck in the famous Logtak Lake.

[2] i.e. Maharaj Kumar (Prince), also referred to in the letter by his Bhutanese title, *Drasho*.

of the chase poached a little from Assam. I'm afraid I did not have the nerve to apologize to Barruwa whom I've not yet met.

We got back here on the 25th and we are stuck here because it has rained heavily for the last 4 days thus closing our exit for a couple of days, and there is no petrol to be had at Dhubri or Bongaigaon for love or money or coupons. So here we are.

On our tour at Hathisar we were visiting a village and we carried no arms except a couple of pistols (little better than the things you all bought at that tea shop) when being in the middle of the road we met a huge elephant with large tusks and old Drasho nearly took a pot shot at him with his pistol. I nearly had heart-failure—because we would have had a hell-ova time if I hadn't grabbed his raised pistol-hand in time. There are fools and fools but that sort of fool I don't like, they're dangerous company. Anyway we are still alive. We hope to be home on 2nd or 3rd.

Uncle, sorry for all the trouble we gave you and thanks once again. I shall write to Jug in an hour or so.

With all the best for the coming year and look—how about it? Good luck.

Your nephew
Jigmie Dorji

The Prince was fond of Jigmie, and with his marriage to Jigmie's sister, their relations became closer and more intimate. The members of the Prince's family, however, were not likely to regard their growing intimacy with unconcern. The Prince, who succeeded to the throne within two years of his marriage, seemed to them to be slipping into the Dorji fold and their own influence over him was in jeopardy, as he was taking advice from Jigmie over such crucial matters as the resumption by the Government of the royal estates. The King, however, was a strong-willed person and succeeded in steering a middle course. Despite family and other pressures, he retained full confidence in Jigmie, in the knowledge that he was a loyal servant wholly devoted to his master's interests.

It was the King's illness in March 1963 that was the turning-point in his relations with Jigmie. Until then, he had attached no importance to the rumours that were being spread abroad about Jigmie's alleged ambitions. He was shrewd enough to know that there were interested parties who were out to vilify Jigmie and discredit him in the King's eyes. He gave no credence to all the gossip, and his relations with Jigmie and the Dorji family

remained as harmonious as before. His sudden illness, however, came to him as a traumatic shock. He had always been of robust constitution, used to roughing it out under rigorous conditions in the high, snowy mountains, and it must have mystified him that he of all persons should have a heart-attack while passing his time peaceably in the comfortable ease of the capital. Such was the severity of the attack that the medical specialists were amazed that he had survived. And there was nothing traceable in the medical history of the family to point to any proneness to coronary failure at such an early age. True, the King was a chain-smoker. He had been playing football round and about the time of the attack, which might have caused some strain. But he was only thirty-five and had been subjected to far heavier strain, without ill effect, chasing mountain-goat up the most precipitous slopes in the remote snow ranges. The medical specialists were baffled and unable to find an answer.

As I was staying at the Palace guest-house during the early months of the King's illness, I had occasion to sense at first hand the gradual change of feeling in the relations between the Wangchuk and Dorji families. The first indication was when Tashi, Jigmie's sister, hinted to me that the King might not favour the highlighting of the Dorji family's contribution to Bhutan's progress in the brochure I had drafted for the Colombo Plan conference. It had never occurred to me for one moment that the King would have any reservations. But she evidently knew better and I agreed, on her advice, to toning it down before submission to the King for his approval.

Soon after my arrival in Thimphu to assume my appointment, Jigmie informed me of the drastic action he had been constrained to take against one of the King's men for failure to repay heavy Governmental dues. His house, which he had been summarily ordered to vacate, was confiscated, and the property was taken over by the State for public purposes. Jigmie was, I could see, somewhat apprehensive of the King's reactions. But he was convinced that, as long as the King had vested responsibility in him for the administration, he must act according to the best of his judgement. The King raised no open objection to Jigmie's decision. But I sensed it may have caused him unhappiness, as Jigmie's right of access to the King seemed not as free as in previous days. The privilege of access to the King was

indeed the main criterion by which his favour was gauged. In happier times, Jigmie would have had little difficulty in obtaining audience. And if there were obstacles, they could be removed through the intervention of the Queen. But the Queen seemed now to have so identified herself with her husband that her intervention was often unavailing for gaining the King's ear.

True, the doctors had advised that the King must have complete rest and was not to be disturbed over affairs of State. But an impression was gaining ground that the King's illness was often being made a pretext for unnecessary complaints or for keeping away unwanted callers. There was stir and commotion one morning when a complaint was received that a dog had been heard to bark in the Palace garden and disturb the royal slumber. Jigmie was next informed that the King desired that his office be shifted from the Palace premises and the guesthouse vacated so that there should be complete peace and quiet. The inference was that the King, or his advisers, considered it advisable to keep Jigmie at some distance. It might well have been fed into the ears of the King that his illness was but the prelude to worse to come, that an attempt was being made to kill the King by poisoning and that Jigmie was watching, ready-poised, for the most favourable moment to achieve his purpose.

The King was not likely to give much credence to such insinuations. But he had been badly shaken by his illness, and there were no doubt many among his courtiers who were seizing the opportunity of recalling that their forewarnings were now proving to be justified. They had warned the King not to put his trust in Jigmie. He had not heeded their warning, with the result that he had let power slip from his hands and was in danger of losing his life. But it was still not too late. As the King was a sick man, it would not be right to burden him at such a time with the responsibility of setting things right himself. The recovery of his health was the first concern of his subjects, and they had no objection to his proceeding to Switzerland, well away from the ministrations of Jigmie, for a much-needed medical check. His well-wishers at home would meanwhile set his house in order on his behalf. It was not desirable for the King to be troubled with details. The doctors had insisted that he should not be subjected to stress or anxiety. All that his sup-

porters wanted was a little time. Things had been allowed to drift too far, and unless a halt was called at once, it would be too late to save the King from losing his throne, perhaps even his life.

I do not believe, as has been surmised by some, that the King had ordered Jigmie's assassination. I do not believe that he even sanctioned the assassination. But there is no doubt that in the months following the King's heart-attack he felt subjected to irritations that were noticeably telling on his nerves. The privacy of his home was being disturbed by the installation of an office on the ground floor. Jigmie's official acts, all done in good faith, were giving rise to murmurings all round. The King's sister, Princess Choki, was complaining that Jigmie was not respecting the privileges of the royal family. Their lands were being confiscated to the State and their rights over their retainers interfered with. The lamas disapproved of Jigmie's apparent contempt for religious institutions. And, on top of it all, Jigmie's brother Lhendup was reported to be threatening to shoot the 'lady' if she dared make an appearance in public. Lhendup, as was common knowledge, was in no position to talk big of morals or marital fidelity. Besides, the King's affairs were the King's affairs, and he was certainly not going to tolerate loose talk from any quarter questioning his private conduct.

