

Political History
OF
Himalayan States—

Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim
& Nagaland Since 1947

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No ray of sun is ever wasted : when the green will sprout is only a matter of time.

dedicated to
the editor *navabharat times*

Abbreviations in Footnotes

Speeches : Speeches of Jawahar Lal Nehru, 3 vols, Publications
Divison, Government of India, New Delhi.

RS : Rajya Sabha

LS : Lok Sabha

ABP : Amrit Bazar Patrika

HT : Hindustan Times

TI : Times of India

IE : Indian Express

AR : Asian Recorder

Nefa : North-East Frontier Agency

CHAPTER ONE

Prelude to India

THE CORNER-STONE OF BRITISH POLICY WAS TO SAFEGUARD India, "the noblest trophy of the British genius and most splendid appanage of the Imperial crown"¹ so that no one can understand the foreign policy of Great Britain during that period without keeping India constantly in view. In 1893, Durand line demarcated the Indo-Afghan border from Chitral to Baluchistan and, two years later, the Pamir boundary commission between Britain and Russia ceded a narrow strip of mountainous land, 15 to 30 kilometres wide, to Afghanistan to prevent the British and Czarist empires from touching each other. Britain also developed a kind of monroe doctrine to maintain her *predominant influence in countries adjacent to India*² and though trade with Tibet did not promise to be lucrative, it helped them establish their firm political influence on Lhasa.

When India became independent in 1947, she assumed the existing treaty rights of the former British government including its special privileges in Tibet. The British mission in Lhasa became an Indian mission and British trade marts and lines of communication became Indian lines of communication. British representative in Lhasa, Mr. Hugh Richardson, was allowed to continue at his post until 1950 when the Indian government found a suitable incumbent for it. Indian posts in Tibet appeared to be of no great value to the Government of India then because, while Kuomintang China engaged in a fatal civil war was hardly a power to challenge India, the USSR had ceased to be a military threat that Czarist Russia once had been. It was duly noted by British diplomats in 1920, that the Bolsheviks were more an ideological threat, inasmuch as they issued flaming appeals and prophecies³ from time to time and smuggled some help to native revolutionary movements, but thirty years of Soviet power had demonstrated convincingly that it had no intention to intervene openly in any of the colonies. Interna-

1. Lord Curzon.

2. Sir Alfred Lyall.

3. Such as, "the rule of the plunderers is tottering"—appeal by the *Council of Peoples Commissars* on 7 Dec 1917.

tional communist policy initially was not favourable to the 'bourgeois' regimes emerging in Asia after the second world war but the British and Indian leaders and ensured, by a peaceful transfer, that there would be no power vacuum in India to permit the chances of red sailing.¹

INITIAL DIFFICULTIES

THE EMERGENCE OF COMMUNIST CHINA IN 1949-50 ABRUPTLY changed this picture and made the Tibet region once more important for the Indian government. Prime Minister Nehru was realistic enough to see that communist China was an accomplished fact and that capitalist India would have to come to terms with it² rather than take a negativist attitude which a far-off and powerful country like the USA could afford. So the Indian government was one of the first to accord a *de jure* recognition to the People's Government of China on 30 December 1949, soon after the KMT was driven off the Chinese mainland early that month. It sent an ambassador to Peking in May 1950.

To begin with, the Government of India was not even clear regarding the validity and strength of its special rights in Tibet,³ or of the possibility of asserting them. Possibly, it could not refute Chinese suzerainty, nor accept or interpret it, without reference to British imperial inheritance which it should have been loath to assert in view of its recent anti-British past. In addition, it might have seemed futile to assess the juridico-legal value of Tibet-British conventions when a triumphant Red revolution was sweeping away all unequal treaties as the Soviets had done in 1917. K. M. Pannikar tells us that when he went to

1. Where this did not happen, for example, in Malaya or the French colonies, communism raised its head.
2. Mr. Nehru told Parliament on 17 Mar 50, "Very great revolutionary changes have taken place in that country (China). Some people may approve of them, others may not. It is not a question of approving or disapproving; it is a question of recognising a major event in history, of appreciating it and dealing with it. When it was quite clear, about three months ago, that the new Chinese government, now in possession of practically the entire mainland of China, was a stable government and there was no force which was likely to supplant it, we offered recognition to this new government and suggested that we might exchange diplomatic missions". *Speeches*, II, pp. 147-8.
3. We do not know whether the Government of India consulted the British government on that occasion, and if not, why. Mr. Nehru denied having consulted them when questioned about it in 1959, but he said that they had accepted "the position as it was in British days, both the advantage and disadvantages of it" and therefore "constitutionally speaking we could not say anything because of the position we had accepted and the world had accepted". (*LS*, 4 Sep 59).

Peking in 1950, before he left, the Indian Prime Minister agreed with him that the British policy of claiming special interests in Tibet could not be maintained by India.¹ Therefore, while India could not but long for the continuation of this Himalayan buffer, Government knew that the preservation of old extra-territorial rights was no longer possible. Nehru was undoubtedly convinced of it at that time, for both ideological and practical reasons, as was evident from his numerous speeches.

The years between 1947 and 1950 had been extremely difficult ones for India. The new Indian government, since its birth, was faced with at least three internal problems which absorbed its entire attention and must be noted before we proceed with Indian reaction to Tibetan events. They were : the riots and refugees, integration of the Indian states, and the framing and application of a new constitution for the country.

The riots were suppressed during the first year of its existence but the rehabilitation of refugees remained a priority job in the main till July 1952. The refugees were not only an immense economic problem; they were also a tremendous psychological problem. Naturally motivated by communal passions, whose victims they were, they gave a new lease of life to the dying communal and revivalist forces in India.² Uprooted from their hearths and homes, they became the most unstable element in the parliamentary democracy which was to emerge after the republican constitution was adopted in 1950. Extensive preparations were undertaken soon after for the 'first general elections' in the 'world's most populous democracy'³, where universal

1. K. M. Pannikar, *In Two Chinas : Memoirs of a Diplomat*, London, 1955, p. 102.
2. The refugees were the chief support of the communal parties after the Partition. The *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* was organised shortly before the first general elections as the political wing of the most militant communal organisation, the *Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh* (RSS). A *Ram Rajya Parishad* was organised by the Hindu priests though it was short-lived. The *Hindu Mahasabha*, an older but relatively weak organisation of the Hindus, and the *Akalis*, the militant section among the Sikhs, still exist.
3. The preparations for the general elections started as soon as the Constitution was adopted and engaged the attention of the Government for full two years. An idea of the magnitude of the task can be had from the following statistics : *electorate*, 176,600,000 ; *polling booths*, 224,000 ; staff required to conduct them : *presiding officers*, 56,000 ; *clerks*, 280,000 ; *policemen*, 224,000 ; and that when the elections everywhere were not conducted on the same day so that some staff could be diverted from one place to another ; cost, approximately Rs. 100 million. Major tasks for the first elections were : preparation of electrical rolls, delimitation of constituencies, fixing of emblems and booths, preparation of ballot boxes, etc.

adult franchise was being exercised for the first time, amidst widespread illiteracy, a highly stratified cast-ridden society, the 'breakwaters' of former 'Indian' India (where as a result of more than a century's protected autocracy landed feudal interests held considerable sway), and an inexperienced personnel for the conduct of elections. With the communists threatening an insurrection in Telangana and fractionalism weakening the Congress, the latter had a whole-time job preparing for the elections which came in January 1952.

The integration of states was an equally long and absorbing process spread over several years despite its firm and deft handling by the 'iron man', Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, who was ill throughout the latter part of 1950 and eventually passed away in December. Most states were merged in several stages and the process continued till January 1950, when they were organically integrated into the Indian Union as Part B States of the Constitution. Some resentment on the part of the former rulers was not too serious to be mentioned, but it must be noted that the process was not smooth in all cases. The railways, post and telegraph, audit and account, federal revenue and currency of these states could not be integrated with the Union till April 1950. *The armed forces were integrated one year later and full and final financial integration could not be completed before 1953.*

Hyderabad had to be captured by a 'police action' in November 1949 and Kashmir, which acceded on 27 October 1947, five days after it was invaded by Pakistan, remained the scene of military action till the cease-fire of 1 January 1949. Its case still hangs on before world assemblies and not a little of the energies of defence and external affairs ministries of the Government of India have been absorbed by this problem state and our rival Pakistan.

The worst condition was that of the northern border. Almost the whole of it was dotted with small estates about which the British had not bothered since they had controlled the region beyond them. There were at least 21 petty states with a total area of 11,000 sq. miles on the Punjab border alone, which were merged in April-August 1948 in a province called Himachal Pradesh, to be governed by a Lieutenant-Governor, but it took a much longer time to solve the tangled skein of political interests which raised their head both inside the new state as well as in the adjacent province of Punjab. Border states of U.P. were merged in December 1949 and manipur, Tripura and Cooch-

Prelude to India

behar in Bengal-Assam by January 1950. The Nefa (North-East Frontier Agency) areas and Naga hills were integrated a year later.

Political integration of the border was not the full solution of the problem either. A few hill stations, developed as pleasure-polo grounds for British officers on leave, or a few cantonments to drill up the *jawans* in a salubrious climate, were the only 'blessings' of the British rule in this region. Communication were poor and maps inadequate. Until today much of the Himalayan region is an anthropological laboratory of primitive peoples, approached mostly by white slave traffickers.

All these difficulties must have pursued the Government of India when it was called upon to determine its attitude toward the advent of communists into Tibet¹ and there was also an awareness of India's military weakness as against China.² The Chinese revolution must have weighed heavily on Nehru's mind even before the 200,000 Chinese troops entered the Korean war in November 1950 to turn the scales against the United States army, for he was to tell the Indian parliament repeatedly that, among the big changes that had taken place in the world since the last war, one was the rise of a united and strong China.³

THE FIRST REBUFF

CONSEQUENTLY, THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT KNEW THAT nothing was to be gained by rushing to the aid of a 'weak'

1. Mr. Nehru told later, "...in the early days after independence and partition, our hands were full, as this House knows, and we had to face difficult situations in our own country. *We ignored, if I may say so, Tibet.*"—*LS*, 27 April 59, emphasis added. It was not that India completely ignored Tibet, but she had to do so in a large measure. The pre-occupation of the Indian government with other problems must also be viewed in the context that while, Mr. Nehru has been solely responsible for external affairs, *most major decisions with regards to government policy in other spheres too are never made without his consultation.* Since the death of Sardar Patel, in particular, he is the colossus without whom nothing moves in the Government.
2. "Our army, navy and air force are not worth mentioning as compared to the armadas of other nations", Nehru said in a speech at the XI session of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Lucknow, 3 Oct 50, *Speeches*, Vol. II, p. 161.
3. "Forget for a moment the broad policies it pursues—communist or near-communist, or whatever it may be. The fact is, and it is a major fact of the middle of the twentieth century, that China has become a great power—united and strong...Countries like China and India, once they get rid of foreign domination and internal disunity, inevitably become strong; there is nothing to stop them. They have the ability and the capacity".—*LS*, 30 Sept. 54, *Speeches* III, pp. 263-4.

Tibet against a powerful China. On the other hand, something could be saved by a cautious diplomacy. So, when the Chinese forces prepared to move into Tibet, India took the matter with Peking discreetly. On 5 August 1950, Gen. Sen Po-chen announced the intention of Chinese forces to enter Tibet, and on 26 August, the Indian ambassador *informally* suggested to the Chinese Government the desirability of settling the Tibetan question peacefully. He got an assurance that, while China regarded Tibet as its integral part, she had no intention to force the issue and every willingness to *negotiate* a settlement with the Tibetan spokesmen.¹

Either the Chinese ambassador arriving in New Delhi in the following month informed his government about some impossible demands of the Tibetan mission then in India, or the Chinese were determined to have it their own way, they moved their troops toward Tibet. It was only after being informed of the entry of Chinese troops into Tibet, and probably also the fall of Chamdo, that the Government of India took its next step, which was a Note delivered to Peking on 21 October. It is interesting that this Note expressed solicitude, not for Tibet but for China, stating that the Indian government's interest was solely in a peaceful settlement of the issue. It said, "A military action at the present time against Tibet will give those countries which are unfriendly to China a handle for anti-Chinese propaganda...; on the eve of a decision by the (U.N.) Assembly...to those who are opposed to the admission of the People's Government to the United Nations...; the time factor is extremely important...; an incautious move at the present time *even in a matter which is within its own sphere* may prejudice the position of China in the eyes of the world."²

The Chinese must have chuckled at this apparently unsure, insincere and tactful approach. They did not care to reply and, on 24 October, *Hsinhua* announced a general mobilisation

1. We do not know whether this *aide memoire* or its reply was published. It has been referred to by the Chinese in their Note of 16 Nov and also by Chinese commentators, e.g., in *Concerning the Question of Tibet*, p. 197.
2. Emphasis added. This and the following Notes were released by the *Hsinhua* in November. Prior to that, the Government of India released three of them. For text see, *Current Background*, U. S. Dept. of State, American Consulate-General, Hongkong, No 31, 27 Nov. 50; reproduced in Margaret W. Fisher & Joan V. Bondurant, *Indian Views on Sino-Indian Relations*, India Press Digests Monograph Series No. 1, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Feb 1956.

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directive. Thereupon, the Government of India took a slightly stern attitude in its next Note of 26 October. It regretted that units of the People's Liberation Army were ordered to advance on an *invasion* of Tibet without any intimation of the same to India and complained that it was not in accordance with the assurance given by the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister to the Indian ambassador, who, "while reiterating the resolve of the Chinese Government to 'liberate' Tibet, had expressed a continued desire to do so by peaceful means." The Note pointed out that the Tibetan delegation had left for Peking and that it was delayed, among other things, due to a "*lack of knowledge on the part of the Tibetan delegation of dealing with other countries.*" The Government of India expressed "their deep regret that, in spite of friendly and *disinterested* advice repeatedly tendered by them, the Chinese government should have decided to seek a solution of the problem of their relations with Tibet by force."

The Chinese knew that the Indian advice was *not* disinterested and they considered it uncalled for. A lack of knowledge on the part of Tibetans in dealing with the Chinese was indeed ludicrous, and calling China as an 'other country', or the Chinese entry into Tibet an 'invasion', was a challenge to the Chinese claim over Tibet. So they considered consultations with India, no less than India's advocacy of their cause, as an attempt on India's part to interfere in what they [called their internal problem. In a reply to the above two Notes on 30 October, they affirmed categorically that "Tibet is an integral part of the Chinese territory", its problem "entirely a domestic problem of China *in which no foreign interference will be tolerated*", and the PLA *must* enter Tibet to "liberate the Tibetan people and *defend the frontiers of China*". They accused the Tibetan delegation of delaying its departure "*under outside instigation*", rebuffed India for relating this issue with that of China's admission to the U.N., and alleged that *India had been affected by foreign influences* to call the Chinese action deplorable.

The Government of India, used to the delicacies of the English language at the hand of British diplomats, and not gauging the extent of Chinese vehemence with regards to Tibet question, was staggered at this reply to their polite bread-and-butter Notes. It was "amazed" at the insinuation of foreign influence and emphatically repudiated it, both with regards to its own action as well as to that of the Tibetan delegation. In its reply the following day, it restated its general policy

“to check the drift to war”, in which “they (Indian Government) have often been misunderstood and criticised”, but to which they had adhered “regardless of the displeasure of great nations.” It announced that *India had no political or territorial ambitions in Tibet and she did not seek any novel privileged position for herself.*

The situation, however, called for more than pious declarations of lofty principles, and so in this Note, for the first time, India made explicit the following points :

1. Tibet’s autonomy “is a fact which the Chinese government were themselves willing to recognise and foster”. An “adjustment” and “reconciliation” of the “legitimate Tibetan claim to autonomy within the framework of Chinese suzerainty” should, therefore, be obtained ‘by peaceful means’.

2. India’s concern was not an “unwarranted interference” in China’s internal affairs, but a well-meant advice by a friendly government which had a natural interest in the solution of the problems concerning its neighbours.

3. Indian government admitted having “advised” the Tibetan government, but since there was “no justification whatsoever” for military operations and an attempt to impose a decision by force”, it was “no longer in a position to advise the Tibetan delegation to proceed to Peking unless the Chinese government think it fit to order their troops to halt their advance into Tibet”.

4. “At the same time”, the Indian Note said, “certain rights have grown out of usage and agreements which are natural among neighbours with close cultural and commercial relations. These relations have found expression in the presence of an agent of the Indian government in Lhasa, existence of trade agencies at Gyantse and Yatung, and maintenance of post and telegraph at the trade route” and “a small military escort” for the protection of this trade route “sanctioned for over 40 years”. The Indian government were “anxious that these establishments, which are to the mutual interest of India and Tibet, and do not detract in any way from Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, should continue”.

5. Favouring peaceful settlement of *international* disputes, it stated that recent developments in Tibet had affected “our friendly relations”.

This was the first and last strong Note sent by India on the question, but it was an example of utter confusion and uncer-

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tainty. It accepted Tibet as Chinese, denied that India had any political ambitions in Tibet, but talked of rights which 'do not detract in any way from Chinese suzerainty'. Extra-territorial rights, communications and military escort—how could they be deemed by any country as not abridging its authority? By admitting its advisory role with the Tibetan delegation, the Government of India laid itself open to the charge of collusion, and it was quite apparent from this first bout that the word 'autonomy' must mean differently to the two countries, just as they used two different words 'suzerainty' and 'sovereignty' when referring to Chinese authority over Tibet.

The Chinese in their reply of 16 November were quick to welcome the "renewed declaration of the Indian government that it has no political or territorial ambitions in China's Tibet", and quietly ignored the 'certain rights' referred to by India, expressing the hope that "the problems relating to Sino-Indian diplomatic, commercial and cultural relations with respect to Tibet may be solved properly through normal diplomatic channels." They nailed the point by regretting that the Indian government was making a domestic problem "an international dispute calculated to increase world tension", again alleged foreign influences and forces in Tibet, claimed that they had kept the Indian government informed, and gave their interpretation of the word autonomy as "*according to the provisions of the Common Programme adopted by the Central People's Political Consultative Conference*", granted to the national minorities "*within the confines of Chinese sovereignty.*" This, they said, was conceded by the Indian government in its *aide memoire* to the Chinese government dated 26 August, but "when the Chinese government actually exercised its sovereign rights", they accused, the "Indian government attempted to influence and obstruct" this operation.

It was abundantly clear that the two governments had basic differences on the question and they spoke different languages with different intents, but in the foreign policy debate in the Indian parliament on 6-7 December 1950, Mr. Nehru gave no hint of this difference of approach. He merely informed the House that he had insisted on Tibetan autonomy within Chinese suzerainty. He called suzerainty a historical fact but added that it was suzerainty and not sovereignty. "It is not quite clear from whom they were going to liberate it (Tibet)", he said sarcastically. 'They say there might be foreign intrigues in Tibet; I cannot say much about it because I do not know. Indeed one can hardly talk about war between Tibet and China.

Tibet is not in a position to carry out war and, obviously, Tibet is no threat to China...the action of China came as a surprise to us...we expressed our earnest hope that the matter would be settled peacefully... We also made clear that we had no territorial or political ambitions in regard to Tibet and that our relations were cultural and commercial...¹.

There was heated discussion in the Indian parliament, but neither parliament nor the press or the people at that time noted the loss of face which India had suffered on account of these Notes.² Some members linked the Tibetan issue with the question of defence. Nehru seemed to agree with them but asked, "But what is defence. Most people seem to imagine that defence consists in large numbers of people marching up and down with guns". He rightly pointed out that defence included the economic capacity and industrial potential of a country, *whose balance could not be very much upset for defence requirements*. He thereby laid his finger on the real problem before India and angrily retorted, "Some honourable Members seem to think that I should issue an ultimatum to China, that I should warn them not to do this or that, or that I should send them a letter saying that it is foolish to follow the doctrine of communism. I don't see how it is going to help anybody .." Regarding communist activities in India, he promised that his government's policy had not been tender and "It is not going to be a tender policy".³

Thus, the issue was not between communism and anti-communism; it was one between a powerful China and a relatively weak India. India could do nothing because she did not have the strength to force her interpretation on China. Under the circumstances, it was best to harp on her own and presume that her opponent meant the same thing. In the meantime, an armed insurrection had broken out in Nepal which engaged the Government of India's major attention. The Tibetan question was

1. *Parliament*, 6 Dec. 50, *Speeches*, II, pp. 174-175.
2. In 1959, the Indian press recalled them e.g., the *Statesman* on 22 Mar, "Unhappiness in India and other surrounding countries over Tibetan developments is magnified by a sense of helplessness...after the *rebuff* of 1950, when India was plainly told by China to mind her own business and it was insultingly suggested that Delhi's attitude had been affected by hostile foreign influences, it is clearly useless to expect Indian friendship to cause the Chinese to modify their attitude in the slightest". The *Hindustan Standard* wrote on 24 Mar, "India's protest against the Chinese use of force in 'Tibet in 1950 met with a *rebuff* from Peking and later the Sino-Indian treaty on the 'Tibet region of China' was the basis of *formally unconditional acceptance of China's 'rights' there*".
3. *Parliament*, 7 Dec. 50, *Speeches* II, pp. 181, 185.

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shelved in the United Nations, and India let history shape itself in Tibet.

We do not know what advice the Indian government gave the Tibetan delegation when its two members met the external affairs ministry before proceeding to Peking. Asked in his press conference on 13 March 1951, whether there had been any change in the Chinese attitude since the exchange of Notes, Mr. Nehru replied that the "Chinese attitude for the past quarter of a century or more had been that Tibet was an integral part of China". He implied thereby that he had acquiesced in the situation. The agreement between the Tibetans and Chinese in May 1951 could not be to the liking of the Indian government but it made no comments. The verbal sabre-rattling in the first instance had brought India no benefits except the strain of embittered relations with her powerful neighbour, though the Indian ambassador reported that, by the end of 1950, "the stiffness which had entered into our relations with China as a result of the Tibetan controversy had by this time totally disappeared".¹ The first diplomatic exchange had heavily underlined the differences of approach between the two countries, but the Indian Prime Minister preferred to ignore them.

In February 1952, the Indian ambassador again gave a statement of the existing Indian rights in Tibet and reiterated India's willingness to arrive at a mutually satisfactory settlement. Premier Chou En-lai replied that there was "no difficulty in safeguarding the economic and cultural interests of India in Tibet".² It was a conclusive answer that the question of India having any political rights in Tibet was closed for ever.

AN UNEASY COMPROMISE

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA NOW MADE A RESOLUTE ATTEMPT TO improve its relations with China. Its attitude on the Korean question was helpful. It consistently pleaded for China's entry into the U.N.O. In April 1952, the Prime Minister's sister, Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, led the first official cultural delegation to China, to be followed by a rice agreement between China and India on 26 May 1952. In September, N. Raghavan succeeded K.M. Pannikar as Indian ambassador to Peking and, on 12 June 1953, India agreed to serve on the Neutral Nation's Repatriation Commission on Korea. The foundation of a friendly atmosphere thus laid, India opened negotiations on Tibet on 31

1. K. M. Pannikar, *op. cit.* p. 116.

2. Mr. Nehru disclosed this in *Lok Sabha* on 25 Nov 59. There may have been more diplomatic exchanges on the subject which we do not know.

December 1953. It took four months to arrive at a 'trade and cultural intercourse' agreement (signed on 29 April 1954) to 'facilitate pilgrimage and travel' and 'promote trade and cultural intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India.'

The agreement, valid for 8 years, allowed the three Indian trade agencies in Tibet to continue, but established three Chinese agencies reciprocally at New Delhi, Calcutta and Kalimpong in India, with equal status and privileges. It specified markets, places of pilgrimage and routes for Indo-Tibetan trade and pilgrimage, and also provided for less rigorous application of passport and other regulations for bonafide traders, pilgrims, porters and mule-drivers, and inhabitants of border districts visiting friends and relatives. The Government of India promised to withdraw its military escorts then stationed in Tibet and hand over the communications and rest houses 'at reasonable price.'¹ It was permitted to keep the land on lease, and its buildings in its trade agencies.²

The negotiations had been prolonged and explanations for delay were given in 'illness among negotiators', 'a civilised' refusal by Chinese to be hustled', 'difficulties in translation, and the Chinese 'love of exactitude'. The Chinese might have delayed till India's role as POW custodian in Korea was over on 20 January 1954, but K. L. Shridharani learned from 'Delhi insiders' that India, "unable to think of Tibet as an absolutely foreign country," wanted "facilities that go beyond the usual routine of diplomatic relations," whereas Peking was anxious to show that "India could not inherit the traditions left behind in Tibet by British imperialism." The Chinese wanted three equal trading posts in India which the volume of trade did not justify. They "wanted a trade establishment in strategic Simla, but Nehru succeeded in giving that right in Delhi instead, an area under the direct scrutiny of the Indian government."³ Even "before the Chinese had agreed to negotiate, Indian commentators had taken for granted that concessions with respect to Indian 'privileges' in Tibet were 'inevitable' and had hoped that in return India might be permitted to reopen her Consulate in Kashgar (Sinkiang). But the Chinese government considered Sinkiang to be a closed area, so that when negotiations opened, India

1. The price was waived by India the very next day. Indian troops withdrew from Tibet on 1 April 55.
2. For text, see *Foreign Policy of India, Text of Documents* Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, Oct 58, pp 85-93
3. *ABP*, 22 Feb 54, 7 June 54.

had already given up attempts for Kashgar and it was not on the agenda.”¹

The agreement confirmed India's complete surrender of any claims on Tibet and was a recognition of China's full sovereign rights in that region. Implicitly, it acquiesced in the status Tibet had accepted in 1951. Yet there were optimistic commentators who hailed it as a great achievement. “India may well assume that what was secured in the early part of this century by Lord Curzon's forceful diplomacy has been substantially preserved,” wrote the *Indian Express*,² we do not know on what grounds, shaming both Lord Curzon and republican India for their respective ideologies.