The heaviest pressure on the King came from his senior civil and army officers, who had serious apprehensions that they might soon be replaced by the young blood being increasingly injected into the administration. This followed as an inevitable corollary of Jigmie's strenuous endeavour to modernize the administration and fit it for meeting the demands of a newly developing country. It is significant that the two persons primarily responsible for plotting the mechanics of the assassination were the Army Chief and the Quartermaster-General, the latter a senior civil servant under orders of retirement. The former, too, had reason to apprehend that he might soon be replaced by one of the three young Colonels recently returned from training in a modern military academy. Both these officers were old-timers who had the ear of the King, and they found in the King's illness the opportunity they were so keenly seeking. Hitherto, their complaints to the King against Jigmie would

have been construed as motivated by personal self-interest, the fear of losing their posts. They could now stand forward and pose as champions of the King, who were placing their services at his disposal to save his life from the evil usurper. They realized full well the embarrassment of the King's position. Jigmie was the Queen's brother and the King could hardly be expected to ease him out of office on the strength of mere suspicion. But this was no time for family sentiment or legal niceties. There was danger ahead and a question of who would be the first to strike. Besides, matters of State were involved, the survival of the royal house, and it would be wrong for the King to allow personal or family considerations to come in the way of the larger public interest. The King had, in any case, handed over the administration to Jigmie for the duration of his illness. The doctors had advised him complete rest and freedom from all worry and tension. They would not therefore burden him with the taking of any decision that might be a source of anxiety to him in his present enfeebled state. The first priority was his health and he must give himself a fair chance to recover by remaining for some more time under strict medical supervision in Switzerland, where he would be safe from further threat to his life. His well-wishers at home would meanwhile act according to their best judgement to ensure that the King's interests were safeguarded and that the 'lady' should come to no harm. If they felt the need for instructions or wished to communicate with the King, they would approach either his mother or his brother and take their advice. All they wished the King to know was that whatever action they might decide to be necessary was being taken with the sincerest of motives and in the best interests of King and country.

Had the King been enjoying normal health, he would certainly not have allowed himself to remain a mere observer of events. But as things were, he was a very sick man and was being subjected, at a time of extreme physical and emotional weakness, to a rumour campaign systematically directed at breaking down his resistance and compelling him to allow his self-appointed well-wishers to take matters into their own hands.

It is easy to be wise after the event. But if the King's predicament had been understood, much of the subsequent unhappy developments might well have taken a very different course.

The King was basically a good man, with a lively sense of humour and an essentially kindly nature. The revelation that his uncle had ordered Jigmie's assassination should not have led to the assumption that the ultimate order was the King's. But in the prevailing state of tension and frayed nerves, it was openly and indiscriminately bruited about that it was the King who was the villain of the piece; and it was, again, the King who had engineered the plot from start to finish. It could not have been a welcome situation for the King to find himself publicly branded as the murderer of his Prime Minister and maliciously maligned for 'moral lapses' that were a commonplace both in and out of Bhutan. He was a man with self-respect and, as he had written in his letter from Zurich, was not going to be insulted in his own country. Matters, however, had come to such a pass that every action of his was being deliberately misconstrued. There were complaints, at the initial stages of the enquiry into Jigmie's assassination, that the investigations were being deliberately delayed and that the King was looking around for ways and means of protecting his uncle from the operation of the law. To allay all doubts, the King insisted that the investigations must be quickly completed and the accused brought to justice. And what more could he do to prove his impartiality than confirm the death-sentence on his own uncle? But this too was construed as a cunning ruse on his part to forestall unpalatable truths being divulged at any subsequent stage. Had the accused been sentenced instead to transportation for life, there would have been protest for sure at the inadequacy of the sentence and insinuations that the King would look for the first opportunity to revoke the sentence and set his uncle free. There was nothing the King could do right.

This has been no fairy-tale, but when I first met the King and Queen, twenty years back, they appeared to me as the King and Queen of a fairy-tale. It was difficult to imagine a more handsome pair, so fresh, so attuned to each other, and in the flush of youth. And their kingdom, their palace—it was a fairy palace in a fairy kingdom. Everywhere there was radiance and colour. There is a sharpness in the air that gives an edge to all colour in the crisp and rarefied heights of the Dragon-Kingdom. When the rhododendron and azalea are in bloom on the Dochu La pass, it is a sight not to be forgotten. But apart

from nature's beauties, there is colour in the simple things of life, a pony's saddlery, the dress of a peasant, a hand-carved table or a musical instrument. I could not believe, in my innocence, that there could be intrigue and blood in an atmosphere of such pure enchantment. It seemed indeed that, as in a fairy story, a wicked spell had been suddenly cast on the land, turning all that was sweet into sour, transmuting joy into sorrow and love into hate.

For six years after my return to Assam, I never revisited Bhutan. My duty done, I felt no urge to retread the paths of a shattered dream. When I went again, it was a call of duty, to pay my final respects to the King whom I had served and to offer my condolences to his family who were my friends. But though it was a call of duty, I found love strangely re-entering my heart. Thimphu, the little village I had known, had grown into a large and busy township. But amidst all the hustle and bustle, I recaptured once more an echo of my one-time fairy kingdom. Love and patience had triumphed in the end. The wicked spell was broken. Hate and anger had died, and the late King was being recognized again for what he truly was, a good and able man, bent upon handing down, in the brief years allotted to him, a stable kingdom to his rightful heir.

I thought back with nostalgia of a letter I had received from the Queen on my return from my first visit to Bhutan in 1955:

Dear Uncle,

H.M. and I are very happy to add another grand-nephew to your family. Both Sonam Choden and Dechen Wangmo are thrilled with their new brother! Sonam Choden has still not forgotten you and recognizes you in the photographs. H.M. has gone to Punakha and will be busy there for some time, as the damage caused by the flood this summer is much worse than we had feared.

It is very peaceful here as practically all the people in the valley have gone to Punakha for the winter months.

We are sorry, Uncle, that your stay with us in Thimphu was so short, and that we could not make you more comfortable. We do hope you will come to Bhutan again in the near future.

With our warmest greetings and every good wish to you for the new year.

Yours sincerely,
Kesang Wangchuk

My newest 'grand-nephew' was now a young man of the same age as was his father when I met him first in Shillong in 1948, and in many ways strikingly similar—in the bloom of youth, handsome, but with rather softer, more sensitive features. Like his father in his early years, he was a lad of high spirits, who enjoyed speeding along the hill-slopes at breakneck speed on his high-powered motorcycle. On my latest meeting with him at Thimphu, he was sedate and dignified and noticeably conscious of the heavy burden that had suddenly fallen on his youthful shoulders. He had already gifted away to his friends his beloved motorcycle and scooters, and I felt saddened that his lovely youth should so prematurely be shadowed by responsibilities of high office. I felt for him an instinctive fondness and sympathy, as I had for his father, and I was happy, in a way proud, to hear him so highly spoken of by all who had occasion to know him and work with him. He was surprisingly balanced and composed, despite the tensions he must have been subjected to through the family estrangement. His had not been an easy upbringing, and it is to the credit of his parents that they did not allow their own differences and troubles to embitter their children or create psychological conflicts. That this was possible was due, I think, to the underlying current of love that, for all the external waves of estrangement, flowed deep in the hearts of both parents until the very end.

Left to themselves, husband and wife might well have worked their way to an ultimate solution of their family problems. The King had mentioned to me often that, whereas he was confident of his ability to manage affairs of State, he felt frustrated in his efforts to settle the 'family problem'. He was genuinely anxious that the old and happy relationship with the Queen should be restored. But he felt he had as much right to conduct his private affairs according to his likes as any of his subjects. He saw no cause or justification for all the righteous indignation that was being voiced about his morals by persons who quite obviously could not see the mote in their own eye. As King, he objected to family interference in matters of State and to the questioning of his judgement regarding the loyalties or otherwise of his officers. As a private person, he was irritated by the niggling gossip regarding his personal affairs. If only the Queen's well-wishers would cease trying to poison her mind and

sowing suspicion against him, he felt there was hope for a reconciliation. And the basis of his hope was the love that, in spite of all that had transpired, he bore towards her and he was convinced she still bore towards him.

It was the consciousness of the deep love their parents had for each other at heart that enabled the children to grow up without feelings of rancour and cynicism. They were as happy when they stayed with their father as with their mother, and they admired and worshipped both equally. With the new King sharing the blood of both, a new confidence has been born and hurtful suspicions and rivalries have been finally laid to rest. If the King is devoted to his mother, he has affection and respect also for his father's family. His parents have had the wisdom to give him a modern education, but without allowing him to lose his roots in his own country. He has had the invaluable advantage of personal instruction in the art of kingship from a father who was aware that his end was near and that the best use he could make of his last days was in passing down his skills to his son and successor.

The Queen had told me of the ancient prophecy by Guru Padma Sambhava that a future ruler of Bhutan would be born in the Thimphu Valley. The prophecy had been fulfilled in the birth of her son. According to this prophecy, the first twelve years of his reign would be years of happiness and peace. The thirteenth year would be a critical year, with danger threatening the country. But when once it was past, his reign would continue in uninterrupted happiness and prosperity. His father, the late King, was enthroned in 1952, and the first twelve years of his reign were years of happiness for his family and peace for his country. In 1964, his Prime Minister was assassinated and his country plunged in bitter dissension. History, it is said, repeats itself, and the ancient prophecy has vouchafed the new King also twelve golden years. And when, in time's inexorable course, the critical year of the prophecy draws near, the Guardian Deity of Bhutan, who appeared before the Prince in a vision once before at a time of crisis, will surely stand by the King, in splendid, scarlet aspect, to protect him and guide him through the perils that may be in store.

# APPENDIX I

(See page 17)

*Oath of Allegiance signed at Punakha at the installation of Sir Ugyen Wangchuk as King of Bhutan, 17 December 1907*

To the Foot of the Two-fold Judge

Most Respectfully Prayeth,

There being no Hereditary Maharaja over this State of Bhutan, and the Deb Rajas being elected from amongst the Lamas, Lopons, Councillors and the Chiolahs of the different districts, we the undersigned Abbots, Lopons, and the whole body of Lamas, the State Councillors, the Chiolahs of the different districts, with all the subjects, having discussed and unanimously agreed to elect Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, Tongsa Penlop, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, as Hereditary Maharaja of this State, have installed him, in open Durbar, on the golden throne on this the 13th day of the 11th month of the Earth-Monkey year, corresponding to 17 December 1907, at Punakha Palace.

We now declare our allegiance to him and his heirs with unchanging mind, and undertake to serve him and his heirs loyally and faithfully to the best of our ability. Should any one not abide by this contract by saying this and that, he shall altogether be turned out of our company.

In witness thereto we affix our seals.

Seal of the whole body of lamas, headed by the Khenpo and Lopon. Seal and sign of Chotsi (Tongsa) Chiolah. Seal and sign of Thimbu Jongpen Kunzang Tinley. Seal and sign of Punakha Jongpen Palden Wangchuk. Seal and sign of Angdu-phodang Jongpen Kunzang Norbu. Seal and sign of Rinpung Chiolah (Paro Penlop) Dow Paljor. Seal and sign of Tarkar Chiolah Tsewang Dorje. Seal and sign of Deb Zimpon Kunzang Tsering.

Second class Officers: Seal and sign of Zung Donsapa Shar Sring. Seal and sign of Zimpon Nangma Namgyal. Seal and sign of Tapon Rigzin Dorje. Seal and sign of Chapon Samdub. Seal and sign of Punakha Nyerpa Kunley. Seal and sign of Ghassa-jong Tarpon Goley Ngodub. Seal and sign of Thimbu Zimpon Sithub. Seal and sign of Thimbu Nyerpa Phurpa Tashi. Seal and sign of Linzi Nyerpa Taya Gepo. Seal and sign of Angdu-phodang Zimpon Tsewang Ngodub.

Seal and sign of Angdu-phodang Nyerpa Gharpon. Seal and sign of Minpung Nyerpa Yesha. Seal and sign of Rinpung Zimpon Sigyal. Seal and sign of Duggye Jongpen Samten Wot Zer. Seal and sign of Hah Tungpa Ugyen. Seal and sign of Byagha Jongpen Tsemed Dorje. Seal and sign of Shon-gha Jongpen Sonam Sring. Seal and sign of Lhuntse Jongpen Tinley Gyatso. Seal and sign of Shalgang Jongpen Karma.

Seal and sign of all the third class officers of Punakha. Seal and sign of all the third class officers of Tashi-cho-jong. Seal and sign of all the third class officers of Angdu-phodang. Seal and sign of all the third class officers of Tongsa. Seal and sign of all the third class officers of Rinpung (Paro). Seal and sign of Chotre Zimpon Dorje. Seal and sign of Tarkar Zimpon Dorje. Seal and sign of Nyerchen Wangpo. Seal and sign of all the subjects of Thekar-kyon-chu-sum. Seal and sign of all the subjects of Shar-tar-gyed. Seal and sign of all the subjects of Bar-khor-tso-tug. Seal and sign of all the subjects of Tsen-tong-ling-tung. Seal and sign of all the Hah subjects. Seal and sign of all the subjects of Shachokhorlo-tsip-gyed.

# APPENDIX II

(See page 26)

*Notice in the STATESMAN (Calcutta) of 13 July 1963*

## FIRST BHUTAN CABINET EXPECTED TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON

From DESMOND DOIG

For some time now the Bhutanese have been demolishing one of their finest *dzongs* and building a modern version in the rubble of the old. The project will apparently cost the Bhutanese a staggering crore of rupees: Bhutan's annual revenue is in the region of 40 to 50 lakhs, excluding payment in kind.

The idea of rebuilding Thimphu Dzong, to house Bhutan's new Secretariat, is the Maharaja's. It is thought possible that his unflagging interest in the project, often running to hefting building material about himself and spending long hours at the site, may have contributed to his recent heart trouble. Another factor was his insistence on joining his conscripted subjects in military training, including mock combat and strenuous obstacle courses.

From all accounts the Maharaja—now known to all Bhutanese by royal proclamation as His Majesty—is responding favourably to the care of his physicians, a senior Indian Army doctor and a Calcutta heart-specialist among them. For a while a renowned British heart-specialist stood by to fly to Thimphu.

The Maharaja is now on his feet again, but it may be some time before he is completely fit. Though he remains very much at the head of his Government and is kept acquainted with every development of any importance in his country, many of his responsibilities are at present being borne by his Prime Minister, Mr Jigmie Dorji, and other senior officials. In the present context of the Chinese threat and Bhutan's new preoccupation with modern development, the strain implicit in such a situation is beginning to tell. The Maharaja is shortly expected to proclaim the creation of six new ministries and formation of the first Bhutanese Cabinet. The Cabinet will replace the present selected Council of Members that acted as advisers to the King in the National Assembly.

### NEW MINISTERS

Miss Tashi Dorji, the Prime Minister's capable sister, is expected to be Minister of Education and Health and permanent representative

to the Colombo Plan. It was she who was largely responsible, last spring, for steering Bhutan through the Plan preliminaries in Sydney, where members at the conference were impressed by the all-woman Bhutanese delegation she led. Mr Lhendup Dorji, the Prime Minister's brother, will be elevated to ministerial rank and entrusted with the important business of Transport and Communications.

It is not yet known who will be given the Defence portfolio. Until now defence has been the Maharaja's direct responsibility, but so has almost everything else either within his or the Prime Minister's province.