Posterity may ask as to who played the April Fool but everybody was happy at the amicable agreement reached with a reputedly ‘difficult’ Peking. The *Times of India* agreed that “our rights and privileges in Tibet had become obsolete” and that India's “vital trade and cultural interests were safeguarded by putting them on a more stable basis”.³ The *National Herald* noted that when a “new Chinese government in Peking decided on pulling Tibet closely into the framework of Chinese unity”, the old autonomy under “loose” Chinese suzerainty had become unworkable. “China's first moves caused suspicions in India...but an exchange of Notes removed the misunderstanding”, it explained (reflecting Mr. Nehru's own wistful mood ?), and added that India relinquished facilities “without any mortification or regret” because she had maintained them for the safety of routes at a time when Tibet herself could not guarantee it. “When these functions are taken over and can be performed by the Chinese, India's main purpose is achieved”.⁴

This could not be a new discovery but the seeking of bright elements in a bad bargain for at the same time it was being anticipated that, with the Chinese firm control of Tibet, the pattern of Indian trade with Tibet was bound to change and dwindle. It could no longer be worked to the advantage of Indian traders who, in the past, used to fix their own terms and conditions. The *Amrit Bazar Patrika* duly recognised that,

1. Fisher & Bondurant, *op. cit.*
2. 1 May 54.
3. 1 May 54.
4. 1 May 54.

with Peking taking the trade out of private hands,¹ the “Indian traders compelled to deal with a monopolistic organisation will find themselves at a disadvantage, with the result that the trade channels would eventually dry up”.² The *Hindu* vainly hoped that the geographical position of India would help in her necessarily continuing to serve as a source of supply for a variety of products which Tibet needs, and as an outlet for Tibetan exports.³

The only opposition to Nehru’s Tibet policy came from the most uncompromising fighter against communism, the Praja Socialist Party which failed to focus the issues in correct perspective or suggest an alternative course due to its overtones of anti-communism. “*We are not sure that buffer states have lost their utility for ever*” wailed the *Vigil* of Mr. J. B. Kriplani.⁴ M.A. Venkatrao called it a “failure to recognise the inward needs of the situation in the strategical defence of India.” This need, he was the only one to point out, was “*a non-militarisation of the Himalayan frontiers*”.⁵ The PSP called it a folly to recognise China’s authority over Tibet, which would provide “open door” for “indirect political and diplomatic infiltration and espionage in India”. It criticised the Indian government *for not consulting Nepal and Tibet*, and called the agreement “*the first international document to set a seal on the abolition of Tibet’s autonomy*”.⁶ So it was in the sense in which India interpreted the word ‘autonomy’. Tibet had finally ceased to be a buffer which the British had made it exactly 50 years ago.

The above views were also echoed by the Jana Singh whose organ, the *Organiser*, also warned of infiltration.⁷ The *Tribune*

1. Peking did not take trade out of private hands then but it did regulate it to provide relief to Tibetan traders. The question of Indo-Tibetan trade cropped up later, as it was bound to.
2. 1 May 54.
3. 1 May 54.
4. 22 May 54
5. *Mysindia*, Mysore, 30 May 54.
6. Incidentally, the PSP compared Tibet to Kashmir and argued that, while India accepted the principle of a plebiscite in Kashmir, she should also apply the same principle to Tibet. A spokesman of the Party in Kashmir told the author in 1959 that while Nasser’s rise had meant the loss of West Asian and African markets to India, the incorporation of Tibet into China would mean not only the drying up of Indian trade in Tibet but also the dumping of Chinese goods in Indian markets through the Himalayan routes, which was a frightful possibility “we cannot tolerate”.
7. 10 May 54.

said that the emergence of a strong and united China made it impossible for the Government of India to "maintain the old balance of power which the British had left behind" so that the central Asian borders "need be watched more attentively than ever before".¹ The *Hindustan Times* lifted its finger toward Nepal which was "the gate through which infiltration can take place. In a word, Nepal assumes special position as a bastion of democracy in this sub-continent", it concluded.² And Nepal was to become the scene of India's blunder diplomacy in subsequent years.

Facing parliament with the Tibet agreement in September 1954, Prime Minister Nehru lashed out at his critics with his usual fervour. "Several honourable Members have referred to the 'melancoly chapter of Tibet'. I really donot understand", he said. "What did any honourable Member of this House expect us to do in regard to Tibet at any time ?" Admonishing the members to read the history of Tibet, China and British India, he asked, "Where did we come into the picture unless we wanted to assume the *aggressive role of interfering with other countries* ?", and replied, "We donot go like Don Quixote with lance in hand against everything we dislike; we put up with these things because we would be, *without making any difference*, only getting into trouble."³ It was a voice of wisdom as much as of helplessness.

LOSS OF A BUFFER

NOW WHAT COULD INDIA HAVE DONE EXCEPT PULLING OUT

1 1 May 54.

2 4 May 54.

3. *LS*, 30 Sep. 54, *Speeches*, III, p. 263 Nehru also told in 1959, "All kinds of extra-territorial privileges were imposed on Tibet because Tibet was weak and there was the British empire. With some variations, we inherited these when India became independent. Regardless of what happened in Tibet or China or anywhere, we could not according to our own policy, maintain our forces in a foreign country, even if there had been no change in Tibet...Apparently some people seem to imagine that we have surrendered some privileges in Tibet. The privileges we surrendered in Tibet were privileges we do not seek to have in any other country in the world, Tibet or any other." ,*LS* 30 Mar 59.

He was more frank in the debate in RS on 9 Dec. 59. He said "They were sitting in Tibet. Our telling them that we did not recognise it would mean nothing..Our saying anything to them would make no difference. It is rather infantile to think that they would have been frightened by our saying something. The result would have been that they would have achieved their dominance over Tibet completely and the only thing is that we would have qurelled with them and we would have come near breaking point with them".

of Tibet and formalising her relations with China thereafter ? From all accounts, "It is not a debatable issue that India did not have the military strength to push back the Chinese armies once they had started rolling into Tibet".¹ Yet the same critic who accepts this reality also says, "To defend the independence of Tibet with all the resources at her disposal should have been an article of faith for the Government of India."² No one seems to know how India could have helped Tibet's march from autonomy to independence, but virulent critics called Indian helplessness in the face of China's advance as the Great *bhoo-dana* of Tibet.

After the lapse of time, it is reasonable to conclude now that the Tibetan cause (as also the border question which followed it) suffered a distortion by falling into the hands of virulent anti-communists and those in India who opposed the Government's policy of nonalignment. It was never considered from the objective viewpoint of India's national interests, or of Tibet's, with the result that a coherent policy could not be followed and the Indian government was bedevilled with the problem of arguing with its own conscience. If diplomacy consists in a right appraisal and balancing of forces for and against an objective, the Government of India failed in having even a clear objective. For example, the complete unanimity in this regard between the Chinese Kuomintang and Chinese Communists shows that Tibet (or the border question) had nothing to do with communism or its enemies. It was merely a question of Chinese great nation aspirations in Tibet and the Himalayas and India's counter steps to safeguard her interests before the Chinese could challenge her. The Indian government, however, never challenged the fictitious medieval concept of Chinese suzerainty or sovereignty in Tibet; all it could think of with regard to Tibet were its own imperial extra-territorial rights. Tibet was a feudatory outpost of the Manchu empire, converted into a piece of Chinese motherland, both by the Chinese republicans as well as communists, and India could not help it grow otherwise into an independent republic of Tibet.³ Before it became

1. Giri Lal Jain, *Panchsheela and After*, Asia Publishing House, 1960, p. 42-

2. *ibid.*

3. The interests of Tibet, India and world peace demanded independence of Tibet and Sinkiang even as peoples republics like Outer Mongolia. However if the "bourgeois" government of India was powerless to effect it, the communist parties of India or the Soviet Union did not have the farsight or boldness to advise their Chinese brethren to desist from their great power ambitions.

Prelude to India

a question of military strength, it was one of clarity of objectives and of timely vigour to attain them.

If India wanted Tibet to be independent, she had to prepare for it. If that were the Indian objective, Indian leaders coming into the helm of affairs since June 1946 should have done something to raise Tibet's status and to modernise its government and external relations before October 1950 when the Chinese armies entered Tibet. They even had an opportunity in 1947 when Lhasa sent a telegram to Delhi making exorbitant territorial claims upon India. Instead of ignoring the telegram, they could seize it as a pretext to negotiate and enter into a new treaty with Tibet, thus obviating the necessity of depending upon the doubtful Simla Convention. They could wrest a new guarantee of the Indo-Tibetan border from the Dalai's government in return for Indian support to strengthen Tibet's freedom and defences, possibly by reforming Tibet's political structure. China indeed should have rejected the results of such "aggressive Indian diplomacy", but India would have gained another bargaining counter in her subsequent deal with China.

In continuation with this line of thought, some one suggested that, in place of polite Notes and brave words to the Chinese during August-November 1950, India could have sent a contingent to die on the other side of the Tibetan border, thus creating an international crisis with its inevitable reference to the comity of nations. An adroit mixture of Indian courage and world opinion might have led to the emergence of a 'People's Republic of Tibet' in place of the 'Tibet Region of the People's Republic of China'. In the present context of Sino-Soviet dispute, it is evident that it could make a big difference to the problem of India's border defence.

The Indian government could do nothing of the kind because it had no anticipation and appreciation of the nature and magnitude of the Himalayan problem until it had lost Tibet to the Chinese. It could not attend to the Himalayas before Communist victory in China because it had no prevision that, whatever the character of the Chinese government, India would have to face the question of settling her northern border. All it was moved by was the threat of Chinese communism. Again, in common with other Western governments, it was blind to the force of the Chinese Revolution and could not anti-

cipate its success until the U.S. Senate had written off China.¹ And when the Revolution did come, with characteristic “bourgeois” weakness, it was numbed by its might. From the beginning, it accepted Tibet as lost and installed on the border question as long as the going was good.

It is not advocated here that India should have initiated a policy of brinkmanship with massive resistance to the Chinese in Tibet, because it is a fact of history that Dalai’s Tibet was never independent and Lamaist Tibet could not continue to exist independent and isolated in the world of today any more than it did earlier. The condition precedent to Tibet’s independence was its modernisation and uplift with Indian, Soviet or Chinese help. The Chinese could step in where the other two failed and nothing that India could do could have arrested the Chinese march into Tibet in 1950. However, if the Indian government were clear in their objectives and had pursued them with courage and imagination from the beginning, they might have made a better bargain out of a bad situation. Granting Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, they could still strive for the neutralisation of the Himalayan region and refuse to recognise Chinese “sovereignty” until they had obtained a clearer guarantee about the Indo Tibetan border. If the Chinese could declare that their armies must enter Tibet in order to defend the frontiers of China, India could likewise declare her clear interest in the southern reaches of Tibet in order to defend the frontiers of India.

Finally, once the Indian government had known that it could not help the independence of Tibet, it should also have realised that it could not preserve its extra-territorial rights therein. Republican India had neither the inclination nor the strength to force an unequal treaty on China,² Then she should have forsaken it with grace. Once Tibet was firmly integrated into China, there was no point in harping upon

1. If the Indian government had their own intelligence, they should have known by the middle of 1948 that the balance of forces had shifted in favour of Chinese Communists. With the fall of Mukden on 1 Nov 48, the communists controlled the whole of Manchuria and North and Central East China. Peking fell on 1 January 1949 and by July 1949, the fate of Chiang on the mainland of China was sealed for ever.
2. Indian government’s weakness in playing any effective role in Tibet is clear from the fact that it could not find a person to replace the British representative in Lhasa for nearly three years.

Tibet's 'autonomy'.¹ The task since 1951 was the settlement and strengthening of the border. Instead, India entered into a fruitless war of attrition with China over the Dalai Lama's fate in 1959.

1. The major question faced since 1911 by the Chinese—both KMT as well Communists—was the establishment of a strong central government which could pull all the regions of China into a unified state. The Chinese were, consequently, sensitive towards demands of regional autonomy and could never agree that autonomy should mean semi or quasi-independence.

CHAPTER TWO

Bulwarks of India's Defence

ON A PARTICULARLY GLOOMY OCCASION WHEN CHINESE armies were first reported to have infiltrated into Indian territory, I saw the editor of a powerful Indian daily newspaper look mournfully at a wall map of India which adorned his room. His eye moved along the high Himalayan ranges in the east and in the west and came to rest on Nepal, the six hundred miles of Himalayan border which, in his opinion and in the opinion of thousands of Indians, was vulnerable to Chinese aggression from the north. This was the moment of intuition when I suddenly discovered the key to the worsening of Indo Nepali relations and regretted the possibility of the Indian editor's fears come true.

Earlier, I had read numerous newspaper comments and books written by Indians expressing their anxiety over Nepal, but I had written them off as the natural exuberance of sensational journalism. One such comment was as follows :

“Nepal occupies a key position between the democratic Republic of India and Communist China. Even more than Bhutan and Sikkim, it is the northern gateway to the Indo-Gangetic plains. Even a casual acquaintance with the geography and history of this region would suffice to indicate that India's security and stability are inextricably tied up with the security and stability of Nepal, in view of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. *This awareness has largely informed India's policy towards Nepal since 1950-51 when the Chinese armies rolled into Tibet, thus establishing a common frontier between democratic India and Communist China.*”¹

The author went on to say that India had “considerable stakes in Nepal” since “geography was the compelling factor”. Nepal was “not a natural buffer between India and China” because there was “no natural frontier or barrier between India and Nepal”; “the boundaries between what are now India and

1. Girilal Jain, *India meets China in Nepal*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1959, p. 1, emphasis added.

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Nepal shifted from time to time and conflicts between them were of inter-family nature”, the cultural patterns in India and Nepal were hardly distinguishable, and the economies of the two countries were inextricably interwoven, a case in point being that the problem of flood control could be tackled only jointly by India and Nepal.

Further, between 1956-57 (when Nepal signed treaties with China), “apparently, Nepal was drifting away from its traditional policy. Many Indians were alarmed by this shift in Nepal’s foreign policy in favour of Communist China. I was one of them”.

This is the quintessence of what the Indian ruling circles and elite feel about Nepal, admirably summed up by one of their columnists, but a thought which every Nepali would refute and resent. The Nepali hates the word “buffer”, denies India’s “special interests, stakes or sphere of influence” in Nepal, claims that he has a cultural pattern identifiably his own, and considers the economic interdependence between India and Nepal as a universal feature of modern economic life between the countries of the world. To the insinuation that his frontier was more vulnerable than India’s, he spiritedly replies that his ancestors defended their freedom better than Indian princes did and when time comes he would know how to hold his own, again better than the lotus-eaters of the plains. As regards his traditional policy, he asserts that, except during the hundred years or less of Rana rule, he was always as oriented towards the north as toward the south, and Nepal’s policy had always been of equal friendship with both her neighbours.

When Indians charge Nepal of being soft towards Communist China, or name one of its leaders as being pro-Chinese¹, the Nepalis remind us that the Americans hold the same views about India’s foreign policy and indifferently name Nehru as being a crypto-communist. A cursory survey of Indian comments upon Nepal would show how much this uninformed criticism of men and matters in Nepal has affected Indo-Nepali relations and how much our “interpretative” reporting is responsible for the deterioration of our mutual relationship.

UNFOUNDED FEARS

BEFORE WE GO FURTHER, WE MAY AS WELL EXAMINE THE validity of the above statements today. Irrespective of the fact

1. Tanka Prasad Acharya, K. I. Singh, late Nar Pratap Thapa, Tulsi Giri, and even King Mahendra have often been suspected of pro-Chinese loyalties by Indian kite-fliers.

whether Nepal's defences were sufficient to withstand Chinese aggression, a Nepali asks whether he or the Indians would be the first to suffer from a breakdown of their defence? Evidently, Nepal must be run over by the Chinese before they could enter India through Nepal and the Nepali denies that he would cut his nose to spite India. In other words, every Nepali is, traditionally, more ready to defend the freedom of his country than he thinks Indians are and he is proud of the fact that his country did not lose her independence when the entire subcontinents of China and India were a prey to Western imperialism. If Nepal's independence was a fortuitous circumstance attendant upon a failure of British arms, ingenuity or inclination, a Nepali says, the "compelling factors of geography" have not changed to his detriment. Today, if India and China do not protect her independence against each other in their own interests, the situation could be saved by international action.

There can be no sillier statement than that Nepal was drifting towards Communist China to the point of becoming inimical to India, or to the extent of embracing communism, unless Indians drive her to the point of no return. Even communism cannot enter an independent country without some measure of native support and conditions in Nepal do not support even a parliamentary democracy, let alone communism. While we would consider this point later in greater detail, it should be clear to us that if the Nepali King or people chose the way of communism, it would be beyond Indian arms and ingenuity to stop them from going Red. Above all, our anxiety to stop any country from choosing the path it likes runs counter to our professions of neutrality and coexistence.

Need we go into the question whether India should follow a policy of nonalignment and coexistence, or become a knight-errand of the defenders of the "free world"? It would be beyond the scope of this book to discuss India's foreign policy and its merits, but we may remember, by the way, that our refusal to be preoccupied with the communist danger to the world arose out of our keen desire to be out of the cold war that threatens the sanity of our world. Our fight against Chinese aggression is not a war against world communism. We also believe that what is good for us is good for others in a similar situation. Then, can we blame the Nepalis for their wish to keep the cold war out of their small country flanked by two opposing social and economic systems? By considering Nepal our 'special sphere', whose freedom or stability should be our concern, we not only expose ourselves to the charge of incipient imperialism,

Bulwarks of India's Defence

but also take upon ourselves the burdens which we cannot shoulder. With our hands full with the defence of our own border and the problems of economic development, and singeing with linguistic discords that disturb our emotional integration, why must we add unfounded fears to our responsibilities? We have a large subcontinent to manage and there is no doubt that the countries of far and near would follow our lead when we have made a good job of defending and governing ourselves. India is not economically or militarily in a position to take over and face Nepal's problems.

What is the problem of India's defence? After wrestling with this problem for the last many years and especially in the last one year, we should be more realistic in our appraisal of the situation. If a large-scale Chinese invasion of India was ever possible, it should be less feared now because the Chinese have once tried and failed in the attempt. For one reason that it cannot be attempted without exploding a world war for which the Soviet Union is wholly unwilling. For another, that the element of surprise shall never again enter the Sino-Indian war and it must be a long and drawn-out affair. We are already on our guard against a nibbling of our territory and have realised that we have to build our defence potential. Building of roads and checkposts over our far-flung border, and building the morale of the people inhabiting the border regions, is the steady task which we should be pursuing, and must more vigorously pursue in the coming years. More than that, we must build our defence industries and quickly increase production on a war-footing. The solution of the defence problem lies within our frontiers, in the hands of our own people and government, and not in bullying the neighbours that lie between us and communist China.

Indian policy towards Nepal has suffered from the beginning from this preliminary, ill-founded notion that defence of Nepal was a part of Indian defence and that, as a corollary, the defence of Nepal was India's responsibility. Our solicitousness was resented because it smacked of the White Man's burden, because it is proved that an attitude of big brotherliness provokes 'ungrateful' resistance among the people it claims to serve. What is surprising is that while we resent the same attitudes in the West, we have displayed them in our relations with our own smaller neighbours.

FORWARD SCHOOL

THE FAULT AROSE OUT OF OUR UNCRITICAL ACCEPTANCE OF the "forward" school of defence which the British advocated

in the nineteenth century and which we inherited together with such other institutions and outlooks as the Indian administration and its blue-eyed boys, the I.C.S., the cricket commentary, or the summer exodus to the hills. That kind of defence, it must be firmly stated, has now become completely out-of-date, neither possible nor feasible in the world of today.

To disabuse our mind of the possibility of practising "forward" defence today, we must clearly know what it means. It means reaching beyond India's frontiers to adjacent countries and integrating them with the system of defending what were then called the "scientific" frontiers of India. For this purpose, the British thought it necessary to occupy Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Ceylon, East Africa and Aden which sealed the southern sea approaches to India. In the north, they advocated the annexation of Afghanistan and other Himalayan states to the Indian empire, but wars with Afghanistan and Nepal gave a lesson that "in Asia, where victories cease, difficulties begin".¹ When they found it unprofitable to subjugate the turbulent peoples of the high Himalayas, their pattern of dominance changed to the twin objectives of controlling their external relations and freezing their static societies, so as to prevent the possibility of either their becoming sufficiently strong to challenge British authority, or to allow the influence of any other power to grow in their territories. Britain, thus, developed a kind of Monroe doctrine to maintain her predominant influence in countries adjacent to India.²

The Chinese had called Tibet the palm and Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and Tsayul (Nepa) as the five fingers of Tibet. With considerable Tibetan religious and cultural influence, these territories were bound to be a source of worry to any Indian government. So, by the end of the nineteenth century, Ladakh and Nepa were integrated into the Indian empire, and Bhutan and Sikkim were converted into Indian protectorates. Nepal retained her independence but her contacts with the north were totally snapped because beyond the five fingers, it was really the palm which formed the kingpin of India's defence of the Himalayas. Cleverly discovering their opportunity in the popular strength and semi-sovereignty of the lamaist church, the British buttressed it after their first expedition and brought home to the Tibetan government that the alternative to an acceptance of British terms was the wiping away of lamaist authority by means of

1. Duke of Wellington to Lord Auckland in 1839; quoted by Sir Francis Younghusband,

2. Sir Alfred Lyall.

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Chinese reforms on the one hand and British arms on the other. The Dalais heeded to their advice and kept the Chinese 'at bay'.

Armed with her predecessor's wisdom, it was free India's desire to preserve the status quo in all the four states¹, but the story of the past one decade is the story of her uniform failure everywhere primarily because the times had changed. The government of free India could not vigorously pursue the aim of preserving its sphere of influence because it owed its existence to the waning of the British empire whose torn mantle it was ashamed to wear. It could be amusing, if it were not so painful for the Indian people, to find Nehru's government at pains to deny its imperialist connections and seeking ideological justifications for its fruitless actions, while assuming attitudes which unknowingly owe their origin to the old "forward" school of defence. It sought to do this by treaties, by a "firm declaration" that their defence was India's responsibility, by increased technical assistance, and by generally supporting their rulers to assure them that their own security lay in their dependence upon India. Only in one case, where India helped a country to grow self reliant, that country (Nepal) was the first to go out of India's orbit of influence, despite its cultural and economic ties, because as it stood on its legs, we did not appreciate its eagerness to get out of its playpan.

It should be obvious to us that there are no "scientific" frontiers of countries any more in this atomic age, that a gathering of neighbours for a common system of defence can only be called by military pacts whose futility has been proved, that protectorates cannot be maintained even by the USA in Latin America, that Imperialist occupation is rendered impossible by the growth of freedom, and that India is in no position to enforce a monroe doctrine in her part of the world. Having lost Tibet irretrievably to the Chinese, India must not count upon isolating the Himalayan states from China, or upon controlling their external relations for any length of time. This applies to Nepal today and will be true for Sikkim and Bhutan tomorrow.

IDEALS AND SELF INTEREST

THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE ABOVE IMPERIAL TECHNIC IN OUR times is sound diplomacy based on genuine friendship, which in turn is based upon enlightened self-interest. The Himalayan states may not remain for a greater length of time India's protectorates, but they share with India the urge to develop-

1. Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet.

ment, trade and cultural exchange, and voluntary aid for defence. They are *not* hotbeds of communism and their rulers' interests lie in better relationship with India, subject to the discretion of *not* inviting the ire of their northern neighbour. They need Indian capital investment in their future industries, and Indian technical assistance. They want us to support them to enhance their stability, and not to have a doctrinaire approach to their problems to serve an ideology. In their smooth growth to economic viability, in the emergence of an educated and enlightened class among their peoples, in their closer intergration with the plains below by means of better means of communication, lies the improvement of their friendly relations with India, and incidentally, the possibility of their becoming willing bulwarks of India's defence. Any other policy of pressure or coercion is bound to recoil upon us, for we shall as surely be driving them over to the Chinese as they wish to escape this contingency today.

It must also be remembered that the Himalayan states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim are not buffer states between India and China in the proper sense of the term, since they do not cover the entire range of China-India border. China can invade India, without violating their integrity and while professing love for them as events have shown, which buttresses their desire to "keep out" of any Sino-Indian conflict. Only Tibet as a buffer could satisfy India's wish to keep the Chinese frontier at a safe distance but that was not to be. Consequently, India must build the defence on her own border with China first, before she assumes the responsibility of defending the northern borders of these Himalayan states.

Geography cannot be denied and it would be futile for the Nepalis to refute that Nepal is, in a limited sense, a buffer state sandwiched between two larger neighbours. When they protest against the use of the word "buffer", they are more sentimental than reasonable, but one can be made more amenable to reason by not being rubbed the wrong way. I have no doubt that the Nepali government and people are keenly aware of the difficulties inherent in the situation of their land-logged country. A realistic way to get out of them is even dictated in their latest pronouncements. "The problem of Asia at present is predominantly economic", says a pamphlet published by the Nepal Government, which continues to say that the failure of parliamentary democracy in many Asian countries was a natural and inevitable result of "seeking to provide a predominantly political solution to a predominantly economic problem." What Nepal

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needs today, it concludes, is "pre-eminently development politics" and her goal is "a viable economy".¹

Whether we agree with this analysis of their national situation or not, what is important for us is to understand their analyses, since we do not deny them the right of choice. In passing, it may be pointed out that a proper study of the reasons that led to the failure of parliamentary democracy in large parts of Asia and Africa has yet to be made before we pass our judgment upon this phenomenon. Where Nepal is concerned, her stress seems to be on the right point. Her political stability can be achieved only as a "product of stable and strong economy".² She may cease to be a 'buffer' when she has acquired economic strength, like Switzerland,³ and when she has opened up her trade with countries other than China and India.⁴ For the rest, she must depend upon the native shrewdness of all peoples who have to coexist with stronger neighbours. If the South forbears them with its claims of special interests, those will always be rebutted by an equal claim of the North. If we call this playing one against the other, we have to accept it as the normal mode of self-defence in our divided world. It may be as distasteful to us as having to fight gravitation when we want to soar into space, but our individual and national lives acquire their firmness on the ground, thanks to this benevolent force of gravitating self-interest. If the strong nations of the world were to form an axis to suppress the weak, where would the poorer ones be? Unless the thieves sometime fall out among themselves, this would be a hellish world to live.

The best India can do is to help Nepali defence as and when the Nepalis demand it, and where we are not content with the guarantees of our defence, fill in the lacuna on our side of the border. If geography compels, since there is no natural barrier between India and Nepal, we should treat the Indo-Nepal border the same way as we are treating the rest of our international border. We may establish checkpoints and defence installations and carefully screen all incoming and outgoing men and goods. That could give us a greater sense

1. *Panchayat Democracy for National Prosperity*, Press Secretariat, Royal Palace, Kathmandu, May 1962.
2. Vishwa Bandhu Thapa, Minister of National Guidance, *National Guidance, its Origin and Functions*, Department of Publicity and Broadcasting, His Majesty's Government, Kathmandu, 1962.
3. Most Nepalis like to compare their country with Switzerland. It is a laudable ambition of every Nepali patriot to develop his country into a Switzerland of Asia.
4. Hence, the attempt to open trade relations with Pakistan.

of security, as also reduce the smuggling of goods or arms which form a perpetual source of dispute between the two countries. At the present juncture, Nepal Government might welcome this step rather than consider it unfriendly.

In this connection, it is essential to sound a warning that our international relations are liable to be cramped if we start judging every country at the touchstone of her support or neutrality in our present border dispute or even war with China. In world politics, it is too much for us to expect that another country would pull our chestnuts out of fire, or that she would model her own diplomatic relations with any country with our moods and fancies in view, not even in gratefulness to what we might do for her benefit. Again, the parallel between India and U.S.A. is clear ; acceptance of aid without strings is the name we have given to the inability of the recipient to do a good turn in return to the giver. If you do render aid, you do so in your own "enlightened self-interest" and you thereby protect your own "way of life" against ugly encroachments. A bit of charity is tonic for the troubled soul of the wealthy.

Finally, before we close this preliminary to our study of Indo-Nepali relations, we must look at the Nepali viewpoint with regards to our handling of the Tibetan and border affairs. Their chief grudge is that India never consulted Nepal, or even informed her, before she made in 1950 (what they say) the great 'land-gift' of Tibet to China, nor when she formalised Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1954. If the Nepal Government were consulted in 1950, in all probability, they may not have advocated a policy of massive resistance to China, nor was India bound to accept such advice, when rendered. But the present day Nepali would not have argued then, that the responsibility of losing Tibet lay squarely upon India.

The necessity of consultation, over matters of common interest (as Tibet was a matter of common concern to both India and Nepal) is not merely to avoid hurt sentiments. At times it becomes a test of our friendship, or even a test of one's intent to respect the other's sovereignty. So in this case, the Nepali feels that India did not treat Nepal as an equal and independent country. Soon enough, Nepal found an occasion to pay back our discourtesy, when she took economic assistance from China without prior consultation with India, much to our chagrin.

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The Nepali argument in this regard gathers strength from yet another incident which followed the Chinese occupation of Tibet. In September 1951, the Chinese Prime Minister, Chou En-lai, invited a tripartite conference between China, India and Nepal to discuss the common problem of Tibet and India ignored this suggestion, presumably, without referring it to Nepal.¹ One fails to see why the Indian government disregarded a tripartite conference in 1951, when Nepal would unquestionably have stood with India, unless it was nursing a fond hope that Nepal could be kept isolated from China in times to come. Instead of restricting the conference to these three countries, the Government of India could well have enlarged its scope, by inviting many more countries to the proposed roundtable, including USSR and Pakistan, and aiming at the "neutralisation" of the Himalayan region.

When a history of Indian diplomacy comes to be written, it will be recorded that India's Himalayan policy was neither bold nor imaginative, neither militant nor idealistic. The one approach needed an assertion of India's claims born of actualities of the preceding half a century, even though it meant a reference to the expansive but *unifying* role of British imperialism on the Indian sub-continent; the other required a clean break from the nineteenth century diplomacy with a clear enunciation of the right of self-determination for all the Himalayan peoples, from Tibet to Sikkim, and a demand from China to guarantee their neutrality. On the latter proposal, India could have derived support from all countries fringing the Himalayas, because each would have little to lose and much to gain. The tranquility and stability of the Himalayan region was a boon which should have been prized more than our dubitable advantages in Bhutan or Kashmir.

If such a solution was to be thought of by a bold and imaginative foreign minister, the proposals in the Himalayan Conference would probably have boiled down to an independent Tibet together with independent Bhutan and Sikkim. It is immaterial whether such a conference could be held at all, or would have been to no purpose, for India would have generated a friendly force among the Himalayan states which could be the surest bulwark of her defence from Chinese

1. Nehru disclosed in *Lok Sabha* on 25 November 1959 that Chou En-lai had, in an informal conversation with the Indian ambassador, said, "The question of stabilisation of the Tibetan frontier was a matter of common interest to India, Nepal and China and it could best be done by discussions between the three countries."

encroachments, while if she had succeeded, the independence of Kashmir would have been a small price paid for the independence of Tibet and for our lasting friendship with Pakistan.

CHAPTER THREE

Pasupati and Manjusri

GEOGRAPHICALLY, NEPAL IS A PART OF THE INDIAN SUB-continent and its narrow strip, barely 90 miles wide, is lost to a casual observer on the Indian maps between the Great and Lesser Himalayas. The sacred Ganga drains all her waters brought to it by her numerous rivers, making the entire region sacred to a Hindu as a gift of Pasupatinatha (*Siva*) and the source of the pure waters mythically arising from Kailas. Since the Muslim invasions of the eleventh century, Nepal became a hinterland for small chieftains who were driven out of India by their conquests. Thus, in the fourteenth century went Hari Singh Dev from Tirhut to found his kingdom and with him scores of *brahmins* who spread their religion and enabled Jaya Sthiti Malla to codify their laws. Thus again in the seventeenth century, stray Rajput clans, unable to hold their own against the mighty Mughals, wandered into Nepal to settle in Gurkha, later to conquer the whole country and establish a dynasty which rules her to this day as a representative of Providence (*Visnu*)

Earlier, Buddhism had come to the country under the missionary zeal of the early Indian Budhists, supported by the blessings if not the arms of the Great Asoka.¹ Under its influence, illustrious families of Nepal had begun to connect themselves, genuinely or fictitiously, to the Buddhist nobility of India. The rulers of first century Nepal were called *Licchavis* and claimed to come from the sacred stock from which came the holy Buddha; and so did the later indigenous dynasties, not content with their suspicious ancestories and wanting to equalise themselves with the princes of India. The *brahmin* always knew how to graft an extrinsic branch upon the old stump, even though the holy genealogies left by him are doubtful to sustain their claims, and by his efforts, Buddhism was also to become brahminised in times to come.

1. Siddhartha was born in the Tarai, on Nepali territory, but he attained his enlightenment (Buddhahood) and began preaching in India. So Buddhism is initially an Indian religion.

It is in the above sense that the best historian of Nepal called her history *a prelude to the history of India*. "Nepal is India in the course of her making" he wrote, "on a territory as conveniently restricted as a laboratory: an observer can easily encompass the chain of facts which modern India has drawn from primitive India. He understands by what means a handful of Aryans, carried by an adventurous march into the Punjab, and come in contact with a multitude of barbarians, managed to subjugate her, frame her, make her docile, organise her and propagate her dialect." Nepal under the *Licchavis* was spiritually an extension of Indian Buddhism: Nepal under the *Mallas*, of Indian Brahminism. The Gurkha conquest completed her annexation, as it were, to brahminic India.¹

Nevertheless, "the Nepalis, though they imitated India, welcomed the brahminic pantheon and relegated to it their own stone, fetish and image, sheltered Indian pilgrims, merchants, quacks, beggars, adventurers and vagabonds, and swallowed with simple credulity (common to all hills folk) their tales and miracles, they never pledged their independence to any one beyond their borders". Nor did they allow the British rulers of India to annex Nepal to their empire, because by that time they had learnt the Japanese lesson that Europe's entry into their land in any garb spelled disaster to their freedom. "First the bible, then the trading stations, then canons" had also become a Nepali proverb. The first Gurkha ruler, Prithvi Narain Shaha, who is said to have profited by British training and firearms to make his conquests, nevertheless, expelled all Christian missionaries from the Nepali soil.

UNDER THE SHADOW

DURING NEPAL'S WAR WITH TIBET-CHINA IN 1791-2, THE British compelled her to a trade pact and sent a military mission to help, but the Nepalis preferred to conclude a hasty peace with China and sent the British mission packing back in three weeks. In 1814-16, however, the British defeated Nepal in a war, forced her to cede a part of her territory—Sikkim and Darjeeling in the east and Kumaon, Garhwal and Simla in the west—and admit a British resident in Kathmandu. After 1829, when a furious struggle for power raged among the Nepali nobles, they consolidated their foothold, which became permanent after the Rana prime ministers usurped power in 1846.

1. Sylvain Levi, *L' Nepal*, from the English translation in typescript (unpublished), available at the Indian Council of World Affairs Library, New Delhi.

The trend of linking up Nepal's interests with those of the British in India started with Jung Bahadur Rana in that year. With Tibet equally dominated by British power, Nepal was sealed on both sides and she came under the (British) Indian sphere of influence. "Although Nepal did not form part of the Asia-wide empire of Great Britain, she was well within her shadow".¹

Not that the British would not have liked to conquer Nepal and annex her to their Crown. There were many British vice-roys in Calcutta, and secretaries of state in London, who advocated a forward policy and saw in the conquest of Nepal a road opening out to central Asia and Tibet where by the beginning of the twentieth century they were afraid of growing Russian influence. But the very fear of Russian intervention in Tibet forbade them any advance in Nepal. Nor did they wish to repeat their painful experience of two Nepali operations, especially when they found the Rana rulers docile enough to subserve British interests.

It is true that the British resident was never allowed such authority or control as exercised by his counterparts in Indian states, and he was not permitted to move out of specified limits in Kathmandu. He did not even assume that advisory role which various British agents played in Lhasa. In 1920, his status was changed to an Envoy and in 1934, he became a minister plenipotentiary in a British legation. But it cannot be denied too that the Rana rulers purchased safety for their isolated autarchy and unlimited right to exploit their own people by letting the British manage their external relations and foreign trade, by showing their "heroism and loyalty" to the English Crown during the Indian "Mutiny of 1857", and by sending 200,000 Gurkha troops to serve the British empire overseas and during the world wars. "During the Rana regime, if India was a slave, Nepal was dominated by the colonial rulers of a slave-state" and she was "not sovereign under a century of Rana-cra-²cy".² "The Ranas were safe in Nepal so long as the British were safe in Delhi".³ It was only in June 1947 when the British were leaving India that the British legation in Kathmandu was raised to the status of an Embassy, signifying their hands off from Nepal.

1. Khanal, Y.N., *Background of Nepal's Foreign Policy*, Dept. of Publicity, H.M.G., Kathmandu.
2. Yami, Dharma Ratna, *The Study of Critical Situation in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1958.
3. Tuladhar, T.R., *Nepal-China, A Story of Friendship*, Dept. of Publicity, H.M.G., Kathmandu.

CHILDREN OF MANJUSRI

DESPITE THIS LONG ASSOCIATION WITH INDIA, HOWEVER, Nepal never became her cultural offshoot, the reason being that she was as much in contact with the north as with the south. For India, China was a 'distant neighbour'; for Nepal, she was always within striking distance and Nepal had continuous course with her in peace and war. The Himalayas were not effective barriers to its own peoples, even when they did not possess the resources of modern science and industry. The Nepalis and Tibetans, Afghans or Kashmiris, had made war upon each other and constantly taken their arms, commercial and cultural traffic up and down the difficult passes between India, Tibet and Sinkiang. So Nepal's pictures of mythical age emerge from China : the first legendary god to thrust his spear into the rocks and let out the captive waters which released the valley of Kathmandu was Manjusri, a Chinese god.¹

As far back as the eighth century, the first Tibetan King, Tsrong Tsang Gampo carried Bhrikuti, a Nepali princess, who spread Buddhism and Nepali art in Tibet. In the last quarter of the thirteenth century, a master-architect, sculptor and painter, named Anika, went from Nepal, to be called Min Hui at the court of Kublai Khan, where he introduced the pagoda style of architecture. In 1271 A. D., he built the Great white Dagoba in the Miaoying monastery near Peking which attracts visitors to this day. Nepali Buddhism in the east and on the high mountains follows lamaism, and mountain-dwellers—*sherpas*, *limbus* and *kiratis*—look to the north for trade, culture, religion and inspiration. The native population is of mongoloid stock. On the whole, the Himalayan region has so different a terrain and climate from the rest of the Indian subcontinent that conditions of life and culture of its peoples are bound to be fundamentally different from those of Indians.

Nepal fought two wars with Tibet, one in 1790-92 and the other in 1856 as a result of which Tibet became Nepal's overlord for half a century. The kingdom of Nepal sent mission to Peking every five years until the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty² and Nepal carried free merchandise through its own trade emporia in Tibet. King Prithvi Narain Shaha expelled the Capuchin monks who were refugees from Tibet, having been thrown out of that country, The Nepali Prime Minister Bhim

1. The Chinese Emperor was considered an embodiment of *Manjusri* and technically, Nepal was a vassal of China for some time, though China never exercised any practical authority over Nepal.
2. The last Nepali mission was sent in 1908.

Sen Thapa appealed to the Imperial court in Peking in 1816 to help him fight the British. In a hundred years of Rana rule however, Nepal was completely cut off from China and contacts of all sorts, physical, cultural, economic or political were withheld. "The imperialist forces were too shrewd; the feudal elements, too self-seeking and un-national".¹

This is again not to say that the Nepalis are a cultural offshoot of Tibet or China. Having borrowed extensively from both China and India, in the elements of her civilisation, as in her man-power, Nepal developed a unique culture of her own which made her, in the words of a former prime minister of the country, "a cord of friendship between India and China".² Her influx of races foreign to India was so softened by brahminic penetration that an Indian never felt an alien spirit among the Nepali people while he discovered innumerable traits, customs and conventions identical to his own. Nepal cooked the Tibetan and Indian elements well in her own laboratory to evolve her own synthesis quite early.

To take an example, in Nepal unlike India, Brahminism and Buddhism were never in combat; they developed side by side in relative peace and mutual give and take to the extent that it is hard to distinguish a Nepali Hindu from a Nepali Biddhist. If one hill in Kathmandu is consecrated to the Buddhist *Swayambhu*, the other is dedicated to *Pasupatinatha* or *Narayana*. Chinese (or Nepali?) type pagodas shelter Hindu gods and rich carvings on Buddhist temples remind one of Hindu temples in India.

Nepali art has its own harmony and its own rhythm which is a direct expression of their own sensibility, It was not captured by society for biological ends. Like the Chinese it has constantly recognised the spiritual function of art; like the Indian, it is self-contained and bound up with her religious mythology. The Nepali artist felt free to weave an unending texture of innumerable plastic forms over the surfaces of temple in wood or metal. His fantastic and sometimes monstrous inventions wander unchecked by physical barriers across the northern Himalayas. To this day, much of the metal work in Tibet is carried out by Nepali craftsmen.

Thus, to conclude, Nepal is a cultural entity distinguished from her neighbours, though she has amply borrowed from both of them. She has more in common with India than with

1. Tuladhar, *op.cit.*

2. Tanka Prasad Acharya, quoted by B. R. Misra, 'Nepal and India-China Differences', *Echo* weekly, Kathmandu, 10 Sep 59.

China because throughout her history, she has been in living contact with the warm south. Pasupatinatha and other shrines in Nepal have been important pilgrimages for Indians. Woe to him in Nepal who does not harbour the ambition of expiating his sins at the bathing ghats of Banaras once in a life time. Nepal is geographically a part of the subcontinent of India. There are no barriers of mind or spirit between the two countries but what are created from either side.

On the other hand, "while tension might be the staple diet of agitated politicians in her neighbouring countries", Nepal could not afford to throw away her "borders of peace" with either. So, when the British withdrew from India, the Nepali public opinion veered round to the thought that Nepal must maintain good relations with both India and China. "It was worked up generally against those, whether in India or in Nepal, who would be happy to see Nepal-Tibet border smouldering".¹

There were material and psychological reasons for Nepal's eagerness to open her relations with China so soon as she was free to do so after India's independence. It was natural for her to extend her life-line in two directions instead of one, and to balance India's possible over-insistence upon her "cultural and political ties" with Nepal. Opening her relations with the outside world meant also an assertion of her sovereignty in external affairs attained after a long century. Her "consciousness of a neighbourhood other than Indian and the need for survival as an independent sovereign nation through the maintenance of a balance between old friends and new"² create an urge to remain uninvolved in a Sino-Indian dispute. As a buffer between the two, Nepal would like herself and even Bhutan and Sikkim to remain truly neutral.³ This also explains her somewhat self-conscious effort to assert her sovereignty and individuality,

HANDS ACROSS THE TARAI

A HUNDRED YEARS OF BRITISH RULE IN INDIA AND RANA RULE in Nepal had made Nepal wholly dependent upon India. Nepalis needed neither visa nor permit to journey to the Indian plains and the rebel nobles of Nepal sought shelter and much needed

1. B. R. Misra, *op. cit.*
2. Prem Bhatia, 'Prospect and Retrospect; Nepali Sensitiveness and Nationalism,' *TI*, 2 Feb 60.
3. Speaking to pressmen in Kathmandu on 29 Nov 59, then Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala, thought that Bhutan was fully sovereign, though he pleaded ignorance about its exact relationship with India, *IE*, 1 Dec 59.

succour of sweet British promises in India—Banaras being an important place of pilgrimage, as well as a centre for Nepali politics. The Nepalis went to Indian universities for higher education and in some areas of Western Nepal, as many as 70% of the people move out to India in some parts of the year; those living in Tarai have business and family relations in adjacent Indian districts.¹ Over a lakh of Nepalis have settled in India and 20,000 Gurkhas serve in the Indian army. The postal system was run by India till 1957 and India still remains her only outlet to world trade, until the Lhasa-Kathmandu road becomes a reality.

Nepali nationalism matured under the powerful inspiration of Indian nationalist and socialist movements because, under the Rana regime, no political activity was possible inside Nepal. Numerous Nepali leaders took their apprenticeship in Indian national struggles. Some of the future ministers of Nepal got schooling in diplomacy in the parlours of a doyen of Indian statesmanship, the late Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, or in social democracy from Jai Prakash Narain, then considered an authority on 'scientific socialism' though of a fading colour.² Though a Praja Parishad was clandestinely formed in Nepal in 1935, a more powerful Nepali National Congress was formed in India in 1946. After the withdrawal of British power from India, this nascent Nepali nationalism clamoured for support from the Government of India and sought alliances with Indian political leaders in Calcutta, Patna and other Indian states adjoining Nepal.

The Government of India had no special treatment for Nepal or other Himalayan States on its agenda until the challenge of Chinese communism forced its attention towards the border.³

1. The same is true of eastern Nepal and highlands where people gravitate to Tibet during certain months.
2. The 'strong-man' of Nepali Congress, the former Home Minister, S. P. Upadhyaya, was a disciple of late Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. Former Nepali Congress Prime Minister, B. P. Koirala, was a follower of Jai Prakash Narain and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia at different times.
3. Nehru told Parliament on 6 Dec 50, "Our interest in the internal conditions of Nepal has become still more acute and personal, because of the developments across our borders, to be frank, *especially those in China and Tibet*. Besides our sympathetic interest in Nepal, we were also interested in the security of our own country. From time immemorial the Himalayas have provided us with magnificent frontier. Of course, they are no longer as impassable as they used to be, but they are still fairly effective. We cannot allow that barrier to be penetrated because it is also the principal barrier to India. Therefore, much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot allow anything to go wrong in Nepal or permit that barrier to be crossed or weakened, because that would be a risk to our own security."—*Speeches II*, p. 177.

Among the Indian leaders, only Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia fought an exemplary skirmish on Nepali territory to draw the attention of his government to the need of formulating a Himalayan policy. But if we take his word for it, when he suggested that India might help the replacement of Ranacracy by a democratic government in Nepal, Indian 'reactionaries' favoured the view that any change in Nepal might lead to confusion and anarchy and pave the way for communism there.¹ In any case, "Though the Government of India favoured the democratisation of the Rana regime, it was not prepared to do anything which would expose it to the charge of interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring kingdom. The Nepali leaders won whatever support they could from the Socialist Party in opposition."²

LOYAL FRIENDSHIP

INDEPENDENT OF THE WILL (OR LACK OF WILL) OF THE Government of India, however, a set of circumstances were hastening the downfall of the Rana regime. Under the hereditary Rana prime ministers, the monarchy of Nepal was a prisoner, having signed away all its powers to the Ranas in 1876. There was no constitution, no fundamental rights, no proper judiciary and no defined law, hence, no equality before the law. Nepal was a personal domain of her rulers. In November 1945, Nepal came to be ruled by a "comparatively liberal though weak-willed" prime minister, Padam Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, who leaned on the lesser nobility among the Ranas in order to counteract the influence of his brothers. Aware of the growing restlessness among the educated Nepalis consequent upon the British withdrawal from India, he invited two Indian experts³ to frame a constitution. In February 1948, he announced proposals for the grant of fundamental freedoms, formation of an independent judiciary and public service commission, release of political prisoners, establishment of *panchayats* (self-governing village bodies) and a bicameral legislature with partly responsible ministers to rule the nation.

Prime Minister Nehru deserves credit for advising Padam Shumsher to promise these reforms to the people. The constitution so framed was, however, rejected by the Ranas, then

1. Lohia, Ram Manohar, *Third Front*.

2. Jain, Giri Lal, *India Meets China in Nepal*, pp 13-14.

3. Dr. R. U. Singh, a professor of law in Lucknow University, and Sri Prakash, Indian barrister and Congress leader.

basking in the moonshine of American flattery, whose influence had greatly increased since 1947. The proposals cost Padam Shumsher his prime-ministership and he was forced to resign in May 1948, to be succeeded by Mohan Shamsher Rana. It was probably "due to the Ranas gradually being inclined more and more to be agents of Anglo-American bloc, that India should have taken interest" in Nepal¹. India interpreted Rana government's tendency to "lean on the USA as a counterblast to Indian influence". Nepal threatened to become a potential seat of cold war, but as the need to protect Nepal from Chinese 'invasion or subversion' grew, "the USA and India came to realise that their aims in Nepal were identical" and that "they must not set themselves up as rival suitors for favours in Kathmandu".² So far the old diplomacy of counteracting rival influences of friends or foes!

The Indian government now also felt the need of concluding new treaties with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. "Apparently such a step was considered necessary to ensure that the rulers of these strategically important states were prepared to show *the same sense of loyal friendship to the new regime in India which they had earlier shown to the British*. This appears to be a valid assessment in view of the fact that *the new treaties were modelled after the existing ones*."³ The Nepali Prime Minister, Mohan Shamsher, was persuaded to visit Delhi in February 1950, primarily to negotiate the new treaty and only in the second place to be told that enlightened interest demanded of him to "meet popular wishes at least half way"⁴ On 17 March 1950, Nehru informed the Indian parliament that he had advised the Rana Government "to bring themselves in line with democratic forces". He also declared that "Geographically, Nepal is almost a part of India... although she is an independent country. It is not possible for the Indian government to tolerate an invasion of Nepal from anywhere' even though there is no military alliance between the two countries" because it "would involve the safety of India".⁵

On 31 July 1950, an "everlasting"—to be terminated on either side by one year's notice—Indo-Nepali Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed in Kathmandu which abrogated all previous treaties between British India and Nepal and recog-

1. Yami, *op. cit.*

2. Prem Bhatia, *op. cit.*

3. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 14, emphasis provided.

4. *The Tribune*, Ambala, 21 Feb 60, editorial.

5. *Speeches II*, pp 145-6.

nised Nepal's "sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence". But it enjoined upon the two governments to "inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring state."¹ An exchange of letters on the same day further laid down that "Neither government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two governments shall consult each other and devise effective counter-measures."² By a treaty of trade and commerce, the transit of goods and manufactures through Indian territory was regulated under mutually agreed conditions.

By another treaty of "perpetual peace and friendship" with Great Britain on 30 October, Nepal was freed from the earlier treaty of 1923 and the conventions which British India had exercised during a hundred years of Rana rule. The treaty substantially preserved the old commercial relationship with Britain, accorded her and the Commonwealth the most-favoured nation treatment and continued the British recruitment of Gurkha troops from Nepal.

Subsequent developments in Nepal have not changed this basic legal document on which India's relations with Nepal are based till today. So we might pause here to examine it. It is evident that while the Indian government felt it had "responsibilities and special interests" in Nepal, the Nepalis always insisted on their *complete independence* "throughout history" and more so since British withdrawal from India. Nationalist Nepalis would not deny that Nepal was only semi-independent during the Rana-British period and that her complete sovereignty was restored only in July-October 1950 with the seal of recognition contained in the new Indo-Nepali and British-Nepali treaties. But if Nepal's sovereignty was the outcome of India's success in making the British quit the Indian subcontinent, they argue, it was just as Nepal's limitations were prescribed by India's failure to resist to expanding British empire a century ago.

India never conquered Nepal and she cannot claim her special interests in all the countries that were freed at the same time that India attained her independence.

In 1947, under a tripartite agreement, the U. K. had retained the right to recruit Gurkha troops and continue diplomatic

1. Text in *Foreign Policy of India*, pp 21-3.

2. quoted by Nehru in Indian Parliament, 27 Nov 59.

relations with Nepal. An agreement for exchange of diplomatic representatives had also been signed between Nepal and the U. S. A. The Indian government had been powerless to prevent this and it felt the impact of changed circumstances wherein it could not monopolise Nepal's external relations. Nonetheless, it hoped to play a big role in the shaping of Nepal's political orientation.

Now if India wanted "*the same sense of loyal friendship to the new regime in India which they had earlier shown to the British*", then she was cheated out of this inheritance by force of circumstances or faulty diplomacy. The Indo-Nepal treaty merely asked both the governments to inform each other of their stresses and strains of international politics, a condition which, say the Nepalis, India violated when she failed to inform them about developments in Tibet and on the Sino-Indian border. The treaty was not a defensive and offensive alliance and the Indian representatives brought no pressure upon the Rana Government to cede any special rights to India—not even the pressure of resurgent Nepali nationalism. It must be said to the credit of British diplomacy that Britain did not anticipate matters; she only followed Indian treaty with a similar one of her own.