So the demolition of the old Thimphu Dzong and the building of the new to house the country's Secretariat are illustrative of the new Bhutan. In 1959 when I first visited the country we walked and rode six days to reach Paro, another two to Thimphu (then Thimbu), the new capital, and yet another nine to Bumthang in the north, once the summer capital. Thimphu Dzong was old and beautiful but falling down, there were no shops, only a handful of primary schools, one small hospital, two doctors in the entire country, a tough but irregular force of border guards, few at that, and the whole feel of the place was other-age, other-world, medieval and, above all, unhurried. Last year I motored to Paro. New buildings below the dzong housed advisers with the Rs 10 crore Indian aid programme to Bhutan. I discovered a South Indian agricultural expert examining local manure in a paddy-field. Drivers from Darjeeling lounged about a square of shops close by the archery ground. I was told of roads cutting rapidly through the eastern ranges, of paper pulp and rayon-producing projects, shown the site for a dam that will bring hydro-electric power to the Paro and Thimphu valleys and was impressed by the new urgency in everything.

Since Bhutan decided to lower its physical and psychological barriers in 1959, the country has received generous Indian aid to finance its first Five Year Plan. It has joined the Colombo Plan, issued its own stamps, brought in experts from India, Europe and Japan to advise on potential industry and has faced up to a national emergency arising from the Chinese threat with vigour. With an estimated population of only 6,00,000, Bhutan has found the men to double and quadruple its army strength and the labour to work round the clock on its new network of roads.

On 1 September, Mr N. K. Rustomji, I.C.S., and at present Adviser to the Governor of Assam, will become the first Indian Adviser to the Maharaja. Bhutanese are quick to point out that the Maharaja asked for the services of Mr Rustomji; there is no question of India foisting a political agent on Bhutan. According to them, the new adviser will be concerned more with development projects than

with politics. Mr Rustomji is an old friend of Bhutan, having been Dewan in Sikkim for several years, when he visited the country on more than one occasion. It is no secret that his advice went far in making the transition from Bhutan's feudalistic past to its present eagerly progressive state as painless as it has been.

# APPENDIX III

(See page 71)

## (1) PROCEDURE FOR THE TRIAL OF CHABDA AND OTHERS

The trial will be an open hearing at the Dzong before His Majesty the King's Commissioners and the following procedure will be followed:

1. The Royal Commission will be read out by the Chief Secretary.
2. Prayers by a lama.
3. The charges will be put to the accused persons by the Chief Secretary. These will be explained clearly to the accused. They will then be asked whether they plead guilty or not guilty to these charges.
4. The Chief Secretary calls on Colonel Tangbi, the Chief Investigating Officer, for a full report of the offence and the proof of the guilt of the accused.
5. Colonel Tangbi outlines the case against the accused and calls for evidence of the crime, the arrest of the accused persons and the statements and confessions made by them.
6. The accused are asked individually if they have any further statement they wish to make to the Court.
7. The Court is adjourned while the Commissioners consider their verdict.
8. The Judgement of the Commissioners is read out by the Chief Secretary.
9. Sentence is then given.

## (2) ROYAL COMMISSION

We, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, King of Bhutan, hereby appoint:

1. Dasho Gyelden Tinley Dorji (President)
2. Commissioner Rinchhen
3. Thimphu Thrimpon Japha Dorji
4. Tongsa Thrimpon Dawa Tshering
5. Deputy Chief Secretary Dasho Sangey
6. Puna Thrimpon Ura Gup

as Our Commissioners to inquire on Our behalf into the circumstances of the death of Our trusted and well-loved Prime Minister, Jigmie Palden Dorji.

And to hear and determine the criminal charges arising from his

death which have been made against Namgye Bahadur and others now awaiting trial.

By command.

## (3) CHARGES

Chabda Namgye Bahadur, Jambey and Doley, and Sangye Dorji, you are charged with Treason, contrary to section 3(1) of the Law of Treason, Act No. 17 of the Laws of Bhutan.

(Chief Secretary reads Act No. 17 in full.)

Do you admit instructing Doley and Jambey to go in search of the Prime Minister and then to shoot him? Chabda Namgye Bahadur, do you now admit it?

Jambey, do you admit shooting at Jigmie Dorji, the Prime Minister, and so killing him?

Sangye Dorji, do you admit discussing the assassination of the Prime Minister and taking action against his life, passing on instructions to Jambey and Doley, who committed this crime? Do you now admit it?

Doley, do you admit that you went armed in search of the Prime Minister, having received a payment of rupees 1,000, with intent to kill him? Do you admit it?

## (4) REPORT OF CHIEF INVESTIGATING OFFICER

The Court will see from the statements of the four accused that knowing full well that they were breaking the law of the country for their own personal selfish reasons they carried out the murder of Jigmie Dorji. They hoped that they would not be discovered but fortunately they were caught. They must therefore suffer the penalty laid down by the law.

After the death of the late Prime Minister there were widespread reports that the Army had revolted. This was not true; the Army remained loyal to the King and country and the plot was found to be limited to a small group of vain, discontented traitors. It was entirely an internal affair and there has been no evidence at all to show that any foreign power played any part in this crime.

The evidence that the Court will now hear will consist of details of the murder from a witness who was present. The Court will also hear evidence of the arrest of the accused. Their voluntary confessions admitting the crime have already been read to the Court.

(i) Witnesses

1. Subdivisional Officer, Phuntsholing
2. Maksi Penjore
3. Pelpon Nob Getsen

(ii) Read Statements
1. Chabda
2. Bacchu
3. Sangye Dorji
4. Jambey
5. Doley

The trial of these accused arises out of a terrible crime which will be remembered as a black moment in the history of our country.

The four accused are charged with Treason, contrary to Act No.17 which has been read to this Court by the Chief Secretary. This crime involved the murder of Jigmie Dorji, our late Prime Minister who was acting as Regent in the absence of His Majesty abroad. The killing of a senior officer of His Majesty's government changes the crime of murder to one of treason, and the accused have admitted their crime both in their statements and before this honourable Court. You have already heard the statements and confessions of the accused and as Chief Investigating Officer, I would like to tell the Court briefly of the circumstances of this crime.

The late Prime Minister was sitting at the Rest House at Phuntsholing with friends and relatives playing cards on 5 April. Through a window behind the Prime Minister, a shot was fired wounding him fatally. He died from this wound about one hour and a half later. His dying words were a request to tell His Majesty that he had always served his King and country faithfully and loyally and to the best of his ability. (You will hear one of the persons present on that unfortunate evening describe to this Court the events of that evening.)

In the meantime, an extensive search was started to find the killer. A message was sent to Chabda asking him to send all available men to search for the killer. His first reply was that it was late at night and he refused to send any men. He sent a message the following day that due to heavy pressure of work only a small force of men was available but that he would despatch reinforcements later if necessary. The Court may find it hard to think of a more necessary occasion to send forces than the assassination of the Regent, the Prime Minister.

The Indian Government sent dogs to help in the search and showed their concern with offers of assistance in the investigation. The efforts of Sgt. Nob Gyetsen and his men were rewarded with the arrest of Jambey on 8 April 1964. He readily admitted to being the killer but to everyone's surprise, claimed to have been acting on the orders of Chabda and Sangye Dorji. This was at first incredible. This was a man who enjoyed the trust and confidence of both the King and the Prime Minister, and who had always appeared to be a loyal servant. The investigation showed, however, that this information was correct.