The strangest phenomenon in Nehru's diplomacy is that it has tried to win and assert by mere declarations and verbal statements what it lost willingly in written and signed treaties. It shows the ambivalence of a liberal mind arraigned against a captive heart which can neither get rid of its compulsions to serve its narrow interests nor seize the opportunities to serve an ideology. Nehru's earlier statement of March 1950 declaring India's unilateral protection to Nepal was resented by the Nepalis as an enunciation of India's special rights. The Indo-Nepali treaty in July that year was a disclaimer of these supposed rights. Nehru's clarification of his stand in December that year sowed fresh confusions regarding the meaning of the treaty and India's intentions towards this kingdom.

"When we came into the picture", Mr. Nehru said, "we assured Nepal that we could not only respect her independence but see, so far as we could, that she developed into a strong and progressive country. *We went further in this respect than the British Government had done* and Nepal began to develop other foreign relations. Frankly, we donot like and shall not brook any foreign interfereance in Nepal. We recognised Nepal as an independent country and wish her well. But...*no other*

country can have intimate relationship with Nepal as ours is. We would like every other country to appreciate the intimate geographical and cultural relationship that exists between India and Nepal".¹ According to a columnist, these last words were a warning to the British Government reinforced by the unexpected support which India received from Washington.²

The Nepalis were decidedly not of the same opinion regarding their "intimate relationship" with India. The Indian Prime Minister's illusion was probably nursed by the role he was then playing in bringing the Nepali King and Prime Minister together. For in the meantime a 'liberation' movement against the Rana rule had taken to arms with the blessings of the hitherto captive King Tribhuvan. It was led by the Nepali Congress which had emerged in 1950 as a united front of nationalist forces. As King Tribhuvan took asylum in the Indian Embassy on 6 November 1950, later to be flown to New Delhi by the Indian government, the Nepali insurgents began their march from the Indian border, captured the *Tarai* and threatened to bomb Kathmandu. *The Nepal Government accused India of allowing the rebels to operate from the Indian soil and of interfering in Nepal's internal affairs*, but the Indian government stood by its recognition of King Tribhuvan (in India) as the supreme head of the state. When Nepali insurgents failed to capture Kathmandu, and were driven back, negotiations opened between the Nepal and India governments.

OPPORTUNITY AND COMPLUSION

IN FACT, THE "DRAMATIC MOVE ON THE PART OF KING Tribhuvan and the insurrection which followed it were both an opportunity and a compulsion for the Government of India to take a firm stand on the question of democratisation of the Nepalese regime."³ The weakness of the rebels and the isolation of the Nepali people was apparent from the fact that the rebellion nearly collapsed in two weeks, *despite the handicap imposed by India upon the Rana Government that it could not use Indian territory for movement of its troops*. Nehru advised the Nepal Government a middle way: to call an elected constituent assembly, from an interim government consisting of popular representatives and restore King Tribhuvan to the throne. Talks continued for two months after which King

1. Foreign policy debate in Parliament, 6 Dec 50, *Speeches II*, pp 176-7, emphasis added.

2. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

3. *ibid*, p. 19

Tribhuvan was accepted as an effective sovereign committed to a constitutional monarchy. Immediate formation of an interim cabinet on the basis of parity between Ranas and popular representatives and elections by 1952 were also agreed upon.

The above settlement was rejected by all the political parties of Nepal as falling short of a "complete transfer of power" to the people.¹ So the negotiations dragged on for another month between the representatives of the Nepali Congress and Rana Government, in the presence of the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, King Tribhuvan and the Indian Prime Minister. Ultimately, the Nepali Congress was persuaded to call off its operations and share fifty-fifty power with the Ranas in an interim government. King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu on 15 February 1951. Three days later the interim government was sworn in.

Thus began a new chapter in the history of Nepal which ended its medieval isolation and brought it to stand in the whirlpool of modern life. It was called a nationalist and democratic revolution of the first order at that time and so it seemed, but there were sharp observers even then who realised that logically, "what took place in Nepal was not a revolution".² It was not the first time in history that the interests of a King had collided with those of feudalism and the king had fought feudalism with the help of the people. The only difference between what happened in Nepal and similar episodes in world history was that the denouement had taken place in the second half of the twentieth century, that the Nepali leaders who hit the public eye were educated in modern schools of socialism and democracy, and that the ailing King, outside his realm, was aided in his counsels by a modern democratic government. Hence, the trappings of modern verbiage and the tremendous hopes aroused in India. To the simple and illiterate people of Nepal, inhabiting the different parts of His Majesty's mountainous realm, who were cut off from each other and from the world for want of means of transport and communication, the King had always possessed a divine right to rule the land of Pasupatinatha, a right which he had asserted *at his pleasure* once again to earn the title of the "Father of the Nation".

1. M. P. Koirala, Nepali Congress leader, described it on 10 Jan 51 in one word as "disillusionment". Quoted by K. P. Karunakaran, *India in World Affairs*, (1950-53), Oxford, pp 195.
2. Jain, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

On 18 February, in a colourful ceremony held at his palace, attended by Indian and British ambassadors, loyal nobility and popular leaders, His Majesty proclaimed amnesty to all persons guilty of political offences, many of whom had returned after years of exile, restored all property confiscated for such offences, promised the calling of a constituent assembly to draft the constitution of the state, and set up an interim government consisting of victorious leaders of the Nepali Congress, taking oath and helm of affairs forthwith. Renouncing the customary feudal form "to all the nobles, clergy, landowners, merchants, civil and military officers", he addressed directly "to our beloved people", a form signifying, to wit, that all the intermediary classes between him and the people lay thereafter at his mercy and would stay in the political arena *at his pleasure and command.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Tudor Revolution

DESPITE THE GREAT HOPES AROUSED IN NEPAL AND IN India by the 1951 Revolution—revolution undoubtedly it was of a major import, Nepal's democracy was not yet come. To appreciate the fate of Nepali democracy in subsequent years, we should examine the relationship of forces that led to the 1951 Restoration.

Under Ranarchy, Nepal was broadly divided into a landed nobility and an illiterate peasantry spread over isolated habitations and divided by tribal loyalties. Nepal's cottage-craftsmen (the Newars) plied their trade in Kathmandu and a few other towns, untouched by, and indifferent to, changes in government. The valiant classes in Nepal went out to join the British army and guard the Sovereign that paid liquid cash which came in handy to their dependents at home. The few Nepalis educated in India, if they did not belong to the nobility, had no option but to eke a living in exile rather than try their luck in the stagnant administration of their home country which paid them as little as it accorded them no safety from the uncertainties of a feudal-aristocratic power.

There are few large towns in Nepal ; even Kathmandu is a sprawling village by modern standards. Its nucleus is a crowded bazar surrounded by still more crowded lanes and hovels whose filth and monotony is broken by an equal number of amazingly carved temples and shrines, surrounded by numerous palaces concealing their revelries behind their high walls and dominating the adjacent fields which grow corn or vegetable under their shadow. Since Pasupatinatha would not allow his beloved vehicle, the sacred bull, to be harnessed under his stern gaze, these fields are tilled by a hand hoe, and the tiller unto this day stands in perpetual awe of the castle that overlooks his miserable piece of land.

NOBLE REVOLUTIONARIES

UNTOUCHED BY THE NORH WIND OR THE SOUTH, THE RANAS

could continue to rule indefinitely in the bowl of the Kathmandu valley but for their own interencine conflicts and the recurrent dreams of those sections of the nobility whom they had outmanoeuvred. The generations of the King's family, the *Shahas*, and of the family of the prime minister who preceded them, the *Thapas*, were born to be as resolute enemies of the Ranas as C-class Ranas born of concubines of the almighty prime ministers, but denied the privilege of sharing state power. In terms of economic power, the *Shahas*, the *Thapas* and the C-class Ranas had enough wealth to buy whole armies which could challenge any state power in Nepal.¹ The brahmin, exempt from death sentence by an old law, and more loyal to the King in memory of his ancestors who had sung praises of His Majesty, could provide leadership to an anti-Rana movement.²

The anti-Rana movement arose mainly in India among the few hundreds of educated rebels facing a blank future. It was led by brahmins and supported by the anti-Rana sections of Nepali nobility. Inside Nepal, following a discontent among C-class Ranas, Tanka Prasad Acharya had tried to organise in 1935 a *Praja Parishad* (People's Council) but, despite the support of the powerless King Tribhuvan, the party was firmly suppressed at its very first attempt of political activity in 1940. The Nepali rebels in India participated in the Quit India movement in 1942 and thereby established their links with the Indian socialists, notably Jai Prakash Narain and Ram Manohar Lohia, and with Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. When in 1946 they formed the Nepali National Congress in Banaras, their only support inside Nepal (supposedly) was Tanka Prasad Acharya, then in jail, whom they elected their president *in absentia*. It is typical of such emigre organisations formed without reference to the masses of people at home that within two years it was divided between B. P. Koirala and D. R. Regmi, the latter then gravitating towards communists to counter the former's socialism. What is more significant is that the two contending leaders were financed by two C-class Ranas, namely, Subarna Shamsheer and Mahabir Shamsheer respectively.³

1. Among the "democratic" leaders, General Subarna Shamsheer Rana, Bharat Shamsheer Rana, Mahabir Shamsheer Rana and several others are estimated to possess millions of rupees in property, stock and cash in India, Britain, France, Switzerland and the U.S.A.
2. Most 'democratic' leaders of Nepal, other than Ranas, Thapas and Shahas, are brahmins, such as the Koirala brothers, S. P. Upadhyaya, Tanka Prasad Acharya, Bhadra Kali Misra and D. R. Regmi.
3. Yami, *op. cit.* Incidentally, Dr. Regmi lost to B. P. Koirala his leadership in the Congress partly because his financier soon became bankrupt.

In 1948, another member of the nobility, Mahendra Bikram Shaha, was able to draw the bulk of the disgruntled C-class Ranas into the fold of an organisation called the Nepali Democratic Congress of which he became the President. He brought with him the secret and implicit support of King Tribhuvan and he was also the first to gather the support of Gurkha ex-service men by "coming out of the narrow circle of merely abusing the Ranas"¹ and giving a more positive nationalist orientation to the Nepali movement. Finally, when the Nepali National Congress merged with the Nepali Democratic Congress in March 1950, the resulting organisation, the Nepali Congress, became the rallying ground of all Nepali rebels in and out of Nepal. Its real strength, however, lay in the finances provided by the Ranas, though its apparent leadership went to the "socialist" Koiralas. In this coalition of the lame and the blind, the Nepali Congress elected not B. P., but M. P. Koirala as its President, because the latter, having worked as a district officer (*subba*) under the Rana regime, was more amenable to the financing Ranas than his doctrinaire step-brother. Mr. Regmi, who was even more of a "scholar", found no place in the Nepali Congress and had to be content with his own splinter flag of the Nepali National Congress.

The major strength of the Nepali political formation developing in India then lay in the finances of disgruntled Ranas and the moral support of the King. Among the masses, the only section it counted upon was of the educated Nepalis seeking administrative jobs, whom we might call the gentry, and some ex-service men looking out for adventure. The royal and feudal suspicions against B. P. Koirala's "socialism" were reflected at the outset in their choice of M. P. Koirala to head the new organisation, and the "family" feud between the two brothers, which was later fought at all levels, was an expression of the implicit conflict between the royalists and the republicans in the Congress party. On the other hand, the "socialist" leadership of the Nepali Congress could not convert it into a socialist party, but it prevented the non-socialist and purely democratic and nationalist elements from finding a significant place in the organisation.² The Nepali Congress thus could not become a full-fledged united front of all anti-Rana elements even during the course of its struggle and insurrection. In addition to Mr. Regmi, Dr. K. I. Singh had his own band of followers who refused to fight shoulder to shoulder with it.

1. *ibid.*
2. *ibid.*

The veteran nationalist leader, Mr. Tanka Prasad Acharya, released from prison after the Revolution, could not be wooed by the Nepali Congress leaders either and he revived his own Praja Parishad.

The people of Nepal did not count. If at all, they heard some rumblings in the suburbs of the capital, or in the marshes adjoining the Indian border, and they rejoiced in a change because they wanted, first and foremost, a rule of law wherein their life and property was no more invaded by arbitrary and rapacious nobles. As they loved and worshipped their King, they were shocked to know that all these years His Majesty had not been ruling at all over their hills and vales and that he was held in check by a usurper's rule of the sword. Little wonder then that they had suffered so much! They only nursed the hope that Restoration may bring some land reforms, some opportunity of education and employment to their growing children, and some more contact with the world beyond their forests and the mountains. They knew little about democracy and cared less.

There had been no agricultural revolution in Nepal. The restoration of monarchy was neither the result nor the cause of such a revolution. So there was no large-scale capitalist farming, no prosperous peasantry, no landless labour and certainly no proletariat or working class. There was not even a floating population of unemployed in the towns or countryside as all "vagabonds" and deserter "villeins" trekked to India to become sentries in Indian business houses or soldiers in the army. There had been no industrial or even a mercantile revolution in the country. We know that in the absence of waterways, rails, roads or communications, overland routes are hazardous, freights high and risks of trade numerous. Consequently, internal markets are small and primitive and foreign trade restricted to luxury goods.

There are few statistics of any kind available in Nepal till today. So an appraisal of her economy or class structure can not be made with scientific accuracy, but the only rich class in Nepal with some accumulated wealth has been the feudal nobility which invested its 'capital' in cash and stocks mainly in adjoining India. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that it was the nobility, particularly that section of it which bereft of state power was not preoccupied with statecraft, that controlled all the trade, commerce, urban property and the little manufacture the country possessed. This section of nobility

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in course of time grew strong enough to demand some elbow room to become more respectable and grow richer. It resented the curbs imposed by arbitrary Rana and monopolies exercised by the ruling clique and its courtiers and hangers-on. To this extent the nobility became 'progressive' but a partially (or mainly) feudal and partially urban propertied class of merchants could not take the place of an entrepreneurial middle class which "enlivens democracy," just as the non-working classes could not listen to the call of international socialism which Mr. B. P. Koirala claimed to represent. In addition, there was no civil service and no national consciousness as distinct from tribal loyalties. Whatever national cohesiveness the country possessed was symbolised in the person of the King.

MONARCHICAL REVOLUTION.

BY THEMSELVES THE NEPALI REVOLUTIONARIES IN EXILE could have achieved precious little in 1951, but the support lent them by the monarchy and 'left' nobility converted them into a viable force capable of fighting for, if not of winning, power. It robbed them, however, of sentimental patriotism and genuine idealism which must characterise all rebels in their initial stages. nobility injected its own experience of palace intrigue and manouvres into the national movement which needed self sacrificing pursuit of the cause for at least a decade to come. The revolutionaries, in fact, ceased to be revolutionaries even before they formed the government. They were merely politicians hoping for a new dawn in their country, once a new dawn had appeared on the Indian subcontinent.

The new pattern of power, therefore, was an uneasy compromise between the Rana feudal elements and the educated gentry. Subsequent events proved more poignantly that the political leaders were not in touch with the solid reality of their inaccessible country, save what they saw in Kathmandu, where all modern education and political and economic power was concentrated. During the next one decade too, political parties and leaders made little attempt to establish their living contact with the immense backlog of human mass which inhabited the mountain fastnesses of the sparsely populated countryside, and to exercise an educative influence upon them. This inert mass would, in the years to come, refuse to throw its weight on either side, while governments may come and go in the nation's capital.

Intelligent political observers in Nepal as well as in India did realise quite early that "Nepal had been pushed into an

experiment for which it was ill-prepared".¹ The feudal nobility henceforth was to be arraigned against agrarian reforms. The educated gentry which clamoured for recognition, and had sided with democracy, now swelled the ranks of courtiers to the King who held the balance between them and the feudal elements. For the same reason, and also because no political party in the post-insurrection period possessed any organised following throughout the kingdom, politicians too depended upon intrigue and manouvre to rise to power. The revolution was a failure "inasmuch as it could not wholly liquidate 'court politics'. Court politics, whether it was practised within the palace walls or beyond, could not give form to the feelings of the people."²

Truly, the Nepali Congress and its leaders had been "auxiliary forces of the King. He was in a position to discard the organisation and its leaders as soon as he had won access to the traditional instruments of power in the form of the army, the police and the administrative machinery." What had happened was that "For the first time since 1846, *the Council of Ministers was in theory as well as in practice responsible to the King.*"³ As was to be expected during the circumstances, political parties grew like mushrooms, a struggle for power broke out among the Nepali Congress leaders who had attained wealth and power too quick and at too little sacrifice, and mutual rivalries took the form of mutual recrimination rather than solid political work to rally the masses behind.

To sum up, the Nepali democratic movement was hollow from within. Despite its ambitions and profession of democracy, it had no base among the peasantry or the toiling masses. Its support among the nobility and middle classes was bound to prove chimerical as it was opportunistic, while it corrupted and divided the movement. It could not evolve a revolutionary democratic programme because of its alliance with the feudal forces. The monarchy returned as a powerful objective force claiming to be a symbol of unity and stability as the revolution had leaned on him from its inception. The Nepali Congress itself was divided among royalists and republicans since its birth and it failed to build itself into a broad and united democratic front of all the fighting elements. Needless to say that this was necessary in Nepal for a long time to come if any kind

1. Jain, Giri Lal, *India and China Meet in Nepal*, p. 27.

2. Thapa, Vishwa Bandhu, *National Guidance, Its Origin and Functions*, Dept. of Publications, H. M. G., Kathmandu, 1961.

3. Jain, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 8 ; emphasis added.

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of democracy dear to the nationalist-socialist leaders was to be achieved.

It is interesting to compare the situation in Nepal in 1951 with the rise of Tudor absolutism in England. According to a writer, "Henry VII, founder to the new monarchy was in the fullest sense a symbolic figure. Winning his kingdom by force of arms he consolidated it by the homespun qualities of thrift, cunning, diplomacy and double-dealing. The relative strength of the Crown and the nobility had been greatly altered to the advantage of the former. Henry had the support of the merchants, the clothiers, the town artisans, of all those who valued security and feared above all things the resumption of civil war. It is important to note that this support came from what we may begin to call the *rural bourgeoisie* as well as from the *middle classes in the towns*. With this support Henry was able to go forward steadily to destroy every possibility of opposition and to lay the foundations of a despotism that was to last a century. The Tudor monarchy rested on the fact that the bourgeoisie—the merchant classes of the towns and the more progressive of the lesser gentry in the country—was strong enough in the sixteenth century to keep in power any Government that promised them the elbow room to grow rich, *but not strong enough to desire direct political power*. Though relying on the bourgeoisie as their main supporters the Tudors made little use of Parliament..."¹ In Elizabethan settlement Protestantism assumed the form most compatible with the monarchy and with the system of local government created by the Tudors. Many of the nobles, observing how profitable Protestantism in England had been for their class, joined the party of the reformers.² In Nepal, nobles found it convenient to be constitutional monarchists or republicans.

STAPLE DIET

CONTRARY TO THE WISHES OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE, WISHES which were fondly transformed into expectations, the abortive revolution forebode no good to India or to Indo-Nepali relations. The Indian people and government, by aiding the Nepali rebels and King Tribhuvan, had created inveterate foes among the Rana nobles who owned huge fortunes not only in Nepal but also in property and cash in India and England. The revolution did not end their political power, nor did it touch their economic power. Very soon the Rana elements

1. Morton, A.L., *A People's History of England*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1951, pp 177-78.
2. *ibid*, pp. 196-7.

regrouped themselves to become a substantial political force in the shape of a political party of their own called the Gurkha Parishad. Soon enough the Nepali politicians were to run to their parlours for marriages of convenience. And while the Nepali rulers were to learn to live with them, or to subjugate them to their will (as the Indian government did with its own stately princes), they were to inject a strong dose of anti-Indianism in their political confabulations. It was duly observed by a Nepali writer that "the error of Indian policy" lay "in bringing about a compromise between the Rana and the democratic elements, which gave ample chance for the Rana element to come out freely against India".¹

But that was not all. In fact all politicians and adventurers out of power at a particular time, in times to come, were to live on a staple diet of "anti-Indianism" in the absence of better political programmes. Even the Nepali Congress veterans, upon whose friendship India banked most, had to take up an anti-Indian stand in order to rid themselves of the taint of pro-Indian sympathies. The democratic party formation and freedom of expression in Nepal led to this India-baiting because, like Pakistani rangers, the Nepali spokesmen too had nothing else to offer to their people. The overbearing and big brotherly attitude of some Indian counsellors, and their undiplomatic behaviour, provided the organism in which these viruses could grow in comfort. As early as 1951, it was rumoured in Kathmandu that the Indian advisers had taken over the administration and the Indian ambassador was interfering in the internal affairs of Nepal.²

The Indian government could not help these developments, probably because a compromise with the Ranas was inherent in the situation. But by and large, it failed to anticipate the developments and counteract vigorously and tactfully. For example, it might have changed the Indian ambassador to Kathmandu immediately after the Revolution since, having played a direct part in the parleys preceding the change-over, he was bound to become unpopular in Nepal both with the victors and the vanquished. He was liable too to err on the side of pomposity because of the better days he had seen vis-à-vis the commoners now participating in the government. It could have ceased providing grist to the anti-Indian mill by

1. Yami, *op. cit.*

2. It was widely believed in Kathmandu that the Indian ambassador managed to attend even cabinet meetings, let alone assume to himself the role of an arbiter between different factions of Nepali politics.

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insisting upon strict observance of protocol by all its representatives in Kathmandu. And it would be interesting to know whose bright idea it was that the Indian embassy in Kathmandu should be housed in the buildings of the former British Legation there.

What seem to be incidental errors to a cursory observer may indeed be expressions of the inner compulsions of governments as of individuals. We know now, for instance, that New Delhi did not "take it for granted that democracy or popular government was indispensable for Nepal", as it claimed latter¹. The Government of India wanted essentially a minimum of disturbance and the maintenance of a status quo in Nepal as elsewhere. Consequently, when called upon to play the role of a champion of democracy, it did so haltingly, halfheartedly and inefficiently. In addition, thanks to its inner compulsions, it might have found in the weakness of the Rana regime, as in the instability of post-Rana regimes, its opportunity to demand *continued loyalty* from Nepal governments. The fact that all the three parties to the 1951 drama, the Ranas, the King and the Nepali insurgents, had to take counsels of the Government of India should have bloated the sense of importance of the Indian advisers and convinced them that they had arrived on the Nepali scene. In nursing such a feeling they were blind to the historical perspective that, in the second half of the twentieth century, as it was impossible to limit Nepal's external relations, it was also increasingly impossible to 'advise' politicians who depended upon vote-catching devices in order to reach the Crown.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the universal expectation in India that the Nepali Congress leaders should be more pro-Indian than others, because of their Indian schooling, was bound to prove as illusory as the British hope to receive loyalty from every Harrow-trained Indian. When Indian commentators talked of the relationship or conflicts between India and Nepal as being of an "inter-family nature", they were wandering into the middle ages in which a horizontal division of society permitted kings and queens to form family relationships with the rulers of other domains. In modern times, nation-states, once constituted, have gathered their own momentum, inspiring their citizens to distinguish themselves from other nation-states and formulating policies which are in

1. New Delhi has not yet supported the liberalisation of regimes in Bhutan and Sikkim, though they are as steadily passing out of Indian tutelage as Nepal has done. See also footnote 3, p. 37.

the exclusive interests of the territory and people thus demarcated. The Nepali Congress leaders were rather expected to 'prove' their 'freedom' from an alleged pro Indian bias, and they lost no time in doing so. India's best friend in Nepal could only be the Indian government's own action and pronouncements.

LOGICAL CONCLUSION

TO REVERT TO THE STORY, THE RANA-CONGRESS COALITION could not sustain for more than nine months despite the best efforts the Indian Prime Minister to patch up their differences and bring about a new agreement and a reshuffle in cabinet in May-June 1961. The first cabinet thus fell in November after which the King called a single-party Nepali Congress Government to office headed by M. P. Koirala. Since the more powerful man in the Nepali Congress had been B. P. Koirala, the King's choice¹ led to the falling out of the step-brothers. M. P. Koirala was expelled from the Party and his government did not last more than eight months. Thus by August 1952, that is, within one and a half year of the "democratic" revolution, His Majesty the King was in saddle, ruling with the help of his Royal Advisers.

On the other hand, the parties not included in the new administration "logically" continued the struggle, demanding full powers to an all-party revolutionary government, minus the Ranas. Dr. K. I. Singh, called a "run-away shepherd, dacoit and murderer" swore to take the revolution to "its logical conclusion". He was arrested; he escaped. He was arrested again but was released by the guards. He called an armed insurrection on 23 January 1952, captured the Secretariat and proclaimed a parallel government. It was only because he lost precious time in fruitless negotiations that his revolt was suppressed, but he fled across the Himalayas in freezing winter, to Tibet, making himself a hero round whom legends are woven. He explains now that he did not march upon the Palace because of his great respect for the King who is the symbol of Nepali unity. Probably, he knew by his hindsight that the people would not have rallied behind another usurper to the Throne. He was to remain a nightmare to the Nepal Government for some time to come.

1. The King's argument was that M. P. Koirala was then president of the Nepali Congress, but he knew that M. P. Koirala did not carry a majority in the party. This was also apparent when MPK was expelled by the party.

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Two things need be noted in these developments. One that, though the Nepal Government did need the help of Indian armed constabulary to suppress the revolts, it was demonstrated that there was no force inside Nepal to ignore the power and prestige of the King ; the other that the King's deliberate action of ignoring the acclaimed leader of the Nepali Congress, namely, B. P. Koirala, reflected his choice of the royalists as against the republicans. If the King had so soon become aware of the conflict inherent between an absolute monarch and democratic aspirations, he certainly pushed the disintegration of the Nepali Congress afar and *made B.P. Koirala an uncompromising adversary of the Crown*. Again, it was evident that sporadic unrest in some parts of the country, but mainly in Kathmandu, could any day be handy to call a state of emergency and to tumble down cabinets, though it did not pose a threat to the Crown itself.