As soon as His Majesty returned to this country, he consulted his advisers and thereupon summoned Chabda to the Palace where he was arrested together with his accomplices. (The Court has heard their statements in which they admit their crime.) One of the accused, Bacchu Phugel, after making his statement and realizing with horror the dreadful crime he had committed, took his own life in prison.

While the accused admit their crime, they try in their statements to attempt to justify their action by a series of lies and false evidence. The real motive behind this crime will be shown to you to be the personal ambition and vanity of Chabda, assisted and advised by Bacchu Phugel. Phugel was acting through motives of revenge against the Prime Minister, who had dismissed Phugel from his Government appointment as Q.M.G. of the Army. Chabda's complaints about the Prime Minister have been stated in Phugel's statement. (Read complaints set out as 1 to 4.) Referring to Chabda's statement, it will be remembered that the late Prime Minister had modernized the army by bringing in young officers to replace the old ones, who had been pensioned off. Chabda felt that he too was likely to be pensioned off. He states: The Prime Minister's decision to release the old officers on pension had created suspicion in my mind. He wanted to dispose of all loyal and experienced Officers and put a younger lot in their places in order to strengthen his position. Chabda tells Doley that he had been asked by the Prime Minister to go on pension but had refused. Chabda's motive for killing the Prime Minister is absolutely clear. His own position in the Army had become insecure and he resented the Prime Minister scolding him with insulting words, taking away his vehicles and substituting young officers for the old ones. Bacchu in his statement says that when Chabda saw him and made these complaints, he asked whether it was advisable to send someone to murder the Prime Minister.

Chabda claims that he uncovered a plot by the late Prime Minister to kill His Majesty. This is ridiculous. The late Prime Minister's devotion and loyalty to His Majesty have never been in any doubt and far from seeking power, the late Prime Minister was anxious to retire and let younger men take over his responsibilities. Apart from the obvious absurdity of this story it is an obvious lie for other reasons:

1. The story of the plot being uncovered shows that, according to the statements, the arrangements to kill the Prime Minister took place at least one month before the so-called discovery of the plot.
2. If Chabda had any real evidence of such a plot, he should have informed His Majesty. He did not do so.
3. He could have made arrangements to arrest the Prime Minister.
4. His instructions to the killer were 'to carry out the task with

absolute secrecy. In case of arrest they promised not to mention my name by any chance.' If he had been acting in the interest of the King it would not have been necessary for him to carry out this crime in secret.

5. If he was giving a lawful order to the soldiers, it would not have been necessary to pay them a thousand rupees each to carry out the killing.

## (5) JUDGEMENT

You have admitted before this Court that each of you is guilty of the crime of treason. The penalty is laid down by law and this Court has no power to alter the sentence provided in the Act.

Chabda Namgye Bahadur, Sangye Dorji, Jambey and Doley, you must have realized what the consequence would be to you if the crime was discovered. You could not have realized what a terrible calamity the late Prime Minister's death would be to your country, blinded as you were by your own selfish motives. The death of Jigmie Dorji is a sad loss for our country and the King has lost his most loyal and trusted adviser, in whom he reposed the confidence to appoint him as his Regent in his absence abroad. The late Prime Minister guided our country into an age of progress and we and our children will be thankful to him always for the work he did for Bhutan.

In view of certain reports that have appeared in the Press, the Court would like to state that there is no evidence at all that any foreign power was in any way involved. It is entirely an internal affair of our country. It has been clear from the evidence that has been heard by this Court that the full and entire responsibility for this plot belongs to these accused men and only to them.

Chabda Namgye Bahadur, it is a sad duty that we, your former friends and colleagues, have to perform. You have served your King and country well for many years and rose to one of the highest posts in the land. Your devotion and loyalty were never before in any doubt. You enjoyed the trust, confidence and affection of the King, the late Prime Minister and your colleagues. Unfortunately you betrayed that trust.

The sentence of the Court as laid down by section 11 of the Treason Act is that you, Chabda Namgye Bahadur, Sangye Dorji and Jambey, suffer death by being shot by a firing squad of the Army at a time and place to be ordered by His Majesty the King.

The Court has come to the conclusion that while Doley has committed the crime of treason, he played an insignificant part in the plot. For his own personal reasons, he failed to carry out the part in the crime assigned to him. In these circumstances, while this Court does not have jurisdiction under the Act to alter the sentence laid

down by law, we shall humbly advise His Majesty to commute Doley's sentence of death to a sentence of imprisonment for life.

All sentences pronounced by this Court are subject to the confirmation of His Majesty the King.

# APPENDIX IV

(See page 84)

*Report in the INDIAN EXPRESS (New Delhi) of 17 December 1964*

## BHUTAN TRAITORS REVIVE SLUR: INDIA 'EXPLOITING' KING

The Bhutanese defectors, now in Nepal, declared today that India was trying to blackmail King Wangchuk, who himself was mentally unstable.

In yet another outburst against India at a news conference, the rebel Bhutanese officers said the King was not responsible for the statements being made on his behalf by an Indian official, Mr Rustomji.

The conference was addressed by Lt. Col. Penjo Ongdi, on behalf of the leader of the group, Brig. Tangbi.

He said they had enough proof and written documents to show how India was trying 'to blackmail the King and take undue advantage of his poor physical and mental condition'.

'We hope the King will recover soon and we will be able to go back and fight his cause,' he added.

When a newsman asked him to clarify the remark that the King was mentally ill, he said: 'The amount of tranquillizers and pills he takes is sufficient proof that he is mentally abnormal.'

He said it was a twisting of facts to say that they had not crossed into China because China was unfriendly to Bhutan.

'We do not intend to see any foreigners here, but if anybody wishes to see us, we will welcome them.'

### MAJORITY

Col. Ongdi said they had to leave Bhutan because they felt their lives were not safe. 'But our group is in a majority in Bhutan and we are the people who have all the secrets.'

Asked on whose behalf they were speaking, they admitted they were speaking on their own behalf: 'But we do not believe in the so-called statements of the King. They are being made by Mr Rustomji.'

They said Mr Lhendup Dorji was their leader when they left Bhutan and 'we still take him as our leader'.

A statement issued on behalf of Brig. Tangbi said they were surprised at the pronouncements made by Indian Ministers including Prime Minister Shastri contradicting their earlier remarks.

INDEPENDENT

'We still insist that whatever statements we have made in the past are facts. India being a friendly country of Bhutan, we do not desire to deteriorate or break off the existing good relations unless and until the Government of India intends to do so as they are trying now.'

The Indian statements, according to them, were attempts at 'throwing mud and dust in the eyes of the world'.

Reiterating that Bhutan was not a protectorate of India, the statement said Bhutan was an independent sovereign country and 'we want to establish free trade relations with the rest of the world, particularly with our neighbours'.

It said this was not a new point as it had been raised several times previously. The statement alleged that India had at one time suspended economic aid to Bhutan and had released the aid only after Nehru had said it was necessary for the country to have direct relations with foreign countries.

India, the statement alleged, was trying to exploit the situation in Bhutan and create misunderstanding between the King and his loyal servants.

It drew the attention of the peace-loving countries to Indian attempts 'to hoodwink the main issue of their claims that Bhutan was a sovereign independent country'.

SURPRISE

The statement said: 'It is surprising that a pioneer freedom fighter like India should insist on the legacy of Bhutan's treaty with Britain of 1910.'

Other countries had attained independence only after centuries of domination by others. But Bhutan was never dominated by another power.