From the Indian point of view, it must be mentioned that as early as November 1951, when the King appointed M.P. Koirala as Prime Minister, the aggrieved group in the Nepali Congress (B. P. Koirala) blamed the Indian Ambassador for the King's decision.¹ Tanka Prasad Acharya accused India of imperialism and demanded opening of diplomatic relations with other "democratic" countries, notably, the Peoples's Republic of China. This was also a demand of K. I. Singh in his January 1952 charter where he had added that there be "no special ties with any particular country". It was but the first hint of the line that disgruntled political leaders were going to take with regards to India. Even by the end of 1951, India's standing in Nepal had been gravely undermined.

The travail of Nepal's democracy was thus extended from the start. Of the country's swift changing governments, and precarious law and order situation, we need speak here but briefly. When expelled from the Nepali Congress, M.P. Koirala formed his own party, called the National Democratic Party, and he seems to have won His Majesty so well that he was again called upon in June 1953 to head his own single-party government.

1. B. P. Koirala charged the Indian ambassador, C. P. N. Sinha, of meddling too much in Nepal's internal affairs, to which the latter made an arrogant reply that "We cannot remain completely disinterested towards political and economic developments in Nepal in the interests of our own security." Rumours were then rampant in Kathmandu that Nepal government was being controlled by India or that India had designs against Nepal's independence. See K. P. Karunakaran, *op. cit.*, p. 109. No one was more responsible than Mr. C.P.N. Sinha for spoiling Indo-Nepali relations in the initial years.

In September 1953, elections for the eighteen-member Kathmandu Municipality brought in the amazing result of the young and illegal Communist Party polling more than 50% votes and winning five seats against four each of the other two major parties, the Praja Parishad and the Nepali Congress, the one claiming to be the first to organise a freedom struggle in Nepal and the other claiming that it had won it. The Rana front Gurkha Parishad claimed one seat. In this first election ever held within Nepal, anti-Indian feeling was freely used as a vote-catching device and the result was un-nerving to most observers. Fear of Rana revival on the right and a spectre of Communism on the left haunted the social democratic leaders of Nepal throwing them into utter confusion. Now, more fearfully than before, they began to rely upon the Palace rather than upon the People. Since the Prime Minister's party had failed to win even one seat, he now sought to widen the base of his government. This was easy enough as there were any number of parties and leaders in Kathmandu sharing his predicament of being without a following but eager to get into power. On the third anniversary of the Revolution (18 February 1954), the fifth popular government of Nepal was sworn in, which was a coalition of Tanka Prasad Acharya (Praja Parishad), D. R. Regmi (Nepali National Congress) and Bhadra Kali Misra (People's Congress), under Prime Minister M. P. Koirala (National Democratic Party).

Even though inaugurated on such an auspicious day, this uneasy unity of splinter groups began to fall apart within six months. The ministry suffered successive defeats in the sessions of the Advisory Assembly which had been constituted with a comfortable majority for the parties represented in the government because leaders in government were unable to hold even their small followings. The cabinet could remain united for some time with the benefit of the persuasive powers of King Tribhuvan, but in October 1954, when His Majesty left for Europe for treatment, the ministry split into its dull colours, forcing M. P. Koirala to tender its resignation on 31 January 1955. On the fourth anniversary of the Revolution (18 February 1955), Crown Prince Mahendra was vested with all royal powers and he accepted the resignation of the Prime Minister on 2 March.

When King Tribhuvan breathed his last on 13 March 1955, the new King Mahendra began his rule with a five-man council of advisers.

The situation at the end of four years of King Tribhuvan's "popular" rule can be summed up as follows. There was a

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freer atmosphere in the country as a result of the Revolution and the people had the first taste of fundamental freedoms in their history but the extent of their frustration was in proportion to the high hopes which the Revolution had aroused since, during these four years, the country had moved no further. No step had been taken towards the long pending agrarian reforms, which alone would have given some material content to the ideologies professed by the leaders. The exchange value of Nepali coin had gone down. Administration had run loose and chaotic. Corruption and nepotism had become so widespread that few disagreed if the royalists or Ranaists sought a causal relationship between democracy and corruption. The Army, being trained by an Indian Military Mission, and its Supreme Commander, the King, remained the only factors guaranteeing the stability and integrity of the nation.

It may be recalled that in February 1951, when King Tribhuvan was restored to the Throne, he had promised elections to a *Constituent Assembly* by 1952. According to the Interim Constitution, passed by the Cabinet on 30 March 1951 and pronounced by His Majesty on 10 April 1951, the aim of the interim government was "to create conditions, as early as possible, for holding elections for the Constituent Assembly, which will frame a Constitution for Nepal." Faced with such hurdles as Nepal possessed,¹ this promise could not be fulfilled with the avowed speed and was bound to remain a pious wish for some years. However, it is significant that, in the scramble for power and partisan conflicts to enter the interim government (s), this promise was clearly forgotten even by the 'democratic' leaders. During the first months of the controversy between the Rana and Congress wings of the Cabinet, on 16 April 1951, the King had assumed the functions and powers of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Thereafter, the major occupation of both His Majesty and his 'popular' delegates had been ministry-making and assembly-making. Nonetheless, in his proclamation on 18 February 1954, while announcing some amendments to the Interim Constitution, King Tribhuvan reaffirmed his "sacred pledge" to proceed with "fair and independent elections" for a "Constituent Assembly".

One cannot help observe now that His Majesty could certainly have made more headway towards general elections than he did, even while indulging in the luxury of ministry-making as

1. Lack of the means of communication and transport, administrative and police force, inexperience, etc.

a sideline, if he had made it his first object. The interim governments undoubtedly lost every rationale of their existence by failing to pursue their chief task as prescribed by the Interim Constitution, namely, "to create conditions for holding elections for the Constituent Assembly". When the political parties were found slack, we may not blame the King for not moving fast towards calling a representative assembly into being. May be he was too unwell to undertake the burden upon his aching shoulders or probably he had been disillusioned too quickly about the calibre or sincerity of the acclaimed representatives of his people.

CONSISTENTLY MINE

WE MAY ALSO TAKE A LOOK AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEPAL'S external affairs and her relations with India. As early as April 1952, a Nepali government delegation met Mr. Nehru, and Indian experts in administration and planning were provided to Nepal. In the first week of September 1952, King Tribhuvan visited New Delhi and met, besides the Indian Prime Minister, the British, French and American ambassadors. In February 1953, a Nepali embassy was opened in Washington. On 19-22 July, Prime Minister M. P. Koirala visited Delhi and told pressmen on 25 July that, in addition to a million-rupee grants-in-aid to Nepal, India had agreed to transfer the excise duty levied in India on Nepali imports which came to another million rupees every year. On 11 December 1953, Tribhuvan Rajpath, an 82-mile vital road link between Amlekhganj and Kathmandu was declared open, built by Indian funds and army engineers.¹ By October 1955, as reported in the Consultative Council of Colombo Plan at Singapore, Nepal had received Rs. 85 million from India and about 2.5 million dollars from the USA.

Nevertheless, anti-Indian sentiment in Nepal, which began with suspicions against the Indian ambassador in 1951, continued to grow all these days. Although the Nepal Government sought Indian aid in several matters, every Indian gesture, including aids, military missions and experts, was misrepresented by Nepal's 'democratic' leaders. The Nepali Congress in March 1953 demanded a withdrawal of Indian experts in the interest of "healthy relations between India and Nepal". It was recalled that the Indo-Nepalese Trade Agreement of 1950

1. On 17 May 54, Indian government announced that the expenses incurred by India on Tribhuvan Rajpath were accomodated as an aid under the Colombo Plan. On 30 June 57, it was turned over to the Government of Nepal. Incidentally, there were bad feelings in Nepal over the quality of the road and differences over the route followed.

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(concluded with the Rana government) had been prejudicial to Nepali interests insofar as it stipulated levying of import-export duties on goods coming to or going through India, though the innocuous provisions of the agreement were only designed to prevent smuggling and to restrict foreign imports which involved a loss of Indian foreign exchange. Simple observers in India tended to attribute this growth of anti-Indian sentiment to communist manouvering, though the fact is that anti-Indianism was deep-rooted in the fear of India's encroachment upon Nepal's freedom and integrity. It was given substance by repeated enunciations of India's "special interests" in that mountain kingdom.

By the middle of 1955, Nepal had developed her external relations with the West, notably with the USA, apparently with the concurrence, if not the approval, of the Indian government. Chinese entry into Tibet did trouble the Nepal Government, but Prime Minister M.P. Koirala told pressmen on 3 May 1952 that Nepal's friendly relations with Tibet had in no way been impaired by Chinese occupation. The Chinese authorities, he said, had established "very cordial" relations with Nepali representatives and the tribute due to Nepal under the 1856 treaty had been paid. Neither Nepal nor China had taken initiative in establishing diplomatic contact, however, because on the part of Nepal, "the question was conditioned by financial considerations". Evidently, the Chinese were eager to keep the Nepalis in good humour, and the latter were careful to keep them at a respectable distance.

China's theoretical claims over Nepal were not unknown to Nepalis, so Nepal could not be eager to embrace the Chinese dragon even if the Chinese government were not Communist. Her reliance on India for protection against the Chinese, and against communism, was implicit in B. P. Koirala's statement in September 1952 that there was no possibility of a communist invasion, except in the event of an internal uprising, *because China was unwilling to antagonise the Indian government*. A month later, he feared that communism was "not a remote danger", because he claimed to possess information that Nepali communists were planning to occupy some mountainous areas for purpose of guerilla activity, though the Nepali communist party had been banned in January 1952. In May 1954, after India concluded the Tibet Agreement with China, the Nepali Foreign Minister flew to New Delhi and Nepal decided to establish police outposts on the northern border. Eighteen of the most strategic posts were manned by Indian "techni-

cians" at Nepal's request because of their "special training and greater experience", till such time as the Nepalis could "progressively" replace them when they became "trained for these duties".¹ Nepal Government, at the same time, was careful not to rub the Chinese the wrong way for it explained that the checkpoints were "responsive" to "similar establishments" existing on the Tibetan side of the border. By the same logic no checkpoints were needed on the southern border because none existed on the Indian side.

Thus, during the first four years of Nepal's newly won freedom, she was apprehensive of the Chinese and wished to keep them at a friendly distance. She also looked to India for her northern defences. This should have convinced Indians that Nepal's borders were no more vulnerable than India's own, without having to stress at every opportunity India's onerous burden and Nepal's key position in India's defences. This also refutes the mistaken notion that anti-Indian feeling in Nepal was spread by communists or Sinophiles, or that every outburst against India would necessarily throw Nepal into the arms of the Chinese communists. Anti-Indian feeling during that period, as at all times, was a function of political conveniences on the one hand and the Indian insistence on her old legacy on the other.

A change in Nepal's relations with China was inevitable after India's "regularisation" of her relations with China on Tibet and her advice to Nepal to do the same. The Nepali Prime Minister, M. P. Koirala, met Mr. Nehru both before and after the latter's visit to China in October 1954 to learn from Nehru's experiences and to evolve a common foreign policy. It is symptomatic of India's pathetic obsession with Nepal that, despite adverse reactions to Nehru's statements on Nepal made four years back (March and December 1950) and despite the push they gave to anti-Indian sentiment in that country, the Indian Prime Minister again proclaimed in his press conference on 13 November 1954 that "...so far as Nepal is concerned, it is a well-known fact—and it is contained in our treaties and other agreements with Nepal—that we have a *special position* in Nepal, not interfering with their independence, but not looking with favour on anybody else interfering with their independence either."

1. This was decided upon by the then Home Minister, Tanka Prasad Acharya, who was later accused of being pro-China. Disclosed by Nehru in his press conference in Kathmandu on 15 Jun 59.

Tudor Revolution

“You will remember” Nehru continued, “that before India became independent, Nepal was not independent in any reality. It was very much under the British Government, not internally, I mean, but in regard to external factors. When we became independent, we went much further in recognising the independence of Nepal *than the British Government had done*, but it was even then—and this was before the change in Nepal when the old Rana regime was still there—India’s *special position in regard to foreign affairs in Nepal* was recognised. As for diplomatic relations between Nepal and China, that is a matter which the Nepalese Government no doubt will deal in its own way”.¹

This statement, bristling with contradictions, contained enough material to provoke the irate Nepali sensitive about his country’s equality in the comity of nations. Undoubtedly, Nepal was under the hegemony of the British Government in India but independent India could have done better by renouncing her imperial preferences as a matter of principle rather than as charity towards her weaker neighbour. Nehru recalled that India’s special position was recognised by the Rana regime, “before the change, in Nepal”, but he forgot that it was precisely this change, which India had helped come about that had made all the difference. The “democratic” revolution had not only spelt the doom of archaic feudalism and autarchy in Nepal ; it had also put an end to foreign dependence, but what was willingly subscribed to in technical and economic matters. Again, while insisting that India still had a “special position in regard to foreign affairs in Nepal”, Nehru at the same time disowned his interest in Sino-Nepali relations by stating that the Nepali government could deal with its diplomatic relations with China in its own way.

It is sometimes said that India’s policy in Nepal has been “bedevilled by lack of consistency”. Far from it. One finds a strange consistency in the Indian government’s attitude towards all the Himalayan states, despite the fact of fast changing circumstances which demanded a review of our policies. We often speak of the changing reality of the Afro-Asian scene which the West is unable to appreciate, but we forget that Nepal (or other neighbouring countries) are equally a part of

1. During the press conference, a correspondent remarked that Mr. Nehru, during his visit to China, was reported to have achieved China’s agreement that Nepal was in India’s sphere of influence. Mr. Nehru’s reply that India had a special position in Nepal seemed to confirm the correspondent’s view. It is evident that China had not agreed to this and Mr. Nehru was grossly mistaken if he thought so.

that change. As older people refuse to measure the toddlers of yesterday afresh, the "great-nation awareness" of Indian nationalists blinds them towards the newly acquired "greatness" which the meanest of individuals and nations now claim as a corollary of the principle of equality. Consistently, Indian attitude towards Nepal has been that of 'feeling' her special rights and interests and fighting a rearguard action to preserve them at a time when they were washed out by the march of history.



CHAPTER FIVE

Still Birth of Democracy

THE NEW KING BELIEVED IN AN ACTIVE ROLE FOR HIMSELF : the state of his country provided ample justification for his belief. He also indicated early the lines on which his mind was working. Within two months of his accession to power, in the second week of May 1955, he called a convention of political, religious and social organisations, inviting all and sundry to help him decide the future set up of the country. The Convention was boycotted by major political parties and the King, pouring scorn on these parties, declared that *he would not allow the country to be ruined in the name of democracy*. Nonetheless, the Convention demanded preservation of the democratic form of government and early general elections to end the continuance of direct rule. These, it was promised, would be held by October 1957, but a new controversy was injected into the march of democracy. Constitutional pundits discovered that there could not be two sovereignties in the country, namely, the King and the Constituent Assembly, for indeed the source of all power could either be Lord Pasupatinatha and His nominee, the King, or the People and their elected delegates. And so long as the 'real' people in the country preferred divine dispensation, there was no need to hasten the 'people' from democratic text-books to impinge upon the political arena. During the first three years of King Mahendra's rule, the demand for a Constituent Assembly died a natural death, having no one in Nepal to fight for it¹.

Truly, the question of double sovereignty was not more legal hair-splitting; it involved a deeper question of the source of political power and sanctity of human institutions. Through-

1. The Praja Parishad advocated a parliament. The Nepali Congress called the argument of "two sovereignties" more academic than real, but ultimately veered round to the idea of the parliament. How real this difference was, was shown later.

out the middle ages, absolutism of monarchs was diluted by the oligarchy of nobility on the one hand and church or religious authority on the other. The divine right of Moghul emperors in India, for instance, was the result of the decline of the elective principle of the Delhi Sultanate and the eclipse of the Caliphate. It was based upon a balance of forces which gave it the consistent support of powerful classes such as the merchants and landed gentry against the rapacious nobility. Nepal's monarchy in 1951 emerged as a force to protect the gentry from the arbitrariness of Ranachy. Like Tudor absolutism, it was "an absolutism by consent". In England, "the divine right of kings was squarely opposed to, and finally broken upon, the divine right of private property". In twentieth century Nepal, the monarchy, far from being opposed to private property, returned as the only guarantee of the sanctity of private property. Consequently, there was no class which could oppose it consistently. The concept of a *fundamental law which stood above the Crown* had to arise before the monarchy could be challenged successfully. The monarchy was soon to demonstrate that it was the source and guardian of such a fundamental law (of property and its unhindered enjoyment) and that "people" were not to be invoked in its defence. It is no wonder then that the people's representatives thought it futile to fight for the mere principle of people's sovereignty.

Before hastening to instal a new cabinet, King Mahendra addressed himself to the task of modernising his administration. The state machinery was growing inadequate to the complexity of national life. The question was who would create and control the new state apparatus that was needed. King Mahendra reorganised government machinery and laid the foundation of an independent civil service in young but energetic hands; incidentally, it meant the appointment of persons who enjoyed his confidence in key positions in the Secretariat. He improved the efficiency of the police force and set up a judiciary independent of the executive. For democracy (or republicanism) a new state apparatus had to be created not around a council responsible to the King but around a cabinet responsible to Parliament, and having a new and more adaptable system of finance and local government. Here the new state apparatus was built by the King before a responsible Parliament or Cabinet came into being and its system of finance and local government was entirely dependent upon the King.

During the first month of his rule, even before his formal coronation, he showed that he meant business and his business

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primarily was a stronger administration under his direct tenteilage.

King Mahendra was not unmindful of economic problems either. He established a state bank and prepared a plan of economic development. On 2 September 1955, a Royal Proclamation laid down a thirteen point programme for land reforms and promised that a complete tenancy bill on their basis was being drafted. It prescribed that landlords could not demand more than half the produce as rent, or more than 10% interest on loans or arrears from the tenants. They could also not demand additional revenue in cash or kind for religious festivities and tenants were not to offer the traditional feudal presents or homage to their masters. Demanding of such presents was to become an offence and landlords were required to give receipts for all transactions. No land could remain fallow for more than three years and while a tenant could not sublet his land without the permission of the landlord, he could not be ejected from it if he had tilled it for at least two years. A cooperative body of tenants and landlords was to be set up to help the tenants in distress. The Proclamation announced taxation on land for the first time in Nepal's history. It was proposed that land holdings yielding an income of more than Rs. 3,000 annual would be subjected to a tax varying from 5% to 27½%, the maximum to be paid by those whose income exceeded Rs. 45,000.

The other thing he started was the opening of diplomatic relations with China. On 26 July 1955, the Chinese Ambassador in India opened negotiations with the Royal Nepalese Government in Kathmandu. On 1 August, a joint declaration affirmed *panchsheel* and decided upon an exchange of diplomatic representation. Dr. K. I. Singh's asylum in China must have figured in the talks because, on 2 September, he with his 27 followers was handed over by the Chinese and they were granted royal amnesty on a promise of eschewing violence. Dr. Singh, at any rate, appeared to have returned more anti-communist than he could possibly be when he fled to China.

After doing this, in October 1955, the king initiated talks with political leaders for the formation of a new cabinet. It appeared to be an act of grace because the political parties "were not strong enough to exact such a concession from the King"¹ The gesture was, however, short-lived because His Majesty wanted a cabinet without a prime minister, and a cabinet composed of his nominees selected from the working

1. Jain, *op cit.*, p. 48

committees of the parties concerned. The talks having broken down, he invited Tanka Prasad Acharya, *in his personal capacity*, to form a new ministry on 27 January 1956. Earlier, on 14 December 1955, he promulgated the Nepal Civil Liberties Act, which guaranteed freedom from trespass and “no taxation without legislation.”

ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS

THE BEGINNING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CHINA MARKED a new turn in Indo-Nepali relations. Mr. Acharya's appointment as prime minister came in its wake, though there are no known facts to suggest that he was responsible for these or subsequent developments. What is more logical to assume is that, as M.P. Koirala had been the favourite of the late King Tribhuvan, King Mahendra found in Tanka Prasad Acharya a more pliable instrument of his policy, if indeed His Majesty's choice of the man was not entirely fortuitous.

With the establishment of normal diplomatic relations with China, a lessening of the fear of communism was unmistakable. The ban on the Communist Party was lifted on 15 April 1956 and, three months later, diplomatic relations were established with the U.S.S.R. On 23 September 1956, a Sino-Nepali Treaty of Friendship and Trade marked the “normalisation of Nepal's relations with China with regard to Tibet”. Like India, Nepal surrendered her claims upon Lhasa and decided to pull her troops out from Tibet.¹ Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya called it a “historic event in trans-Himalayan relations” and declared that Nepal had no border dispute with China.² Three days later, he was in Peking where he obtained on 7 October 1956, on the basis of *panchsheel*, an economic aid of sixty million Indian rupees from the Chinese, with no Chinese technicians attached and without approval of specific projects. In January 1957, Premier Chou En-lai returned the visit to Kathmandu and called Nepalis and Chinese “blood brothers” whose relationship “nothing can poison”.³

1. The last Nepali soldier was withdrawn from Tibet on 18 March 57.
2. Statement at Calcutta *en route* Peking on 22 Sep 56. *AR* 1956, p. 1071. This was three years before the Sino-Indian border dispute flared up and came before the Indian people. It shows that the Nepal government was then aware of the border dispute between India and China, and its neutral attitude towards it was a foregone conclusion. We wonder whether the Indian government took note of this statement. At least the Indian commentators did not.
3. Reply to civic address at Kathmandu, 26 Jan 57, *AR* 1957, p. 1301.

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In anticipation of these developments, or may be to prevent them, the Indian government had announced in August 1956 that it was willing to give aid of a hundred million rupees (or more) to Nepal, as the latter intended to introduce planning. While Nepal was preparing to set up a Planning Commission at the opening of the year 1957, India promised, under a tripartite agreement between India, Nepal and the U.S.A. on 2 January 1957, Rs. 50 million to be spent in the next five years on building 900 miles of roads. On 14 April, the Nepal Government sanctioned an initial sum of Rs. 50,000 towards construction of a road to be called Mahendra Rajapetha, from Dhulikhel to an undisclosed point on the Tibetan border. By a separate U.S.-Nepali agreement on 31 May 1957, 1.88 million dollars were contributed by the U.S.A. for various development projects. Closely following it on 29 June, another tripartite agreement with India and U.S.A. provided 1.35 million dollars for telecommunication development. On 6 January 1958, a third such agreement brought 5 million dollars from the U.S.A. and 1.9 million dollars from India to be spent on road-building.

The reaction of Indian commentators to Nepal's hands across the Himalayas was one of fear, suspicion and disapproval.¹ The demand for opening of diplomatic relations with China, they thought, had arisen due to a decline in India's standing and suggested that it was indicative of a new trend in the thinking and approach of Nepali rulers. Tanka Prasad Acharya, noted for his anti-Indian utterances earlier, came in particularly for criticism. He was supposed to have a pro-China bias born of his anti-Indian prejudice and his appointment was seen as a result of His Majesty's northern orientation. Mr. Acharya was held responsible for lifting the ban on the Communist Party and for trying to establish diplomatic contacts with Pakistan.

All this was misinformed criticism because at no time since 1951 was a prime minister wholly responsible for the policies pursued by the Nepal Government and His Majesty had not gone communist.² The Nepal Government had merely sought to restore, regularise and extend her contacts with its formi-

1. The Indian press discreetly criticised the acceptance of Chinese aid and hinted that New Delhi would have liked prior consultation because the latter was willing to grant as much as Nepal got from China. It is disclosed in a Nepal Government pamphlet, *Nepal-China, A story of Friendship*, that China first offered aid on 7 Feb 56, that is, soon after a 'popular' ministry was ushered in.
2. This is apparent in Acharya's statement on his resignation that he could not fulfil the "demands of the people" without "greater homogeneity and efficiency" in the government and administrative machinery."

dable northern neighbour, *after* India had done the same, in exercise of its sovereignty, because in Mr. Nehru's own words, external affairs were a key to a nation's sovereignty.¹ Mr. Acharya's sole crime had been that in May 1956, he approached the Indian government for a revision of the 1950 trade treaty but the trade talks between the two governments, held in January 1957, brought no fruitful result.

It may also be noted, in passing, that most indigenous Nepali leaders appear to be blissfully impervious to, if not ignorant of, all political ideologies, other than one of simple nationalism, of which the King is the king-pin. If a Tanka Prasad Acharya or K. I. Singh appeared to be crude in his militancy, we should yet credit them with a shrewdness native to all politicians which would save them from being Chinese agents even as Indian exiles who took the help of Nazi Germany were not German agents.

When Mr. Acharya was forced to resign in July 1957, a Royal Proclamation said that the outgoing Prime Minister had indicated his inability to hold the elections at the scheduled date. Mr. Acharya, on the other hand, accused New Delhi for engineering his fall because the Government of India, he said, had not liked his acceptance of Chinese aid, or opening of diplomatic relations with the USSR. Here is an instance of a politician catching the very straw which was thrown in the wind to blind him and it provided a self-fulfilling hypothesis to Indian commentators.

From the King's point of view, Nepal's relations with both India and China were indeed so good that he invited the now respectable, yet enigmatic and doubtful, K. I. Singh² to form a government on 26 July 1957. He, in his turn, met Nehru on 5 August and expressed support for the Indian stand on Kashmir question on which his predecessors had maintained strict silence. He also tried to mollify Indian feelings by damning Mr. Acharya for his trip to and agreement with China. He accused him of being anti-Indian and pro communist and of having resolved to improve relations with China in order to

1. Nehru said on 6 Dec 50, "The test of the independence of a country is that it should be able to have relations with other countries without endangering that independence" and since Nepal's foreign relations, during the British period, were strictly limited to India, Nepal's independence was "only formal."
2. His opponents in India continue to doubt his bonafides and fear that he is a "crude Ho Chi-minh." See 'New Chapter in Nepal', *TI*, 6 Aug. 59.

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counter Indian influence. Mr. Singh's charges against Tanka Prasad Acharya should have pleased Indian observers but he was only playing to the gallery. His attempts at winning favour with India were negated soon by his advocacy of an isolationist policy of not accepting aid from any country *including India*. He invited the active hostility of other political leaders by setting up a commission to inquire into misappropriation of government funds during the last six years. To the King, he made himself suspect by proposing drastic changes in the administrative personnel and by attempting to draw the army more under his direct control. Consequently, he was thrown out of office in a hundred days, before he had an opportunity to cut himself a new military uniform to suit the more temperate Kathmandu valley compared to the rigorous climate of his own home town in the mountains. Out of office, he charged that American intrigues had compelled him to resign.