They dismissed the charges against them of misappropriation of funds as untrue. 'These are minor points so far as our cause is concerned,' the statement said.

It said India should help Bhutan in its foreign relations, understand the wishes of the Bhutanese and review its policy accordingly.

They said during their meeting with Dr Tulsi Giri, Chairman of Nepal's Council of Ministers, he had told them they could live in Nepal as any free Nepalese citizens.

# APPENDIX V

(See page 90)

*The first of two talks broadcast on All India Radio on 7 and 14 August 1965*

## BHUTAN TODAY (1)

It is difficult to speak with any precision of 'Bhutan today', as Bhutan is a country where yesterday, today and tomorrow are so strangely and elusively mingled together. Our idea of a country and its people is often based on what we know or hear of its capital and more important cities. The country's image is the image presented to the traveller who has time to visit the more accessible areas, which need not, and often do not, fairly represent the land as a whole. Until recent years, the outside world has known little of Bhutan, and most maps show as its capital not Thimphu but the ancient historical centre of Punakha. And then, as of a sudden, we hear of Five Year Plans and all the paraphernalia of a modern bureaucracy. What has happened, we may ask, what is this change that seems to be coming over the country, how deeply is its impact felt by the people, and what do they think about it all?

It was just ten years ago, in 1955, that I was invited to pay my first visit to Bhutan. I remember well the excitement of preparations for what was, at that time, something of an adventure into a new and little-known world. Our bustling caravan of ponies and mules trailing over the seemingly unending succession of mountain passes brought us, on our tenth day, to Thimphu, the 8,000 feet high capital. Here we were graciously received by the King, hospitably entertained, and after being duly revived, trekked eastwards for a further seven arduous days before reaching our destination in central Bhutan. That was ten years ago. Last month, a doctor set off from Calcutta on a Monday to see a patient in Thimphu, and was back in his consulting room in Calcutta the following Wednesday after jeeping his way up the new road to the capital. Communications are, of course, being developed at a phenomenal pace in most countries. But there is, in the case of Bhutan, a significant difference, arising from the circumstances of her history. Elsewhere, people have wanted roads, but have not been able to afford the expenditure of building them. Bhutan, on the contrary, has, throughout her history, preferred to keep herself isolated from her neighbours. Yesterday's isolation is seen reflected in the character and attitudes of her people today. The Bhutanese rarely feels thoroughly at home outside his own country. In former days, he left Bhutan only when he must, and then too, for as short a period as

possible. The reasons for his travelling outside his country were usually trade or pilgrimage, and when his business was done he was glad to return and settle down once more in his old familiar haunts. He was similarly shy of visitors from foreign lands, and if visitors came to Bhutan, it was not to see the sights but on some special mission, very often connected with land disputes along her frontiers. With this background, it becomes easier to understand what might otherwise appear to be a certain aloofness in the Bhutanese character. The Bhutanese is, at heart, a friendly and hospitable person, but he is naturally a child of his past, and tends to remain within his shell.

The radio, newspaper, books, travel, all have combined to standardize to such a degree a particular way of life that many of us forget that there can be another way, many other ways, that are equally valid. We tend to evaluate the educational level of a country by the number of graduates and matriculates that are churned up every year. The casual visitor to Bhutan will find very few people in the interior with knowledge of English or any language other than Bhutanese. In the reports of early political missions to Bhutan, there are disparaging references to illiteracy in the country. Illiteracy in English, yes, illiteracy in Hindi, Nepalese and Bengali; but not in Bhutanese. The early Kings of Bhutan were both religious and secular heads, who attached considerable importance to education. Among the most renowned of them was Ngawang Namgyal, who, nearly four hundred years ago, succeeded in controlling the numerous warring factions within the country and imposing a strong centralized rule. His main interest was in the organizing and disciplining of the religious order. Himself a reincarnate lama of the Kagyup sect, he enforced a rigid observance not only by the monks but also by the general public, of the precepts of the faith. Much of the revenue of the country was ordered to be expended on the maintenance of the monasteries, which became centres of general education as well as of religious instruction. Monks in Bhutan are admitted to the monastery at a very early age, and, if they are found to be talented, are given special instruction in painting, carving and ceremonial dancing. Although, therefore, the conventional type of school with which we are familiar has been introduced in comparatively recent times, the monasteries have for centuries provided, through their monks, a machinery for making the fundamentals of education available to the people—instruction in reading and writing, general knowledge, moral and religious teaching, ceremonial dancing, painting and wood-carving.

The inhabitants of central Bhutan, north of the foothills, who form the bulk of the country's population and whose villages are situated at an elevation ranging from 4,000 to 10,000 feet, are Buddhists of the Nyngmapa and Kagyup sects. The Bhutanese in the plains and foot-

hills of the southern frontier, however, are mainly Hindus of Nepalese origin. Their contacts with the outside world have been closer and it is mainly from the nearby Indian bazaars that they obtain their requirements of food, clothing and other necessities. The prevailing pattern of communications has largely dictated the pattern of their social life, economy and language. Communications to the north have, in the past, been far more difficult than communications to the south. The people of the southern frontier have, therefore, had less contact with northern Bhutan; they still speak the Nepali language and few of them can either understand or make themselves understood in Dzongkha, the State language of Bhutan. Communications, language and religion have been the main barrier in the way of the people of southern Bhutan coming closer together in their way of life, intermarrying and developing more intimate social and other ties with the rest of the country.

I have spoken today of Bhutan as she reflects her past. When I speak to you again, it will be of the Bhutan that is looking forward to the future. It will be the same Bhutan, but we shall see something of the processes by which her past heritage is being re-shaped to meet the challenges of a world which is becoming smaller day by day, a world in which the impact of larger, compelling forces is being felt increasingly by the people of all countries, however remotely situated.

*The second of two talks broadcast on All India Radio on 7 and 14 August 1965*

## BHUTAN TODAY (2)

When I spoke last week of Bhutan, it was to give an idea of some of the historical processes that have played their part in shaping the attitudes and emotions of her people today. Bhutan's past isolation from her neighbours was shown to have generated a certain reserve and sense of aloofness in the Bhutanese character. The absence of easy internal communications, we saw, had come in the way of people from different regions of the country developing intimate social ties or a uniform cultural pattern. And the predominant influence of religion was seen in the concentration of the country's revenue in the maintenance of monasteries, which were centres of both religious and general education.

If we turn for a while from the past, we see that the single most significant development in Bhutan in recent years has been in the

field of communications. Bhutan will soon be drawing to the close of her first Five Year Plan for economic development. The plan provides for the extension of medical and educational services, the development of forests, the setting up of hydro-electric projects, the survey and exploitation of mineral resources, the building up of cottage and large-scale industries—the usual ingredients of a plan for any developing country. What is significant, however, in view of Bhutan's traditional isolation, is her decision to give communications the main priority in all her plans, and not only internal communications but communications that will link her more closely with the world outside. The Five Year Plan is largely an extension, though on a much wider scale, of ideas that had been fermenting in the minds of the Bhutanese authorities over a long period, but were not capable of effective implementation up to now, mainly for reasons of finance. The Bhutanese had, quite early in the century, realized that the world was fast changing, and that Bhutan must also prepare herself for change. And so batches of young students were sent down periodically from Bhutan to study in schools in India and equip themselves for service in their own country as teachers, administrators, forest officers and doctors. Most of these young people are now holding positions of high responsibility as Heads of Departments and District Officers. We see, therefore, that it is mainly in the field of communications that Bhutan is making a departure from previous policy. The Bhutanese have now come to feel more keenly the need for good internal communications to enable the Central Government to remain in effective control of outlying areas of the country and exercise closer supervision over its long-extended frontiers. They have felt equally the need for access roads from the plains to keep themselves in more regular touch with the world outside and facilitate the transport of materials required for the implementation of the Five Year Plan. This new emphasis on the development of roads is indication of a re-shaping of the people's attitude towards their neighbours as well as a recognition of the impracticability of continuing isolation in a world where communications everywhere are so fast developing that distance no longer forms a barrier.

It is the genius of the Bhutanese that they have been able to undertake an extensive plan for development without disturbing overmuch their traditional pattern of administration. This has been achieved through the imaginative insight of the King, who, while initiating the Development Plan, decided at the same time to rebuild the Dzong at his capital in Thimphu. For the Bhutanese, the Dzong is the symbol of their country's history, culture and religion. The Dzong consists not only of the main administrative offices, but is the headquarters of the monks and houses the most venerated chapels of the country. Thimphu

and Punakha were the historic summer and winter capitals of Bhutan, and it was at their ancient Dzongs that the highest monastic bodies resided and discharged their solemn functions. In rebuilding the Thimphu Dzong, the King has made it clear in a language that his people will best understand that, while the Development Plan has its importance, so too have the ancient institutions of the land. The construction of the Dzong is organized along traditional lines, with Bhutanese villagers coming in from the remotest corners of the country to make their contribution in labour to the raising of what is, in effect, a symbol of Bhutan's reverence for her traditional institutions, her faith and her cultural heritage.

Less than three miles from the new Dzong, Bhutanese workers are busy constructing Bhutan's first Public School. The emerging of these two institutions side by side at the capital is a pointer to the carefully thought out blending and balancing of old and new that is so much the Government's concern in shaping Bhutan's future. The new School will be the main source for the flow of doctors, engineers and technical personnel required to man the new services initiated under Bhutan's Five Year Plan. The school will also afford opportunities to the students to learn about and take pride in their country's history and culture. They will play football like boys all over the world; but archery, Bhutan's national sport, will be given a special place in the life of the school. And so also will religion, the bedrock of Bhutan's history and culture. The new Dzong and the new School will be, in many ways, complementary institutions, the former a symbol of Bhutan's variegated history, the latter of her hopes for the future, both interacting upon and influencing each other, as much as to say, 'Remember, I too have my part to play.'

With improvement in communications is following, gradually, the setting up of new industries. Apart from the forests along her southern frontiers, the main bulk of Bhutan's rich and extensive forests have up to now remained largely untapped. Forest surveys have indicated the possibility of establishing, amongst other ventures, a paper and pulp industry, match-factory and plywood plants. Geological surveys have also pointed to extensive deposits of limestone, dolomite and gypsum. Bhutan's major asset lies, however, in her water-power resources. The great gorges formed by the succession of rivers flowing south through the labyrinth of Bhutan's mountain ranges are a natural invitation to build dams for the generation of power. Investigations for a large-scale hydro-electric project, however, demand a reserve of technical know-how which it will take some time yet for the Bhutanese themselves to acquire. The concentration of effort for the present is therefore mainly on the improvement of Bhutan's agricultural economy. The Bhutanese are skilful cultivators, and their systematically

irrigated and neatly terraced rice-fields present a happy contrast to shifting cultivation practised so widely in the Himalayan hills. Rainfall in central Bhutan is moderate and soil conditions here favour the growing of apples, pears, peaches, plums, almond, walnut and other temperate plants. There are already extensive orange-groves in the southern plains areas and a canning unit has for some years now been processing orange and pine-apple juice for export. Bhutan will have her hands full for many years to come in developing her very promising potential in horticulture and industry.

There can be few countries that have been faced so suddenly with such a variety of new and unusual problems. I have spoken of the Government's concern to ensure a just balance between the old and the new. Bhutan's strategic position also poses problems and she is fully alive to the need for maintaining her army in a state of efficiency and preparedness. Bhutan has a treaty of perpetual peace and friendship with the Government of India, which guarantees that there shall be no interference in Bhutan's internal administration, and provides that she will be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to her external relations. The greater part of aid received by Bhutan is from India, and it is mainly from India that Bhutan has been requisitioning personnel for assistance in the implementation of her Five Year Plan. Bhutan is, however, also a member of the Colombo Plan, to whose meetings she has been sending her delegates for the last two years and from whence she has received assistance in various fields. Bhutan has achieved much in recent years, and no small part of her achievement has been in successfully adapting her traditional administrative machinery, evolved to fulfil the needs of a more leisurely age, to the accelerated tempo of today's madding world. There are few countries that have mastered so precisely the delicate art of hastening slowly.

# APPENDIX VI

(See page 107)

From *Kuensel*, a Weekly Official Bulletin of the Royal Government of Bhutan: issued 24 September 1972

*Resolution passed during the 37th session of the National Assembly of Bhutan on the 4th day of the 8th month in the year of the Water Rat*

## DECISION NOT TO APPOINT A COUNCIL OF REGENTS

The grievous loss sustained in the passing away of His Majesty King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the third hereditary monarch of Bhutan, on July 21, 1972, fell upon the entire nation as if night had fallen during the day. Due, however, to the good fortune of the Kingdom, the Crown Prince, His Royal Highness the Tongsa Penlop, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, has succeeded as the fourth hereditary monarch of Bhutan. Despite our terrible loss at the passing away of His late Majesty, therefore, our fortune has not deserted us.

According to an Agreement resolved upon by the National Assembly in its 32nd Session in 1970, provision was made for the appointment of a Council of Regents. In Clause 7 of this Agreement it is stated that if a Crown Prince should succeed to the throne on the death of his father before attaining the age of twenty-one, while the Crown Prince shall be enthroned King, a Council of Regents shall be appointed by the National Assembly consisting of four members, namely one Representative of the Monk Body, one Representative of the Public, one Representative of the Government and one member of the Royal Family. His Majesty had commanded the National Assembly to form a resolution as to the appointment of the members of this Council. A unanimous decision, however, has now been reached by this Assembly, without need of debate, to the effect that since the aforesaid Agreement was originally drawn up with the case in mind of a Crown Prince of too young age to reign in a proper manner, and in view of the fact that our Crown Prince is now eighteen years of age and fully capable of reigning as our King, and taking into consideration the fact that he himself has given a clear declaration to this Assembly that he intends to follow the policies laid down by his late father, the entire public is overjoyed and with full faith submits that it would be most grateful if His Majesty will take upon himself the right to rule. It is therefore decided that the Council of Regents as provided for in the Agreement drawn up and passed by this Assembly in 1970 shall not be appointed.

The Thirty-ninth Session of the National Assembly the following year abolished the system of holding votes of confidence in the King every three years, stating: 'His Majesty is the rightful hereditary King of Bhutan with the complete loyalty and confidence of the people, and such votes were unnecessary.' (Ref. *Kuensel*, issue of 31 May 1974)

# APPENDIX VII

(See page 112)

*From 'Kuensel', a Weekly Official Bulletin of the Royal Government of Bhutan: issued 12 and 19 May 1974*

## PLOT AGAINST HIS MAJESTY AND ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

A special session of the National Assembly held recently and a meeting of the Cabinet on March 5 brought to light a series of sinister plots, the most evil of which was an attempt to assassinate the King His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk himself. The others were, a plan to burn down Tashichhodzong, Thimphu, and wide-spread espionage. The burning of the Dzong was intended to create panic and confusion in Bhutan at a time when the country had now become so prosperous and so united behind His Majesty the King and the Royal Government.