In June 1958, King Mahendra visited the U.S.S.R. where he signed a joint *panchsheel* communique with President Voroshilov, accepting Soviet aid. In February 1959, a Soviet technical mission visited Kathmandu in connection with the proposed aid. On 24 April 1959, the Soviet-Nepalese economic and technical aid agreement was signed which provided for Russian equipment and consultants for a hydro-electric plant, a sugar refinery and cigarette factories, a hospital in Kathmandu, as well as surveys for road constructions. On 30 April in the presence of Prime Minister Nehru, His Majesty laid the foundation stone at Hanumansagar for Kosi barrage, the biggest in India costing Rs. 170 million to help both India and Nepal control that river of sorrow and generate power. The same month Nepal took over administration of its international postal service and issued its first internationally recognised postage stamp. She had been admitted to the Universal Postal Union in the preceding year.

Nepal had thus advanced step by step towards the extension of her foreign relations, and she had in an equal measure grown more self-reliant. The anti-Indian feeling persisted because the Nepalis were not thankful for Indian solicitude in promising more aid as a substitute for what they expected from China. They again interpreted it as an unwarranted limitation of their sovereignty and accused Indian experts working in their country of displaying a big brotherly attitude. It is clear that India took Nepal's playing a second fiddle to her as a corollary to India's unilateral responsibility for the defence of the Indian subcontinent south of the Himalayan peaks but what was

taken for granted in New Delhi was rejected by Kathmandu as soon as it was assured of a friendly border in the north. The Nepalis now regarded the Indo-Nepali trade treaty of 1950 as an obstacle in the development of their international trade.

TEETHING TROUBLES

AT HOME, DURING THESE CRITICAL YEARS, THE POSITION OF THE Crown had been immeasurably strengthened. It had skilfully used the internal feuds among self-acclaimed political leaders and thoroughly discredited as well corrupted them by allowing them brief spells of glory. The governments and leaders that followed 1951 were to be judged by the people by their achievements in land reforms and the development of a modern administrative and judicial machinery. This was done in the following years by the King rather than by popular ministers. If the latter were prevented by the King from taking any initiative, and if they were allowed too little time to achieve much, it was their mistake to have accepted the burden of government. Their blunder lay in being more 'palace-bound' than 'people-bound.' In accepting the role of being royal instruments they ceased to be instruments of the people.

The King firmly integrated all the instruments of power and administration under his direct command. In February 1957, following a pronouncement by the Supreme Court of Nepal that the King could not exercise legislative powers and was limited in the exercise of executive functions, a Royal Proclamation reaffirmed the Royal prerogative over the supreme executive, legislative and judicial authority: the authority which was delegated to prime ministers (Ranas) more than a century ago was thus resumed by the King. The Supreme Court ceased to be the highest court of justice and could not issue writs in certain matters. The ministers came to be appointed by the King and were to hold office *at his pleasure*. The directive principles of state embodied in the Interim Constitution were declared nonjusticiable and the Public Safety Act, Kathmandu Commission and Magistrates Act, exceptions to which were taken by the Supreme Court, were revalidated.

A United Front, constituted by the Nepali Congress, Nepali National Congress and the Praja Parishad in August 1957 demanded elections within six months and launched an agitation in December. But the agitation collapsed within ten days. It was suspended on 17 December 1957 when the King announced that elections would be held in February 1959, and was latter withdrawn. A typical illustration of the confusion reigning in the minds of political leaders: Dr. D. R. Regmi

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called the announcement of the date of elections as "a victory both for the Maharajadhiraja (Crown) and the People".

In February 1958, His Majesty announced his decision to form a ministry without a prime minister and appoint a commission of seven to prepare a constitution providing for a parliament. He also said that the Election Commission would be reconstituted. A new government was formed on 15 May which included among others the Nepali Congress for the first time since 1952, signifying that the Congress had reconciled its differences with the King.¹ An Advisory Assembly of 85 members was also constituted in November on the basis of nominees elected from the districts. On 3 June, the People's Representation Act was promulgated. Barely a week before the elections, on 12 February 1959, the King gave Nepal her first constitution, which had been drafted by the Constitution Commission and approved by the ruling cabinet. The first general elections in Nepal were held between February-April 1959.

There were several hurdles in the conduct of free elections. Remote but vital areas were for all practical purposes removed from central authority by an impossible terrain of virgin peaks and unsullied tracks with few roads and means of communication. At the request of the Nepal Government, Indian and British signaller units established a countrywide network of wireless communication to clear government traffic so that the administration and Election Commission could effectively supervise the elections and timely apprehend foul play or breach of peace in the 40,000 booths spread over 109 constituencies in 33 districts. The country had a shortage of man-power and trained personnel, and the administrative machinery was being increasingly entrusted to the few educated, inexperienced but enthusiastic, young men. For 45 days, these officials worked overtime to supplement the understaffed Election Commission. Six hundred temporary police, in addition to the entire police force, was put exclusively on election work, while the military was drafted for normal police duties in the state. The Commission used all the media of mass communication to educate the illiterate masses in the principles and procedures of elections. The elections were not marred by any violence or untoward incident though there were people (K. I. Singh) who later challenged their fairness.

1. The Nepali Congress justified the reversal of its stand with regard to constituent assembly on the plea that it wanted to remove the 'reactionaries' between the King and democratic forces by offering cooperation to the King. Unfortunately, the Congress did not bear this realistic understanding after the elections.

The elections belied all political pundits and returned the Nepali Congress as a single majority party in the Parliament with 74 out of 109 seats. In all 864 candidates had contested, but out of the nine parties contesting, three did not secure a single seat, the two parallel Praja Parishads (Acharya and Misra groups who contested as separate parties) secured only two and one seat respectively (out of 45 and 40 they contested) and the United Democratic Party of Dr. K. I. Singh got only five out of the 90 it contested. Almost all the top leaders of the country, the firebrand K. I. Singh, the scholar D. R. Regmi, the much misunderstood Tanka Prasad Acharya, the quiet and confident Bhadra Kali Misra, and the 'strong man of Nepal', the reticent and shrewd Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, fell at the polls because they had been in a hurry to be at the helm of affairs. The energetic B. P. Koirala survived other pillars of various parties (not excluding his own) because he had bided his time when the waiting was good. The elbowing for power had dearly cost the popular leaders of Nepal. The robust common sense of the illiterate masses was evident from the fact that only five independents, out of the 325 who contested, got elected; their urge for stability apparent in their rejection of Dr. K. I. Singh and his like. The young Communist Party, banned sometime back, contested 48 seats and won four. At a result of the elections, only three parties remained important in the political life of Nepal: the rightist-revivalist Gurkha Parishad, the republican-socialist Nepali Congress and the left Communist Party.¹

1. The results were as follows:

<i>Party</i>	<i>Seats contested</i>	<i>Seats won</i>
Nepali Congress	108	74
Gurkha Parishad	85	19
Praja Parishad (Acharya group)	45	2
Praja Parishad (Misra group)	40	1
United Democratic Party (K.I. Singh)	86	5
Nepali National Congress (D. R. Regmi)	22	0
Communist Party	48	4
Tarai Congress	21	0
Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha	70	0
Independents	339	4

The Nepali Congress secured 37.2% and the Communist Party 7.4% of the total votes. The total number of votes secured by 4 major parties were as follows:

Nepali Congress	660,621
Gurkha Parishad	305,000
Communist party	130,000
United Democratic party	117,000

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One important reason for the failure of other parties and this welcome simplification of the parliamentary scene was the similarity between the election manifestos of various parties. All of them stood by constitutional monarchy, advocated abolition of *birta* (rent-free grants of land), landlordism, vassal system and agrarian reforms with varying emphasis. Even the Gurkha Parishad promised equitable distribution of land. The Communist Party demanded state-owned industries in addition (which had little appeal for the people until there was some industry in the country) but had not much to add to home policy. In foreign policy, it advocated closer relations with China and India (which was accepted by the Nepali Congress), banning of *private* foreign investment and revision of the 'unequal' trade pact¹ with India. In its 13-point programme, the Nepali Congress promised (with the profitable experience of India) a socialistic pattern of society, but by stages, since the country was not yet ripe for immediate and full implementation of reforms. Even the religious slogans of the United Democratic Party (abolition of cow-slaughter, banning of conversions) failed to appeal. The negative slogan of the Communist Party (defeat the revivalists and reactionaries) made the people vote for the anti-Rana Nepali Congress whose more positive slogan, "Go to the village, look to the village" was as effective as the election symbol (two bullocks) of the Indian National Congress. Nepal was not going red or pink so soon but a more imaginative appeal by Communist to the masses might have helped.

Ultimately "the party which was primarily responsible for the overthrow of the autocratic Rana regime had been entrusted by the electorate with the task of consolidating the gains of the Revolution. A new chapter had opened in the history of Nepal."²

THE ILLUSORY GAIN

SO IT SEEMED, BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE. THE WEAKNESSES OF democracy lay hidden behind a facade of forms and words that hit the public eye but they could be discovered by an analysis of the Nepali scene. We have discussed earlier that the 1951 revolution had come about primarily as a result of a conflict between the King and the feudal nobility and that Nepali democracy had no class basis to support it. Eight years after the revolu-

1. The catching nature of this slogan is apparent from the fact that, soon after the elections, B. P. Koirala promised a revision of the trade pact with India.
2. Jain *op. cit.*, p. 77

tion, the supporters of the Nepali 'democrats' were still the same, albeit in depleted numbers and reputation, namely, a section of the wealthy nobility, some educated Nepalis and small businessmen and adventurers on the Indo-Nepali border.

The restoration equalised, as it were, the two sections of the nobility who were for and against the Rana regime in the pre-1951 period. They were both out of power and they had their wealth untouched. While elbowing for power among themselves and in the parlours of the King, they supported parliamentary forms and administrative reform because they did not want the King to go absolute and dictatorial but they liked to delay, soft-pedal or obstruct agrarian reform as long as they could. Even if a Bharat or Subarna had amassed enough fortunes in India to bear the passing away of Nepali feudalism with equanimity, they were neither too eager to hasten this process nor had the tact and imagination to fight for it. Consequently, neither of the two parties of the left and right feudal lords could expand its base among the Nepali peasants and prepare for the complete abolition of feudalism.

Among the educated petit bourgeois classes—job hunters, professionals and small traders, or among the adventurist lumpen class, a majority found its aspirations fulfilled by the new setup irrespective of the advent or negation of parliamentary democracy. The political leaders on their part, too greedy to come into power and failing to acquire popular support, lacked the wisdom to build a broad united front in order to fight for their objectives. While their aim was to attain a constitutional monarch of the British type, they surrendered the people's right to frame a constitution without demur, forgetting that the British constitution and parliamentary practices were a result of centuries of evolution during which the people had fought their King and nobility with vigilance and sacrifice. By and large no party in Nepal stood clearly for the fundamental right of the people to govern themselves and to convene their representative body to frame the laws of the realm. Most political leaders shamefacedly lined up with the King against the demand of a constituent assembly even towards the end of 1957, when it was feared that His Majesty intended to become an absolute monarch, or that he was trying to build his position "on a threat of force and undemocratic practices."¹ Even the Nepali Congress suffered regressions in the path of democracy without putting up a stout opposition.

1. Policy statement of Democratic Front, 15 Aug 57.

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In English democracy, the monarch is a nominal head of the state, a symbolic object of colour and pageantry, who will please but not offend. In Nepal, when Dr. K. I. Singh declared in September 1957 that monarchy was still a necessity, he was merely giving recognition to the fact that the people of Nepal were not sufficiently strong or enlightened to govern themselves. So did other leaders privately and in their own counsels even though they sometimes warned that "the monarchy will lose its popular and eventually political basis."¹ During the eight years that elapsed between the Restoration and the First General Elections the political leaders had shown little talent of leadership of resistance, administration or tact. They had surrendered their courage and sagacity to the King on more than one occasion. When they were busy building their new apartments in Kathmandu or in Patna and Calcutta, King Mahendra had renounced his love of poetry and had put his shoulders to the task of becoming a real leader of his slowly awakening people. He had toured the country extensively and made personal contacts with the heads of almost all important states in the world. He had shown on the one hand that the aims of a modern democratic government, as announced by one of his 'popular' prime ministers,² namely, "reorganisation of administrative machinery, speedier justice, efficient secretariat, new farming, small scale industry", etc., could be advanced with or without representative government; on the other, he had conferred the parliament upon the people as an act of grace. If it was due to his better manouverability and shrewdness, it is merely to beg the point that the Nepalis had failed to fight for democracy consistently and courageously.

In short, the King's prestige was never so high as in 1959 and, amidst changing governments and insecure conditions, he had acquired a role of guiding democracy. He had proved his capacity to usher in modernisation and bourgeois democratic reforms with a mixture of autocratic and democratic measures. A monarchy draws its strength from the twin factors of backwardness of the people and the credit given for some act of service done to the nation. The monarchy in Nepal confirmed in those eight years that it was the only element of national unity and stability. Nepal could not be divided between the left and the right or be ruled by a bandit dictator, said the enthusiasts of the Crown, so long as the incarnation of Visnu, now become a "citizen king," was safe in Narayana Hitti

1. *ibid.*

2. Tanka Prasad Acharya, 29 Jan 56.

(the palace). Finally, in actual practice, the willing help and advice of the ever watchful and apprehensive Government of India could be sought when internal danger threatened the stability of the *king-dom*, while the same could be ignored and spited by “popular” clamour when it became too obtrusive.¹

CHARITY WITHOUT SUBSTANCE

THE PROOF OF THE ABOVE FACTS LAY IN THE CONSTITUTION which the King gave in 1959 and which was approved by his popular ministers. Practically every clause of the Constitution was hemmed in by phrases such as “at the pleasure of His Majesty, in his discretion”, and limited by his recommendation, satisfaction, prescription and approval. If these meant his ‘desire or will’, few clauses in the Constitution could operate without his will and “parliament could at best be an advisory body giving the benefit to His Majesty of reflecting the relationship of forces in the country.” It gave the the King discretionary powers over legislation and executive *in normal times*, and “during emergency, the entire functions of the state were at his pleasure excluding the supreme court which, however, would have no work to do since the fundamental rights and the constitution, in part or in whole, would be at the mercy of His Majesty.” Charitable critics only hoped that “the King’s wilfulness would be subject to the unambiguous wishes of the Parliament and his *pleasure and discretion* would be discreetly applied to ascertain the genuine wishes of the people and their representatives, and the obvious needs and interests of the nation in its march to full democracy and welfare state.” Nonetheless, it was evident that “the character of the constitution, and the conventions of its working, were being determined by the relative sincerity, adroitness and courage of the two parties to this drama—the monarch and the people’s representatives, who were sometimes in agreement to enhance the power of the Executive as a safeguard against the unreliable masses, and at other times in disagreement over the extent of absolutism which a prime minister or a King should exercise between themselves.”²

It was indicative of a sorry state of affairs that, on the eve of elections, there were groups in Kathmandu who advocated a postponement of the elections and several parties had split into parallel and centrist factions³ on this issue. The elec-

1. I am not being wise after the event. I gave the same analysis in April 1949 ; see my *King and His Constitution*, Introduction
2. *ibid.* All the quotations in this para are from the above book.
3. Called *samanantara* (parallel) and *madhyantara* (mid-parallel) in Nepali.

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tions were as usual marked by anti-Indian propaganda touching a new high to the extent that the defeat of many stalwarts was interpreted as being due to popular suspicion against their Indian contacts and sympathies.¹ Fears were expressed that the King—and India—did not want a stable majority to emerge and that India and America had paid large sums of money to the election funds of two major contestants, namely, the Nepali Congress and the Gurkha Parishad. Money was undoubtedly an important factor in the electoral battle but there is no evidence to suggest that a substantial amount came from a foreign source.

The thumping victory of the Nepali Congress belied many rumours and fears but it created a lulling illusion that the Nepali Congress was a countrywide, popular and powerful organisation. The success of the Nepali Congress was essentially negative inasmuch as it was the only party in Nepal which possessed all the paraphernalia of a modern political organisation. It had the halo of the 1951 insurrection and a number of well-known figures in its leadership. It had some kind of an organisation and funds to sustain electoral activity. Its opponents were petty, disorganised, divided, poor and concentrated mainly in Kathmandu. It had taken the least part in the country's governance and had remained in opposition from 1952 to 1958. It had become more homogeneous by a purge which had eclipsed M. P. Koirala,² eliminated a number of disgruntled elements and made the trio of B. P. Koirala, S. P. Upadhyaya and Subarna Shamsher its unquestioned leaders. Its success showed that the people of Nepal no more worshipped the ex-prime ministers but were willing to cooperate with those who stood for change and took pains to approach them. It did not prove, however, that the Nepali Congress had really enlisted their organised cooperation. It proves the point that the situation might have been different if a united front jointly tackled the problem of mass contact and developed popular sanctions for the defence of democratic rights. But as regards the real strength of the Nepali Congress, it had won two-third of the seats in parliament on the support of a bare 37.2% of the

1. It was suggested that several stalwarts like S. P. Upadhyaya, K. I. Singh, B. K. Misra and D. R. Regmi were defeated because they had on some occasion expressed their indebtedness to India. This was an over-simplification because the most vocal anti-Indian, Tanka Prasad Acharya, was also defeated.
2. M. P. Koirala had again joined the Nepali Congress in sack cloth and ashes but it reflects the sectarian and absolutist spirit of B. P. Koirala that M. P. K. was not given a party ticket to contest the elections.

electorate. The 8.5 million people who were required to vote constituted not more than half the population of Nepal and, except in Kathmandu where 60% of voters came to the polls, the average polling for the whole country was merely 43%. The electoral support of one in five persons inhabiting the kingdom might have bloated the heads of the Nepali Congress leaders but the King knew that its real support was only skin deep.

The King when he ordered the elections may have believed that he had discredited democracy so thoroughly and divided the democratic forces so well that there was no danger of a single party majority in the ensuing parliament. But he was eventually found to be not so far-sighted because, in cutting down the Acharyas and Singhs to size, he had unwittingly raised the stature of his old adversary B. P. Koirala, though his rivals, kins and colleagues had predicted to His Majesty his total eclipse. Nonetheless, despite the Congress victory at the polls, the King had greater support in his realm than the emergent prime minister because he had not laid all his eggs in the same basket. The prime minister had only the parliament to depend upon; the monarch had the discretion to obstruct the parliament normally and dissolve the parliament by creating an emergency abnormally. In addition, he had the army firmly under his control, a young civil service loyal to him, a nobility which looked to him for the postponement of its death sentence and a god-fearing peasantry which might elect a man to become His Majesty's prime minister but would not fight with him to overwhelm its beloved King.

At the time of Nepal's first general elections, Indian government was engaged in an unhappy dispute with China over the Tibetan revolt, which quickly brought the border dispute between the two countries into the open. India expected the Nepali Congress to throw in Nepal's lot completely with her in facing a "common danger"¹ but B. P. Koirala chose to practice the "theory of equidistance" enunciated by his old Indian friend, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. The working committee of the Nepali Congress, after a whole day's debate, issued

1. Indian press had occasion to remark in Feb 60 that B. P. Koirala's persistent harping on sovereignty "provoked Nehru to refer to the role played by India in the advent to power of Mr. Koirala's party, a role no doubt also of moral support, but which is believed by some to have been not inconsiderable otherwise, amounting practically to interference in Nepal's internal affairs, but a role which Koirala had every reason to appreciate at the time".--quoted by *Echo*, Kathmandu, 19 Mar 60.

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a guarded statement on Tibet on 3 May 1959. It refuted the the Chinese constention that Tibet could not be "a matter for moral consideration by other Asian countries" and suggested that China should accept the "good offices" of Bandung Powers to solve the question but its tone was far too mild compared to its Congress-Socialist colleagues in India.

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

THE ELECTION RESULTS WERE ANNOUNCED ON 14 MAY AND B. P. Koirala was sworn in as Prime Minister on 27 May 1959. In his first policy broadcast on 28 May, he referred to Nepal's "historical and inseparable" relations with India which were "growing closer" but he also recalled her "age-old ties" with China which were being "re-established" and welcomed the establishment of the Soviet embassy in Kathmandu.¹ Replying to pressmen on the following day, he struck a balance by informing them that he would also "wecome other countries" to establish their embassies in Kathmandu and that the U.S. were wanting to do so.² He also disclosed that the U.S.A. was helping them construct a civil aerodrome at Mustang near the Tibet border because similar aerodromes existed on the other side. He was, however, keen to point out that the Tibetan refugees in Nepal were few and "mainly in transit" so that they could not break Nepal's harmony with China and Nepal scrupously adhered to neutrality and non-alignment.

Nehru hastened to Nepal in June but was unable to convince Nepali leaders that China's complete control of Tibet constituted a danger to Nepal or that her border dispute with India comprised "foreign agression" and "threat to the security of India" which, under the 1950 treaty, should not to be "tolerated" by Nepal. The joint communique issued by the two prime ministers on 14 June talked of the paramount necessity of world peace, disarmament, non-alignment, "identity of views.. both in the domestic and international affairs", "no conflict of interests", "similar problems", "common approaches" and such other platitudes but there was no commitment on the part of Nepal to stand with India in the face of any "common danger." In a press conference on the same day, Nehru mentioned that they had "concurrence" in "their approach to the Tibetan question" and disclosed the manning of 18 strategic posts on Nepal-Tibet border by Indians, but if this was to suggest that Nepal had some anxiety regarding her

1. *TI*. 29 May 59.

2. The U. S. embassy was opened in Kathmandu on 6 Aug 59.

own security he failed in his purpose. The disclosure merely gave food to anti Indian elements in Nepal and anti-Nepali elements in India.¹ The Indian Prime Minister also expressed India's readiness to share with Nepal India's experience in planned development. Defending the Kosi and Gandak joint projects, he said, "the geographical contiguity of the two countries makes it inevitable that certain development projects can be planned and executed by the joint endeavour of the two countries."

It was not unexpected, therefore, that when the Sino-Indian border dispute came to the hustings in August-October 1959, the Nepali government maintained an attitude of strict neutrality. On 11 August, Prime Minister B. P. Koirala cryptically told the press, "We have now to look after two frontiers", implying thereby that if the northern border had become alive, Nepal was not scared of it any more than of her southern frontier. The General Secretary of the Nepali Congress told the Bombay Union of Journalists that, while Nepal was in no position to mediate between China and India, she believed that if negotiations were started on the "traditional border" peace could be restored in the region. On 4 September, the Nepal Prime Minister told his parliament more frankly that Nepal should not "take sides" or be "involved in any way" in the Sino-Indian dispute. On 16 September, he informed that some Chinese troops had been sighted at some points on the border but that was no cause for panic. A Nepali delegation led by a minister attended the tenth anniversary celebrations in Peking on 1 October 1959 and a Chinese industrial exhibition opened in Kathmandu on the same day.²

Further, on 4 October 1959, B. P. Koirala told the press that Nepal Tibet border stood "traditionally determined" but for *minor disputes* which continued from old times and he "sincerely desired" the India-China relations to improve.³ On 5 October, Home Minister S. P. Upadhyaya was telling the U.N. General Assembly, "We have tried to foster and develop

1. Indian papers became specially sensitive about Nepal and started 'naming' the personalities in Nepal supposed to be responsible for the so-called 'pro-Chinese' shift in Nepali politics. Later, they called the 'China Lobby' in Nepal to book for everything which displeased them. B. P. Koirala's attitude, when he came to power, clearly shows that Nepali anti-Indianism was not the work of any particular lobby.
2. The Indian government had declined Chinese invitations to attend the celebrations.
3. Mr. Acharya had said three years before that Nepal had no border dispute with China. See *supra*, p. 66

the best of relationship with the People's Republic of China for the past so many years and we intend to continue to pursue this policy." And a few days later, B. P. Koirala pointedly told his parliament that there were no essential points of conflict between his country and China. The Nepalis welcomed these statements and hoped that "Just as India cannot break her friendship for a rebellious Dalai Lama, China also cannot afford to give away a life-long friendship for a historically questionable idea of arid mountain zones of influence."¹ On 22 October, Nepal obtained a 30 million ruble Soviet aid for building an east-west road and some other industries.

Before the year ended, the Indian press was indignant at Nepali neutrality and Indo-Nepali relations were at the lowest ebb. In November that year, when the Indian Prime Minister quoted the "clear understanding" of the 1950 treaty in order to re-emphasise that "any aggression against Nepal would be considered an aggression against India", though "there was no military alliance", and suggested that it was "in mutual interests for us to associate ourselves," it was Nepal's turn to protest and allude that the 1950 treaty had lost its validity because India had failed to consult Nepal in her dispute with China.² The Nepali Prime Minister tactfully described Nehru's statement as an "expression of friendship towards Nepal" but pointed out at the same time that according to the 1950 treaty itself Nepal was fully sovereign. Nepal was "at peace with everybody", he said, "and did not apprehend any aggression on its territory from any quarter. No situation had developed or occasion arisen for Nepal to seek aid from other countries" and "in case of aggression, Nepal had a number of friends and she was also a member of the U.N." Asked whether the Indian army would come into Nepal if China violated her border, he sharply retorted, "Nepal and *not* India would decide

1. B. R. Misra, *op. cit.*

2. *Echo* weekly, Kathmandu, 20 Feb 60. Mr. Nehru had said, "May I repeat what we have already declared that any aggression against Bhutan or Nepal will be considered by us as aggression against India. I know very well what this involves. It is a very grave responsibility, but realising this and thinking it out, we said so long ago. Now I want to repeat it "*not only for wider consideration*, but also because of consideration of India's security." LS, 27 Nov 59. An external affairs ministry spokesman said, there was nothing new in reference to Bhutan. With regards to Nepal, he added, the statement was in accordance with the Indo-Nepali treaty of 1950 but there was no question of any unilateral action by India with regard to Nepal.

if there had been any aggression against Nepal".¹ In short, he denied any special obligation on India's part to defend Nepal against aggression much less to decide what constitutes aggression or the fear of it.