Investigations, still proceeding, were begun by an investigative committee comprising the Royal Advisory Council, members of the Royal Body Guards and intelligence personnel from the Government of India, resulting in the arrest of some thirty persons. Prominent among them were the Deputy Home Minister Phuntsho Dhondup, responsible for the issue of identity cards to Tibetan refugees resident in Bhutan; the Tibetan Refugee Rehabilitation Officer Kungo Lhedhing, himself a Tibetan refugee; the Commandant of the Royal Bhutan Police, Dada; and one Tamshing Wangdi, commonly known as Tortola, a Bhutanese national of Bumthang District, who had spent about nine years in Tibet. The others were all Tibetan refugees and businessmen of Thimphu. A large cache of arms, ammunition, hand grenades and poison were seized.

The arrest of these persons, specially of Tortola, revealed that they had been working for the organisation of one Gyalo Thendhup, a well-known Tibetan residing in Darjeeling. Specially trained in the use of explosives and sabotage, they were slipped into Bhutan in the guise of refugees. Some of them had been working for Gyalo Thendhup from as early as 1963. Tortola made a statement to the effect that he had been recruited into the organisation by George Taring and Kungo Lhedhing. He went on to state that he was first invited to Darjeeling in 1969 when he was the guest of Gyalo Thendhup for three days. In 1973, on a subsequent visit, a close aide of Gyalo Thendhup, Jhala, offered him Rs. one lakh and full support for his family if Tortola

would agree to burn down Tashichhodzong. To demonstrate how easy this task could be, Jhala referred to the burning of the enormous masonry Secretariat, Singha Durbar, in Nepal, adding that Tashichhodzong was made largely of wood. Tortola agreed to this offer. Gyalo Thendhup also questioned Tortola about Chinese activities in Tibet. Tortola told the investigative committee that the organisation's agents were watching the internal affairs of Bhutan for many years as well as observing the movements of His Majesty the King. (Since the discovery of the plot, extra security measures have been taken in the Dzong.)

After the death of His late Majesty, the organisation's activities became more intense and some time after July 1972, a secret agreement with another aide of Gyalo Thendhup, Lobsang Yeshey, had been entered into at Dharamsala by one Kanaibhu, father of Yangki, a Tibetan woman who once used to enjoy considerable influence and privileges in Bhutan. Gyalo Thendhup and his associates promised Yangki and her children their full support and it was then that the plot to do away with His Majesty the King was hatched. It is believed that by this move, Gyalo Thendhup hoped to put one of Yangki's sons in power in Bhutan after a few years. His organisation would thus be given the power and influence in this country to continue their nefarious activities. When the arrests of the conspirators became known, Yangki and her father immediately absconded to India. The National Assembly has demanded the extradition of Gyalo Thendhup from India in order that he should be questioned together with Yangki and her relatives.

Investigators also found, in the residence of Kungo Lhedhing, incriminating letters written in Tibetan one of which was the subject of the recruitment of Tortola for the purposes already stated above. A translation of the letter follows:

'On my last visit over there [apparently Thimphu], we had a discussion about the newly returned Drukpa Tamshing Wandgi [Tortola] from Tibet, who has spent about nine years there and he is fully aware of Chinese activities. I have reported the matter to Yapshi Sachhey Sangwang Chinpo [referring to Gyalo Thendhup] and he is very much interested to hear news of the Chinese in Tibet from him. Sachhey has instructed me to ask and find out whether Wangdi has come to Thimphu from Bumthang (Tortola's home district). If he is in Thimphu, talk to Wangdi and send him to Darjeeling without any delay, that is to reach Darjeeling between the 22nd and 25th of this month, and Sachhey also desires you to give him whatever amount he requires for the journey which will be refunded to you when Wangdi comes back to Bhutan. If Wangdi is not available over there, then please send an immediate message to Sachhey saying that Bhutanese

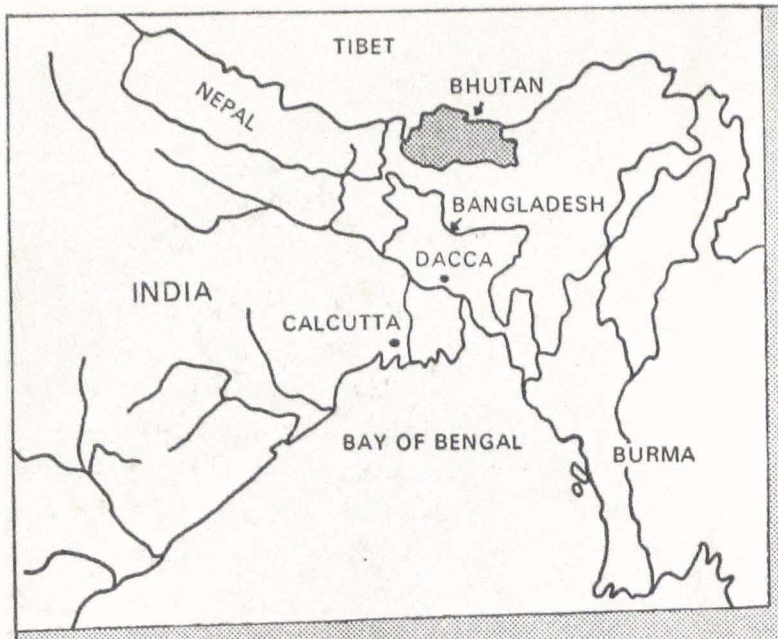
paper [code name for Tortola] is not available, with intimation to me.'

This letter was written by one Rin-nam, obviously to Lhedhing, from New Delhi and bears the date 14th day of the 7th month but the year is not given. However, since Tortola came back to Bhutan quite some time ago, then the letter also must be quite old.

His Majesty the King, despite such disclosures, still maintains that the majority of Tibetan refugees in Bhutan are ignorant of these dealings and therefore innocent, and that they hold sincere and loyal sentiments for their adopted country. When the Tibetans were forced to flee Tibet in 1959, the Royal Government of Bhutan took them in, admitting 4,000 of them who were rendered all possible assistance, provided with land for their subsistence and exempted from all taxes. In the following years, Bhutan came to treat them as her own people, going out of her way to make them feel at home.

While expressing our real horror at the discovery of such heinous crimes against the sovereignty of this independent Kingdom, we offer up our heartfelt thanks that the entire conspiracy was disclosed in time and that the Royal person of His Majesty came to no harm. With gratitude in our hearts, we now look forward to his Coronation on June 2, a historic ceremony which will further demonstrate to our young King and the world at large our unbounded love, loyalty and confidence.

# *Index*




0 10 20 30 40 Miles

0 10 20 30 40 Km

N

T I B E T

LINGSHI
GASA
CHOMO LHARI (23,997)
KULKANGRI (24,740)
THUNKAR
BUMTHANG
PUNAKHA
BYAKAR
LHUNTSI
TAWANG
CHUMBI
YATUNG
THIMPHU
Pele La
TONGSA
PARO
WANGDU PHODRANG
YANGTSE
HA
SHEMGONG
TASHIGANG
CHAPCHA
MONGAR
Sankosh River
Tongsa River
Ridak River
CHHUKHA
DONGSA
Torsa River
DEOTHANG
SAMCHI
SARBHANG
PHUNTSHOLING
GELEKPHU
Manas River
SAMDRUPOONGHAR

I N D I A