A Nepali newspaper, *Motherland*, headlined the Indian Prime Minister's statement as "diplomatic invasion of Nepal by India" and *Kalpana* daily, which was said to be very close to Prime Minister Koirala, regretted editorially that Nehru's statement had created "confusion in Nepal and in the international field about Nepal's position and policy" but for their Prime Minister's statement which had "happily cleared the confusion." Former prime minister Tanka Prasad Acharya called Nehru's statement "extreme high-handedness" and accused India of wanting "to drag Nepal into a cold war against China" or else, the communists added, "to find an excuse to march her troops into Nepal". Indian papers reporting on these comments called them as emanating from the China lobby which was a dangerous over-simplification. Home Minister S. P. Upadhyaya constantly appealed to the press of both the countries not to be emotional or sensitive and perturbed by these reactions in India and Nepal, the Nepali Prime Minister warned that Nepal had "to proceed very cautiously" in the "atmosphere of great uneasiness" generated in Asia by the Sino Indian dispute.² The Indian press was, however, full of numerous stories of Chinese "infiltration, spies and survey personnel crossing into Nepal's territory"³ and the Nepali press and right opposition also caught the contagion. Questions were asked from the Nepali government which persistently denied these rumours though it was confirmed by the Home Minister on 31 December that they had exchanged communication with China on the border issue.⁴

Amidst this acrimonious debate between the newspapers of the two countries, India was steadily advancing her economic aid to Nepal. In October 1959, India signed an agreement with Kathmandu to pay Rs. 3 million for local development and rural welfare projects, such as the provisions of drinking water and construction of roads, schools and dispensaries in rural areas.

On 4 December, agreement was signed on the gigantic Gandak project, costing Rs. 400 million, to build a barrage at

1. Press conference, Kathmandu, 29 Nov 59.
2. Speech at public meeting, Kathmandu, 5 Dec 59.
3. *TI*, 26 Dec 59 ; *Sunday Standard*, 27 Dec 59.
4. Statement in Lower House, Kathmandu, *TI*, 1 Jan 60.

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Bhainsalotan on the Nepal/Bihar border, which would irrigate 140,000 acres of land in Nepal and north Bihar. India would construct at her expense two main canals, branch canals and all the larger distribution channels at a cost of Rs. 21 million and also provide Rs. 1.5 million to Nepal to meet the cost of minor and field channels. All works would be operated and maintained by the Government of India and remain its property, but the canal system and service roads in Nepali territory, except the main Western Canal, would be handed over to Nepal Government. It is estimated that the irrigation facilities offered by the project should provide additional crops worth Re. 10 million a year to Nepal. A hydro electric station would be built by India at a cost of Rs. 20 million *on Nepali territory*. It would be handed over to Nepal when its output reaches 10,000 kilowatts and, for 15 years after the transfer, India would receive secondary power over and above 10,000 kilowatts from the station. For this purpose, India would build a transmission line from the power station to Rexaul in India at a cost of Rs. 12.5 million. Nepal would be free to take power from the station and from any point on the barrage grid upto Raxaul.

A protest campaign against the Gandak agreement was launched jointly by Tanka Prasad Acharya and Dr. K. I. Singh the same month. Since the barrage and the power station were to be built partly on Nepali territory, they described the agreement as an "encroachment" by India upon their land. Dr. K.I. Singh pledged to a wage "a ruthless war" against it and accused Mr. Nehru of having exerted pressure upon Nepal to sign the Kosi and Gandak projects. He alleged that India would misuse survey and transport facilities on Nepali territory.¹ This, however, did not prevent Mr. B. P. Koirala to lay the foundation stone of Gandak barrage soon after.

YOURS FRATEERNALLY :

THE UPSHOT OF IT ALL WAS THAT THE NEPALI PRIME MINISTER and Home Minister undertook a state visit to India in January 1960. The Government of India went all out to accord them a red carpet reception as elaborate as to any other foreign dignitary, ostensibly 'to reassure the Nepalis that it recognised their absolute and complete independence', or indirectly to show to the Chinese that Indo-Nepali friendship was indissoluble.²

During his tour of India, B. P. Koirala paid his wholesome tribute to the Indian national struggle and "the father of the

1. Lucknow, 26 Dec 59.

2. *Echo* weekly, Kathmandu, 19 Mar 60.

Indian nation, Mahatma Gandhi" who had inspired him and "other revolutionaries throughout Asia" in their struggles. He recalled his past Indian associations with genuine sentiment and, bursting into tears, said that 'any attempt to explain or interpret the intimate relationship between friends or brothers is rather un-natural'. Describing the Indo-Nepal friendship as a "historical and cultural reality", he was "slightly irritated at Indian over-emphasis on a relationship so close as to be almost a union". He harped persistently on the theme of Nepali sovereignty and refused to be drawn into any commitment which could be considered unfriendly by China. He "by analogy meant to say that Nepal wants to be as independent of India as India wanted to be of England, at least as a matter of principle in view of the limitation that reality places on independence in the modern world in both the cases".¹ The Nepali press took this opportunity to speak some unpalatable 'truths' to Indians and point out that Nepal was not going to be a 'carbon-copy' of India.²

The joint communique issued on 28 January 1960 "revealed afresh the similarity of approach to international problems by the two governments and their desire to cooperate with each other in regard to them. The two prime ministers recognised that Nepal and India have a vital interest in each other's free-

1. *ibid*

2. As an example, one comment ran as follows :

"There have been talks of 'undesirable activities hostile to India' in Nepal...when Nepal began to have neutral and nonaligned policy vis-a-vis Sino-Indian border, some journalists found that Nepal was drifting away from the Indian sphere of influence. It is rather surprising that a section of the people from India, which has attained her independence after a great struggle, thinks of keeping her neighbour under her own sphere of influence... This section of the press always goes on professing that Nepal should not be allowed to act freely in her foreign affairs. They also mention the names of Sikkim and Bhutan and say...that Nepal should also quietly hand over her foreign relations to India. They want to show that if Nepal is not included in what they like to call the over-all security measures of India, both Nepal and India are not safe. They want to create some sort of fear in the Nepalese minds, and want that Nepal should surrender herself to India by sheer fear of aggression... We are in the midst of two friendly countries and we are sure that India will not attack us...and China will also not do so... So we cannot simply understand why these people are talking of foreign aggression against Nepal... They simply want that Nepal should ignore all her friends and be the carbon-copy of India which, we say again as we have already said, we can never be. No sane person in the world thinks that a nation should surrender to her neighbour simply because an insane section of the press wants her to do so."-*ibid*

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dom, integrity, security and progress and agreed that the two governments should maintain close consultation on matters of common interest." The communique also announced Rs. 180 million Indian aid for Nepal's economic development and Rs. 30.40 million to be spent by India on the construction of East Kosi Canal.

Nonetheless, Mr. Koirala placed the revision of the 1950 treaty of trade and commerce squarely on the agenda. It was announced that broad discussions had taken place on the terms of a new treaty which should provide for separation of Nepal's foreign exchange account and regulation by the Government of Nepal of their foreign trade. The two governments agreed to work out details which would facilitate expansion of Nepali foreign trade. Subsequently in March 1960, trade talks were held between Indian and Nepali officials in New Delhi, where complete understanding on principles was reported to have been reached. A new commercial treaty was signed at Kathmandu on 11 September, replacing the older treaty of 31 July 1950, and it came into force on 1 November 1960.

The new treaty aimed at developing the economies of the two countries "towards the goal of a common market" and at facilitating "trade with third countries." Subject to mutually agreed exceptions, goods from either country intended for consumption in the other were to remain exempt from customs duties and other charges, as well as from quantitative restrictions. It was conceded, however, that in the interests of Nepal's industrial development, she might levy protective duties or quantitative restrictions on goods produced by her newly established industries, or import-export duties on trade with India in order to raise her resources for economic development. At the same time, the existing arrangement for refund of central excise on goods exported from India to Nepal was not disturbed. It was also envisaged that Nepal might sometime follow a policy divergent from India in regards to its foreign trade, but that she would do so after mutual consultations so as to ensure that there is no flow into India of goods imported from their countries." Both the parties expressed their agreement to take all possible measures to avoid re-export of goods, or diversion or deflection of commercial traffic, and it was understood that, if necessary, they would take measures to secure a balance of payments.

The treaty separated Nepal's foreign exchange and permitted normal imports out of Nepal's own resources, "except for

capital goods, spares and industrial raw materials which may be imported against foreign investment." It spelled out in so many words that transit of goods through India from or to Nepal "shall not be subjected to unnecessary delays or restrictions," besides being free, irrespective of "flag of vessels, place of origin, or departure," etc., and would be exempt from customs duties as hitherto. Since delays and procedural difficulties in the transit of goods were a constant source of irritation to Nepali traders, the protocol and memorandum attached to the treaty laid down rather exhaustive details of procedure among which the chief gain to Nepal was the provision that a continuing dealer could furnish a "continuous general bond" to the Indian customs as against a separate bond for each consignment as before. The Nepal Government was also asked to appoint its customs liaison officers at Calcutta and Barauni to ensure for its citizens a "smooth working of the procedure."

The Indian rupee ceased to be legal tender in Nepal from 17 October 1960 in accordance with the Government policy of ending a dual currency.

The importance of the new treaty for Nepal can be gauged by looking at the pattern of Nepal's foreign trade over the years. Nepal's major produce is obtained from tarai belt adjoining the Indian border and a large amount of this is traded in India freely without being generally registered. Of the recorded trade, more than 95% has been with India, less than 1% with Tibet and less than 4% with other countries. Nepal's eminent need, therefore, has been diversification of her trade and its extension to other countries. The 1950 treaty as it were tagged Nepal's foreign trade with that of India by providing for imposition of duties equal to those in India and by a common foreign exchange. The new treaty freed Nepal from such obligations and enabled her to regulate its internal fiscal policies according to its own developmental needs. Complete freedom in foreign trade was considered an essential condition for Nepal's development by Nepali politicians and it was also imperative in the interests of good neighbourly relations that the irritants in the way of transit of goods be removed. Thus, the 1960 treaty removed a major source of conflict between the two countries.

On return to Kathmandu, B. P. Koirala told pressmen on 31 January that he apprehended no danger from China and repeated that there was no border dispute between China and Nepal, except some minor differences which would "soon be

resolved.” He did not envisage joint defence arrangements between India and Nepal because “We are such good friends that a pact of this kind (military alliance) would be worse than useless.”

Koirala’s visit was not fruitful to India if the latter’s chief interest were to forge unity with Nepal on the border question. Otherwise, it did help in dispelling many illusions and thus promoting understanding between the two countries. The militant socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia had broken his silence on 18 December 1959 to advise his former followers in Nepal that they must not “try to be clever”, since “small countries like Nepal have been able to safeguard their freedom not with Czechoslovakian cunning but with Yugoslavian courage.” His journal welcomed Nepali leaders to India with the loud question, ‘courage or cunning in Nepal ?’¹ The Koirala-Upadhyaya team, however, had every reason to congratulate itself for withstanding both the ‘democratic’ and ‘totalitarian’ pressures and for refusing to go under. If there was place for both Pakistan and India in the ‘free world’, the Nepalis said, they had acted like the latter and not the former. Three days after his Indian tour, B. P. Koirala had the opportunity of welcoming President Voroshilov of U.S.S.R. to the colourful city of Kathmandu and on 10 March, Nepal exchanged diplomatic missions with Pakistan.

PRACTICE OF EQUI-DISTANCE

IN THE FOLLOWING MONTH, AS IF TO EQUALISE HIS INDIAN VISIT, Mr. B. P. Koirala made a journey to Peking where, at the conclusion of his talks with the Chinese, a joint communique announced on 24 March 1960 that the “customary and traditional” frontier between Nepal and China had been accepted by both sides and they had agreed to demilitarise the border by each side withdrawing 20 kilometres into its own territory.² They further decided to appoint a joint border commission to “conduct surveys”, determine the “state of actual jurisdiction”, “scientifically delineate and formally demarcate” the border on ground and put boundary markers through friendly consultations. The sting in this agreement for India consisted in the fact that it followed more or less the lines offered by China to India, to the penultimate point of withdrawing just 20 kilo-

1. *Mankind*, Hyderabad, Feb 60.
2. The Sino-Nepali agreement said that “except for discrepancies in certain sections, their understanding of the traditional customary line was basically the same.”

metres from the border. A prize to Nepal for this timely settlement was China's aid of Rs. 100 million within the next three years, "without any political conditions attached", in addition to the Rs. 40 million still unutilised out of the 1956 aid. The question of a non-aggression treaty was postponed for Chou's return visit to Kathmandu since the Nepalis were not willing to chew more than they could digest.

On his return, B. P. Koirala told newsmen in Calcutta that he had not talked about the Sino Indian dispute in Peking but he believed that the "success of the recent Sino-Nepali negotiations would provide a useful background to the forthcoming talks between Nehru and Chou En-lai" since "he had gathered the impression in Peking that China was in a mood to accommodate her neighbours because of her preoccupation with internal affairs." The press dug it out of him once again that China had never "interfered with" Nepali territory, so that no assurances in that regard were either needed or asked for.

There was another flutter in the press when Koirala disclosed in early April that the Chinese had laid claims to Mount Everest but he had refused to entertain this claim. He also indicated that it was not a matter which worried him in the least. The Home Minister announced soon after that the Chinese claim to Everest would not be referred to the boundary commission because Nepal had never entertained that claim. B. P. added that he did not want any excitement over the question because he expected China to give up that claim.¹ He respected public opinion both in India and Nepal, however, by deciding that the non-aggression pact with China was un-necessary, because in the first place he did not envisage any threat to Nepal, and in the second, a pact in itself was no guarantee to safety.² He derided a suggestion that his visit to China could have created any gulf with India.

The Chinese Premier, during his return visit to Nepal towards the end of April, amply expressed his appreciation for Nepal's courage and wisdom in remaining neutral, not only in

1. A Delhi howler called *The Flame* carried a 'scoop' on its banner on 16 Apr 60 that "Red China designs to set up long-distance rocket bases on the Everest." Its "slick intelligence sources" reported from Hong-kong that the plan was mooted 20 years ago "when Stalin was alive", though the journal does not have even a New Delhi reporter on its pay-roll.
2. *The Statesman* commented, "A non-aggression pact with China would indicate and perhaps imply fear of aggression from the south. This position might be construed in India as an unfriendly act."—26 Apr 60

Still Birth of Democracy

words but also in the expansive promise he made to the Nepali people that, in the pending minor dispute of a hundred square miles of territory between Nepal and China, Nepal could have all of it if she so desired (*and unreasonably insisted*). He hoped that a direct road between Tibet and Nepal would soon be built, facilitating direct communication, and proposed a ten-year non-aggression pact as a counterbalance to Nepal's agreement with India. Mr. Koirala politely declined it as "unnecessary" on the plea that the 1956 Sino-Nepali agreement had included "mutual non-aggression." Chinese pressure on this score was apparently so great that he nevertheless signed a treaty of peace and friendship with Chou En-lai on 28 April.

The stress in the new treaty was upon development and further strengthening of economic and cultural ties between the two countries. Chou En-lai advised that Asian and African countries had to "enrich the content of our political independence and provide a complete guarantee for our independence" by developing economically and hailed his victory by describing the treaty as "*a political treaty of a broader scope.*" In marked contrast with the statements of Indian diplomats, he emphasised that "countries irrespective of their size should all be equal and the dignity and rights of various countries should be respected" and won the Nepali's applause by rebuking an American correspondent that the mountains linked up Nepal and China rather than parted them.¹ The higher were the Himalayas to be crossed, the more ardent was the Chinese love for their Nepali brethren. No wonder the north wind seemed to prevail over the south wind.

Koirala confirmed on 30 April that China had withdrawn her claim to the southern side of Everest though the ownership of the summit was still under discussion together with a couple of other areas involving not more than a hundred square miles

1. Chou En-lai said at the civic reception.

"As far back as more than one thousand years ago, our ancestors - already made their way across the towering mountains to establish the first contacts between our countries. Our two peoples exchanged their respective creations in the field of culture and learnt from each other's achievements in agriculture and handicrafts and developed mutual ties. The Himalayas soaring between our two countries have not blocked the friendly contacts between our two peoples. On the contrary, the Himalayas have become a symbol of the profound friendship between our two peoples."

of uninhabited territory.¹ These discussions were concluded in September 1960 when Nepali foreign ministry announced that a satisfactory agreement had been reached on principles. Joint teams were sent thereafter to demarcate the boundary on the ground.

In June 1960, the Chinese government informed Nepal that its troops had temporarily entered the 20 kilometre demilitarised zone in order to suppress a Tibetan revolt and to prevent the rebels from escaping into Nepali territory. On 28 June, a Nepali officer was killed in a frontier clash with the Chinese but in a prompt reply to the Nepali protest, in sharp contrast with their behaviour with India, Mr. Chou En-lai offered his apologies for the incident and paid Rs. 50,000 as compensation. On 17 July, the Nepal Government announced a seven-member board, with Dr. Tulsi Giri as chairman, to reorganise the northern frontier administration. By the end of July, the Chinese had withdrawn their forces and, while they admitted that the clash had taken place on Nepali territory, Chou said, it was a "shortcoming" and "not a breach of agreement".

1. In the second week of June 1952, the Chinese Ministry of Interior renamed "our highest mountain" as *Jolmo Lungma* (Sacred Mother of the waters) and said that the name was given on a 1717 map published during the reign of Kang Hsi. This was evidently a preparation for their claim on Everest. According to them, "Sven Hedin, a Swedish explorer, pointed out that the summit was first discovered by a surveyor sent by the Chinese government 160 years before the British surveyor (Andrew Waugh) made this claim (in 1852). Moreover, Mr. Hedin added, renaming the mount was absolutely unnecessary as it had already a name." (Wang Chun-heng, *A simple Geography of China*, Peking, 1958, p. 12, footnote). The Chinese contention was that 'Everest' was a British name and there was no word for it in the Nepali language though the Chinese name had existed for long. The Nepalis told them that their name for it was *Sagarmatha* and leader of the opposition, Bharat Shamsheer, told Nepali Parliament that *Chomolungma*, the Tibetan name for Everest, was really a Sherpali (*Nepali*) name. The keen attention shown to Everest after 1950, leading to its conquest on 29 May 53, may not have been politically motivated but it certainly had a political significance. On 25 May 60, a Chinese team climbed Everest from the northern side which was apparently a political move on their part to assert their claim on the mountain. The Nepali Premier, however, denied any such implication and saw no reason to protest against their not having sought Nepal's permission to do so, because they had made seven attempts since 1921 and had "established a tradition" of climbing it from the north. Hillary-Tensing team had taken the flags of India, Nepal, U. K., and United Nations on top of the summit. The Chinese possibly took only their own, but evidently, the flags in either case meant no assertion of claims. Finally, Everest was agreed to be on the Sino-Nepali border, and the claim on the summit, by not being mentioned, remains joint.

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This history of Nepal's external relations during the five years from 1955 shows that the Nepali government, whether it was manned by Tanka Prasad Acharya or B. P. Koirala, dutifully followed the trail blazed by Mr. Nehru in foreign affairs. It insisted on Nepal's absolute independence in charting out its course, rejected India's theory of her special position in Nepal, and extended its diplomatic relations with as many countries as it could. Further, it practised not only nonalignment but equidistance with its two neighbours though accepting aid from both. It refused to be drawn into the Sino-Indian conflict and gladly encouraged the Chinese wooing of Nepal which came as a result of this conflict. It settled its border with China when a quiet opportunity was offered, yet it kept a perpetual watch upon its northern boundaries. In the year 1960, it could say with sufficient reason that it had kept itself better informed about its 500 mile greater Himalyan wall from Kanchenjunga, to Kalapani than the Indian government had done in regard to its Ladakh border.

It has been evident to the Nepalis that India has a dominant role to play in Nepal's development and they accepted that role willingly. They would also depend upon Indian help in case of Chinese aggression, irrespective of treaties signed with one or the other. But Nepal is not willing to be an extension of republican India.¹ If India want to take Nepal on a ride with her to fight the Sino-Indian conflicts, Nepal refused to play the game. Indian had avoided a tripartite conference with China because she did not want Nepal to sit with her on the conference table as an equal partner, but this short-sighted diplomacy resulted in Nepal concluding a bilateral border treaty with China leaving India alone and indignant to fight the Chinese. Whereas in a tripartite conference, friendly Nepal would have been an asset to India, in India's single-handed dispute with China, Nepal naturally stands to gain more by neutrality than by allying herself with any. If India could stand neutral in a global cold war and yet aspire for doth U. S. and Soviet aid, the Nepalis were not reluctant to seize the opportunity to collect some "cold war commission" when such an opportunity came. National policies are more often determined by self-interest and logic of power than by idealism.

In August 1960, the Nepali Prime Minister attended an international conference on the "Role of Science in the Advance-

1. The Nepali would rather be, as Chou reflected and Tanka Prasad Acharya said, a bridge between the greater and lesser Himalayas.

ment of New States," held in Rehovot (Israel), and agreed to receive a group of Israeli experts to draw up plans for technical and other assistance and joint enterprises in Nepal in the fields of agriculture, industry and construction. Mr. Koirala said, he was greatly impressed by Israel's remarkable achievements in economic development and he expected all-round cooperation between Israel and Nepal, with the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two countries.

B. P. Koirala's plans to benefit from Israel came to an abrupt end, however, because in a sudden bid to save the political role of the monarchy, King Mahendra swooped on him and his cabinet before the year was over. On 15 December 1960, His Majesty arrested all political leaders, dissolved the parliament and declared an emergency in which the entire Constitution, including the fundamental rights, was suspended *sine die* and all political activity was banned.

CHAPTER VI

Despotism with Consent

THE KING'S 'COUP' AS IT WAS CALLED, SHOCKED AND SURPRISED Indian public opinion beyond a measure of endurance because it was so sudden and appeared to be uncalled for. His Majesty seemed to have torn away with childish delight a new chapter from Nepal's history begun only an year back for no reason. It was not so much a failure of democracy in Nepal that perturbed Indian observers as the emergence of a pattern, with which they had become all too familiar, that of a *coup* followed by political assassinations and mock trials, some new slogans of basic, guided or true democracy and the institution of puppet regimes, in most cases *subservient to Western imperialism*. Those who were ousted from power were always said to be corrupt and those who took over were invariably 'welcomed' by the people, even though they ruled with the help of the military. There were no new elements in the drama enacted by the King and he had demonstrated nothing thereby except his desire to rule *in his discretion*. Even as the Government of India was puzzled, hard pressed journalists rushed through the tense streets of Kathmandu seeking for explanations which were not forthcoming. Nepal appeared to be covered by a blanket on which lay a *khukri* and underneath unknown corpses cheaper by a dozen.

On 16 December, the day New Delhi awoke to the news of the King's action, Prime Minister Nehru expressed his bewilderment before the Indian Parliament. Government of India had no prior intimation, he told the *Lok Sabha*, though it had received numerous reports for several months that the King was dissatisfied with the functioning of the cabinet and might take some action. It was not for him, he added, to criticise the actions taken in Nepal, but it was "obviously a matter of regret for all of us that the democratic experiment or practice that was going on there should have suffered a setback."

Indians in general, including the Government of India, were in fact so absorbed in 1959-60 in condemning the neutrality of

their little neighbour in the Sino-Indian conflict that they had lost sight of the pace of developments in this Himalayan kingdom and were not fully aware of the new alliances that had grown between the contenders of state power. Even subsequent to the event, there was too little analysis and too great resentment in India to permit a balanced view, with the result that the *coup* added a new dimension to Indo-Nepali conflict of views and interests. It started a new wave of mutual recrimination in the press and public statements of the two countries.

CUSHIONS REMOVED

THE ROYAL TAKE-OVER PROVED CONCLUSIVELY WHAT WE HAVE said earlier that all the counters on the chess-board of Nepali politics were held by the King : defeated politicians who awaited his pleasure in calling them to power, "young" opportunists eager to follow the examples of their leaders and to step into their shoes, a feudal aristocracy which, despite 'family' differences, supported the King against parliament, credulous masses who deified him and also the legacy of his father without understanding the meaning of that legacy, nebulous slogans of Indian or Chinese threats which could be successfully played up to drown the republicans and communists alike, and lastly, the isolation of the country from the world, and of its different parts from one another. The stolid silence of the people of Kathmandu after such a "reversal of history" brought home the point that they were not aware or willing to take up a fight. Not even a civil liberties union existed in the capital to mourn over the suppression of fundamental rights and banning of all political activity. Conditions throughout the country remained normal except that a night curfew was imposed in the neighbourhood of the Palace. An official statement on 19 December disclosed that 42 political leaders had been arrested during three days but a majority of them were released within a week, having given an undertaking to support the Crown. They included several second rank leaders of the Nepali Congress and some deputy ministers of the deposed cabinet.

One came across more royalists than republicans in Kathmandu during the days following the royal takeover.¹ Some politicians released after furnishing an undertaking wailed that they had pledged their fealty to the Crown *under duress* but they

1. The following account is based upon my personal observations and interviews with important political leaders in Kathmandu during the two weeks following the *Coup*. Statements quoted are mostly verbatim. Names have been omitted because, instead of taking strictly press interviews, I had chatted with them in a friendly way.

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espoused its cause no less spiritedly. "I would do nothing which weakens the hands of His Majesty", said one such lost cause, because "Nepal needed a King as much as a parliament" but he was not willing to raise his voice for the parliament. Since Nepal had not developed the conventional checks and balances, the King must provide a corrective to the cabinet, argued another. There were no popular sanctions and no organised public opinion in Nepal, he continued. So long as "the people had no way with them to make the state power responsible to them, the state power must remain responsible to the King." They were unanimous that they did not care for forms of democracy but for its content.

"What is democracy," exploded a veteran leader, "without an efficient and clean administration, an impartial judiciary and an independent public service commission." Alleging that B. P. Koirala's government had tried to tamper with these institutions and their processes by making partisan appointments, he further charged the Nepali Congress of terrorising and intimidating the population and the opposition. To the question whether he made a distinction between the merit of a cabinet and the institution of the parliament, he vehemently replied in the negative. The people of Nepal did not possess an awareness of democratic processes, he said, and in the absence of a possibility of the growth of an opposition, the Congress ministry had to be superseded before it perfected its organs of totalitarian rule, to the exclusion of all democratic activity. "His Majesty had not suppressed democracy but an incipient fascism."

The above discussion in a way unravels the key to the royal action. All over Asia and Africa, where increased polarisation between the rightist and communist forces had made democracy a risk for the right, the uneasy truce and coexistence between rival political factions had been broken by a civil war or by a military dictatorship. In Nepal, the King had unwittingly killed, in the preceding years, all 'democratic' opposition to the Nepali Congress. The electorate had further simplified the multiplicity and fluidity of political parties by wiping out of existence all the parties but two, both of them inimical to the King. The Gurkha Parishad representing the Rana ex-prime ministers was avowedly anti-King and the eclipse of M. P. Koirala indicated the waning of royalist influence inside the Nepali Congress. And if the two combined to challenge royal discretion, His Majesty had no opposition to rely on for his own safety.

The elections had removed the cushion between the King and his adversaries in parliament and His Majesty stood in stark opposition to his Prime Minister before the people. As long as the people obeyed him and not the parliament, he was free to murder the baby that had been delivered in good health against his wishes. "Freedom would not survive in our constitution, if it had already died in the hearts of the people. We shall not have a free society unless we have free men."¹ Freedom had not yet arisen in the hearts of the Nepali people.

The republicans accused King Mahendra of beating a retreat on his late father's promises inasmuch as he had rejected a constituent assembly and forced an undemocratic constitution upon them a week before the elections, so that the constitution could not be a subject of discussion in political propaganda preceding the elections. He remembered only the divisive legacy of the monarchy, they said, and not its vital national role which consisted in "*politely bowing out to the people's forces as they rose and consolidated themselves.*" As a matter of course, the King should have reduced his powers, they thought, and become a constitutional figurehead like the innocuous president of a parliamentary republic. The monarchy, it was argued, was as young in its present role as parliament. It was *released from captivity* by the democratic forces in order to lead the country to full democracy and it had no rationale for existence apart from them.

What the republicans forgot was that the monarchy could not be willing to *revert back to captivity* so soon and 'shoulds' rarely determine the course of historical events. The King had beat a retreat because he could do so under the circumstances, the Nepali Congress being powerless to stop him from doing so. He took back at his pleasure what he had chosen to give in charity, when he feared that a wholly anti-monarchical parliament intended to challenge his authority, status and constitution. The instruments of power were still in the hands of the Crown. Treason was still defined as crime against the King and not against the state or liberty of its subjects. A close examination of the turn of events between June 1959 and December 1960 would unveil the fact that Parliament tried to subvert Monarchy before the latter had become out-of-date or useless for Nepal, and before Parliament had the strength to be effective against the King.

1. Judge Learned Hand.

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To begin with, when the election results were announced in May 1960, few commentators in India would have been surprised if His Majesty had declared the elections null and void. Pretenses for this were never far to seek in Nepal. Political observers were indeed pleasantly surprised to see King Mahendra agreeing to a Nepali Congress ministry led by B. P. Koirala. The King, by not succumbing to the temptation of dissolving the parliament before it met, showed his sagacity and willingness to "try-out" both B. P. Koirala as well as the parliamentary experiment. If Mr. Koirala thought that this had set in motion a process of the King "*politely bowing out*" to the Congress, he was both a knave and a fool.

Mr. Koirala's realism no less than his illusions are apparent in the first statement he gave after the elections. He recognised therein that elections had been possible because of the King's "strong belief in democracy" but he also spoke about the "unmistakable people's democratic awakening through the elections" and warned that "any attempt to create disbelief in this would be against the clear thinking of the Nation, the King and the People." The ushering in of his government, he concluded, was "the beginning of a new chapter in Nepal's history." It could be so if Mr. Koirala had been humble in his hour of triumph and had not lost sight of the fact that till then the Nation, the King and the People were really welded together and identified in the person of the King. On the contrary, he seems to have taken his election victory as sufficient proof of the consolidation of the people's forces behind the Nepali Congress.

THE KEY PROBLEMS

IT IS DOUBTFUL IF B. P. KOIRALA IN HIS HOME POLICY INTENDED to do more than what the King had already initiated some time before. He abolished the administrative and judicial powers of the local chiefs and tried to enforce central authority in the so-called vassal states, which was perfectly in accordance with the King's wishes and his constitution. This led to disturbances in West Nepal in the beginning of October 1959. Prince Om Jung, son of Raja of Bhajang, defied government authority for several weeks and resisted by force the establishment of a government court in that area. However, after a clash with government forces, he fled to India. Towards the end of the same month, an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the regime was made by Yogi Narahari Nath at Gurkha (the home town of monarchy) and Raja of Bhajang stated in Kathmandu that he could obey the King, who was the fountainhead of all power,

but not his ministers.¹ While these or some other instances may be bandied about to 'prove' that Government was incapable of maintaining law and order, they only confirm the experience of mankind that no transition, howsoever mild, is quite smooth, because no change can be painless to all sections of the population. These instances also show—and this is more important—that a new state apparatus had to be created, not around a council responsible to the King but around a Cabinet responsible to Parliament, but this apparatus was not yet created. Koirala's government laid emphasis on education, small industry, health, social welfare and development programmes, as did the governments before and after him. He set no time limit for land reforms and, though he promised to take "less time to finish the problem" than had been taken by India (*sic*), the measures he proposed were substantially in line with the thirteen-point programme proclaimed by King Mahendra in 1955 and they fell far short of his own party manifesto. Koirala government's first budget, introduced on 9 August 1959, imposed taxes on *birta*² land, but the complete abolition of *birta* was clearly declared to be a rather drawn-out affair due to its complexity. His Majesty too was and is committed to the abolition of the *birta* system. Therefore, when the King accused B. P. Koirala of pursuing "economic measures, undertaken on the basis, not of scientific analysis and factual study, but in pursuance of purely theoretical principles",³ it mystified outside political observers though obviously there could be genuine differences between the King and the Cabinet over the extent, speed and manner of the abolition of *birta*.

The fact is that the *birta* system in Nepal is highly complex, and there are said to be more than a hundred different types of *birta* in vogue affecting all the layers of society in various ways. Its complete abolition can be ruled out for the time being because it would not only affect the nobility, *which is arraigned on both sides of the fence*, but also political leaders, some of whom enjoy its benefits.⁴ It is not inconceivable, therefore, that the land reforms could be so formulated as to serve one section of the nobility and middle classes against another. In other words, the very moderation of the agrarian

1. He was put under house arrest which was called a 'hasty action' by His Majesty.
2. Hitherto rent free and tax-free large estates, introduced by the Rana regime to create a privileged landed aristocracy.
3. Royal Proclamation, 15 Dec 60.
4. Brahmins are also small *birta* -holders.

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reform could be made to serve party interests.¹ While the King's charges against the economic policies of B. P. Koirala

1. I have had no opportunity to study the problem of land reforms in Nepal, or to examine fully the widely different views prevailing about it among different sections and leaders. There is hardly a book or a person who could fully explain the *birta* system and documents (especially of superceded governments) are notoriously hard to find. However, briefly, the position seems to be as follows :—

There are, broadly speaking, three types of land revenue systems commonly known as *birta* in Nepal, namely, *raikar* or state-owned land, *birta-A* and *birta-B*. A peasant paying rent to the 'landholder' is common to all the three types, but while Raikar land is supposed to belong to the State, the B-class Birta is owned by the landholder. In practice, the landholder pays revenue to the state on both the lands. A-class Birta stands apart from the other two inasmuch as it is land owned by the nobility on which the Birta-holder realises revenue from the landholder but pays nothing to the state. In 1907, the Birta-holder was stopped from imposing arbitrary revenue on this land and was asked to realise the rates prevalent upon adjacent Raikar land. Thus in practice, Birta-A became "assignment of land revenue" to the Birta-holders, while Birta-B became "grants-in-land" to the landholder. The Raikar land in theory belonged to the state, but it was also tantamount to "grants of land" to the landholder.

While all the figures given in this connection are purely guess work, it is estimated that there is 3.6 million acres of all types of Birta land in Nepal out of a total cultivable land of 5.6 million acres, including forests. In other words, Birta land is roughly one-third of the total productive land of the country. Of this, about one-third, or 1.2 million acres, belongs to A-class birta or Birta-holders.

Now, under the Rana regime, there was no limit to which the landholder could exploit the peasant. In September 1955, King Mahendra gave a charter of tenant rights in his thirteen-point programme by which he promised abolition of feudal rights and corvees, protection of peasants against eviction and the fixation of land rent not above 50% of the actual produce. A *land reform law* promulgated on 7 Aug 57 guaranteed these basic rights to the peasant and protected him against the land-holder. Forced labour was abolished and forests were nationalised by Tanka Prasad Acharya in 1956. On 23 May 1958, a *Taxation Act*, by King Mahendra, imposed taxes upon land, houses and vehicles with immediate effect. The tax on land was graded according to the revenue yielded by it. This Act made the Birta-A, chiefly owned by the Rana prime ministers' families, largely uneconomic because the tax in case of large estates, yielding a revenue of Rs. 45,000 or more, was as high as 27 1/2%.

B. P. Koirala's *Birta Abolition Act* of 1959 imposed a universal fixed rate of tax on all land some of which was said to be undeserving of such a tax because, like much of the land gifted under *bhoodana* in India, not all the Birta land were fertile or even cultivable. Thus, where the actual revenue on lands was less or even equal to the tax imposed by Government, the Birta-holder or landholder had no choice but to give it up to the Government or to the cultivator. Again, where the land holdings were more than 300 acres, it was stipulated that 80% of the revenue should go to the state. The maximum sufferers as a result of Koirala's act were said to be members of the royal family and some rich Newar families more firmly attached to the throne.

were vague and unproved, it is evident that his policies did not meet His Majesty's approval.

The Royal Message of 5 January 1961 said that "Since there was no tax system in the country so far, it was necessary for some time in the beginning to keep the rates low and familiarise the people with the system. But a tax system was adopted without educating the people...and without sufficient regard to existing conditions and considerations of equity... The land tax was imposed with a view to bringing about distribution of land among the cultivators. But it produced just the opposite result. As there was no record of land tiller's rights, even those who could have acquired the rights of protected tenants were evicted. The result was, there was mass eviction. Very little land went to the cultivator. The landlord on the other hand stopped all credit for food, cultivation, etc."¹

At any rate, these were not the doctrinaire' differences between the King and the Prime Minister: the conflict between them was of a more fundamental nature. It centred round the question of the need, the role, the functions and the authority of the monarchy in Nepal.

Koirala's chief offence was that he assailed the constitution from the first day of his office, calling it not democratic enough and alluding that it was forced upon his shoulders.² Undoubtedly, the Nepali Congress had accepted the constitution as a temporary compromise with the King in order to facilitate his advance towards the elections. Indeed, if it had not reversed its stand with regards to the constituent assembly in the pre-election period, it should either have been isolated and banned, or no constitution or elections would have been offered by the King at all. Its acceptance of the King's constitution was at best a gesture of good will (if not of surrender), which the King had responded to by permitting it to form its government. But when it called off the truce so soon as it picked the reins of office, the King lost no time in marshalling his strength. Instead of exhorting the people to give a chance to the new cabinet, he criticised his ministers publicly and warned that they should mend their ways.

1. The greatest snag in these charges is that B. P. K. Government was too short in saddle. These analyses could not be made in such a short time and such wholesale assessments are liable to be prejudiced.
2. This was factually true but technically and morally unsound because the Nepali Congress nominees had participated in the drafting of the constitution.

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B. P. Koirala declared socialism as the objective of his government which was as doctrinaire and purposeless as it was against the provisions of the Constitution. The analogy with India did not hold good because, while the Indian constitution is flexible and framed by a constituent assembly-cum-parliament, the Nepali Constitution was a rigid one 'given' by an effective monarch. A public discussion on it was tantamount to a discussion on the personal intentions and bonafides of the King himself.¹

The Nepali Congress leaders were not so innocent as to be unaware of this implication. On the contrary, they knew they were really attacking China while abusing Albania. As an answer to them, King Mahendra started touring the country to heap abuse on the corruption and inefficiency of a parliamentary government. The Prime Minister followed closely on his heels, on the same route, collecting bouquets to arm his selfconfidence. As B. P. Koirala discovered that each succeeding day of the existence of a 'commoner' prime minister backed by a popularly elected parliament "made royal prestige and prerogatives suffer heavily in the eyes of the people." His Majesty was convinced that his beloved people would care less if he dismissed this new 'usurper' to the throne.

Mr. Koirala's next step was to make common cause with his parliamentary opposition, the Gurkha Parishad, in defence of parliament, or in the last resort to abolish the monarchy,² and the King's first resort was to arrest this drift by abolishing the parliamentary form of government.

A MATTER OF INITIATIVE

IT IS NOT ONLY FUTILE BUT ALSO FOOLISH TO PASS MORAL judgments on history. Behind the clash of personalities of a

1. The King referred to this when he said (5 Jan 61) that Koirala government "tried to divert the popular attention elsewhere, in a highly irresponsible manner, by dragging the Crown and the Constitution themselves into political controversy."
2. The republican ambitions of B. P. Koirala and his covert alliance with Bharat Shamsher, leader of the Gurkha Parishad parliamentary party, are now almost established facts. Unconfirmed, though highly reliable, sources allege that B. P. Koirala, in league with Bharat Shamsher, had finalised a plot to kidnap the King and compel him to sign on the dotted line, or failing this to assassinate him. Such plots, no less such allegations, are not new to the history of feudalism and one may believe them or not according to one's understanding or sympathies. Irrespective of the fact whether a plot of this kind was hatched or not, it shows the immaturity of Nepali Congress politics that unto this day it should continue to rely upon intrigue and manouvre rather than upon mass action.

jubilant and headstrong Prime Minister, and an active and apprehensive King, lay the clash of the two institutions of parliament and monarchy. "What you have inherited from your fathers, earn over again for yourself or it will not be yours," said Goethe, and the poet-King had realised this well. B. P. Koirala lost his inheritance because he did not properly assess and reckon with this inheritance. His legacy was not only the parliament, but also the monarchy, and he quarrelled with the latter before it had served its full term. The royal takeover was no doubt a swing back of the pendulum, but it was the logical result of a situation in which the Crown had grown apprehensive about its own safety and existence.

The royalists in December 1960 preferred to watch and wait because "the initiative lay with His Majesty." The initiative had always been in the hands of His Majesty since 1951 and that had indeed been the sole justification for the existence of the monarchy and of the eventual goodness of all its acts. If the cabinet were wise, it would not try to snatch the initiative from the King until it had passed into its own hands, by force of convention, in course of time. If the cabinet tried to be independent sooner than it could, it was bound to get scrapped as it did. B. P. K. landed himself in the prison of the monarch for whom he had fought because he nursed republican ambitions before the situation was ripe for it. Treason doth never succeed, for if it succeeds, who dare call it treason! We may say that it was a regression to absolutism but the monarchy for all practical purposes had been absolute in the past nine years.

Corruption seems to be a feature common to all democracies, especially of backward countries and favouritism is almost an accepted canon of the free world no less than of totalitarianism. To the extent that this is true, corruption and favouritism have become less abhorring, if not more tolerable.¹ In Nepal, however, there was scope for a wholesale regimentation of the infant civil service on the pretext of its democratisation by a purging of Rana and communist elements. This is not to say that King Mahendra's charges, that the Congress "wielded authority designed to fulfil the party interests only" and "made an attempt to dislocate and paralyse the administrative machi-

1. An anti-Congress leader told me, "In India you inherited sound organs of state from the British so that corruption does not harm you so much as it harms Nepal. Besides, Mr. Nehru does not think much of corruption because he cannot eliminate it and has learnt to live with it. Nonetheless, you had your own Kerala."

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nery,¹ were necessarily correct. We do not know, but it is well known that Mr. Koirala failed to minimise corruption, or rise above his partisan interests and he could not achieve his tasks with the required tact and integrity.

At the same time, Mr. Koirala was in good company with his numerous predecessors and possibly even with the men who assumed the reins of power after his dismissal, since he could not be brought to trial for his alleged misdeeds. A secret trial was meaningless because then the accused would have been acquitted in the public eye even before the trial had begun while, in an open trial, the accused could throw many skeletons overboard, not excluding those from the King's cupboard. Therefore, Vishwa Bandhu Thapa made it clear on 30 January that B. P. Koirala was not to be put on trial. The King's charges, he said, were against the deposed Government and not against individuals.

It is an irony of history that B. P. Koirala was accused of the same guilt that he had heaped upon M. P. Koirala's ministry in 1952. He had accused his rival of "fostering international rivalries, centralising all powers in his hands and retarding the establishment of an independent judiciary and public service commission." King Mahendra, it is said, was alarmed at the close tie which B. P. Koirala wanted to build with Israel for several reasons. It was expected to import cold war into Nepal because it was sure to be resented by both India and China.² It was rumoured that Israel had been the channel through which Nepali Congress had drawn its party funds for the electoral battle. In addition, B. P. Koirala had discussed an arms deal with Israel and he wanted to reorganise the Nepali army on the Israeli model. This consists, in Israel, in sending the soldiers to work on land when they are not in battle. Looking at it the other way round in Nepal, it meant creating a militia by directly arming the peasants. Finally, when a militant Youth

1. 15 Dec 60.

2. India does not have diplomatic relations with Israel, partly because it would irritate the Arab countries and partly because it is looked upon as an agency of the West, notably the U.S.A., to provide money and arms. While B. P. Koirala made several visits to Israel during his short term, many other ministers of his cabinet had their pilgrimage too. It is well known that the Government of India does not favour an excess of Anglo-American influence in Nepal, just as it has been anxious to save her from Chinese influence. Y. G. Krishnamurthy, in his official biography of King Mahendra, claims to provide proof that B. P. Koirala had promised both China and Israel that they might recruit Gurkha troops in their armies—*TI*, 24 Jul 61.

Front of the Nepali Congress was constituted, it was suggested that the same would be converted into a militia-cum-shock brigade of the ruling party which was as dangerous for the fate of democracy as it was distasteful to the King.

In the absence of fuller information, the above allegations may be grossly exaggerated. What is significant, however, is that they provide a key to King Mahendra's feeling of alarm which culminated in his swooping down upon the cabinet, precisely when B. P. K. and his colleagues were addressing the first conference of their newly constituted youth front. At least one thing is clear after the passage of time that, although the royal decision to take action was said to have been taken in London,¹ the King did not seize power in order to gravitate towards the West or North. He stuck to the policy of nonalignment and equidistance more faithfully than his prime minister. His *coup* was not in line, in this regard, with the other military dictatorships that had emerged in southeast Asia.

Looking into the class alignments of the period of B. P. Koirala interlude, both the royalists and republicans accused each other of joining hands with the Ranas in pursuance of their aims and both were right to a degree. The monarchy had as much rallied a section of 'Ranocracy' to scuttle the parliament, as the cabinet had conspired with the parliamentary wing of the Ranas to overthrow monarchy. Nepal's tragedy was that nine years after the 'Revolution', feudal nobility was (and it continues to be) the major political and economic force behind all the contenders of state power. It will continue to be until Nepal makes some headway in economic development.

Again a comparison with England would be enlightening. The Tudor monarchy had dispersed monastic lands to build an influential class in its support. The King of Nepal has *birta* land to disperse to win a yeoman class of peasantry. The Tudor monarchy had weakened the nobles as political rivals by turning them into courtiers and had exercised absolutism by consent of the mercantile and rural bourgeoisie and lesser gentry. In Nepal, the new leadership and middle classes were similarly eliminated from political rivalry. In England the

1. His Majesty, accompanied by General Subarna, made a state visit to Britain in October 1960. It is said that Subarna dissuaded the King from taking a catastrophic step just as he disagreed with B. P. Koirala later in the alleged plot of regicide. His 'escape' to India two days before the royal *Coup* lends plausibility to the contention that he was forewarned about the impending action and the King allowed him this 'escape' because he hoped to win him over to his side.

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monarchy was itself too much the product of feudalism and contained within itself too many feudal survivals to be able to carry the revolution to its completion. In Nepal the monarchy had not enjoyed the fruits of feudalism due to its captivity and it did not contain so many feudal survivals as to be disabled in its task of abolishing military feudalism. In England, in a time of great and rapid technical advance, a whole class eager to use and profit by new methods was prevented from doing so by monopolies which in the long run arrested the development of industry. In Nepal the monarchy itself abolished the monopoly of the Ranas, announced the principle of 'no taxation without legislation', gave more civil liberties than were demanded at a time, and generally established a rule of law equitable enough by bourgeois standards of justice. There was no rapid technical advance and no bourgeoisie thwarted in its ambitions. Whatever economic development the country needs has to be ushered in from above by a King or Cabinet with foreign aid which is always forthcoming.

In Stuart England, once a certain point was reached, the objective character of the monarchy underwent a complete transformation and it appeared as the main obstacle to a bourgeois revolution. The English bourgeoisie could no longer in the seventeenth century prosper within the framework of the old regime and so broke its alliance with the monarchy. With the defeat of the Armada in 1588, it became aware of its strength and was no more content with fighting for existence. The Nepali bourgeoisie is still fighting for its economic existence and is content with the freedom it has gained for its progress. Truly, the monarchy in Nepal is fully capable of ushering in all the reforms and development plans which are demanded by a rising bourgeoisie and the poor peasantry.

What is often forgotten is that in a revolutionary struggle what counts is not the noble or ignoble motives of individuals but the alignment of classes and the objects for which these classes struggle. The Nepali republicans, like the levellers in England, had no social base for a more radical extension of the revolution than they had achieved in 1960. The Nepali gentry, like English Presbyterians sees no incompatibility between monarchy and bourgeois democracy and is assured of its progress without an attack upon the Crown, nor has it the wherewithals to launch such an attack. The Stuarts did not have a standing army and Parliament was supported by the Scottish army on the one hand and London masses on

the other. The Crown revenues of Stuarts were largely feudal in character and too inadequate, compelling them to beg for money or taxation from an oldestablished Parliament. The Nepali monarch was under no such contingency and he had the army and administration stoutly behind him. There could be no war between the King and Nepali Congress because it would (and did) leave whole classes out of it, reducing it to a war waged by a minority of emigres against a powerful, modern state. Feudalism first gives way to bureaucratic despotism though that despotism be reformatory or revolutionary. So it did in Nepal and both the King and Cabinet depended upon it for their objects.

Incidentally, King Mahendra is not alone in trying to impose reforms and development from above and instituting a benevolent despotism. Shah Mohammad Raza of Iran has also been introducing a barrage of reforms in his country for the last 22 years against the wishes of the traditional props of the monarchy, the landlords, the clergy and powerful economic interests. A popular National Front has been demanding on the other hand that the Shah should reign but not govern. The Shah weathered these attacks from the Right and Left by appealing above their heads to the peasants and workers for whom he said he would run the country. Like King Mahendra, he too is trying to forge a mass movement, though not an organised official party, behind his programme and monarchy. His similar claim is that he alone can hold the nation together and keep it stable during a period of difficult change.

The monarchy in Iran or Nepal should not be confused with the monarchy of medieval ages. It is in fact the leadership provided by a strong man who, in the specific circumstances of his country, could not arise from the army or the middle classes but has the stamp of royalty on his head. The absence of a middle class and mass movement in Nepal made such a contingency possible just as a balance in the strength of feudal and bourgeois forces in Iran enables the Shah to play a similar role there. Present day historians and fighters for Nepal ignored this fact at their own peril and they reached wrong conclusions thereby.

Some Indians suggest that the King chose the moment of India's strained relations with China to stage his *coup* because any Indian attempt to support the Nepali democrats could at that time be negated by an appeal to China. It

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may or may not be true but for India the question is, what was she to gain by B. P. Koirala remaining in power and what did she lose by the King's take-over of state. If B. P. K's ambitions to import Israeli or 'international socialism' of its type were fulfilled, Nepal would certainly have been more West-oriented than India and one may rightly suspect that his anti-Indian and anti-King utterances were an expression of his sober realisation that both these forces (the King and the Indian government) would be obstacles to the fulfilment of his pro-West dreams. It cannot be denied that Koirala did have in him the makings of a dictator and it may well be that the King had, by his timely action, nipped in the bud a military dictatorship which, by importing cold war in this backward and unprepared kingdom, could hasten Nepal's disintegration.

Indians, however, were in no mood to give consideration to these analyses. Prime Minister Nehru spoke in critical terms of the royal action which had come as a "shock" to him. He told *Rajya Sabha* on 20 December 1960 that the King had previously given him an impression, in private letters, that he was getting on well with the Koirala ministry. Describing the King's charges as "vague", he pointed out that the Koirala ministry had functioned under difficult conditions. While nobody could call it as "ideal", since its installation, Nepal had, *for the first time*, "*some ordered government trying to do its best.*"¹ The Chinese, in contrast showed their usual flexibility in unconditionally supporting His Majesty's Government, on a basis of strict non-interference in its internal affairs.²

Indians felt hurt at the dismissal of the Koirala ministry because they had uncritically assumed that it was the Parliament which had ruled Nepal during the preceding one and a half years and that it had ruled the country well. Mr. Nehru's observation, that there had been an ordered government in Nepal for the first time under B. P. Koirala, was not true to facts because the Nepal Government had slowly but steadily become more ordered during the last nine years and B. P. Koirala's administration was no more ordered than the preceding ones. We also tended to consider our own pattern of democracy as not only the best, but the only one worth while. Our sympathies

1. *TI*, 21 Dec 60.

2. According to a high Nepali government official, the Chinese support came promptly through diplomatic channels even when Peking Radio was announcing a 'reversal of democracy' in Nepal for "propaganda purposes".

naturally went with the Parliament. At any rate, Indian resentment on the failure of Nepali democracy was infructuous because India could not have helped the people of Nepal take over the state against the monarch. "Asia's battle today", wrote a columnist, "centres round the issue whether advanced political thought can coexist with backward economy". In Nepal, the events had proved they could not coexist.

PARTYLESS DEMOCRACY

THE FIRST REACTION IN NEPAL TOWARDS THE DISMISSAL OF THE cabinet was that "the King should invite able and sincere persons to form a government, irrespective of party affiliations, and also avoid both inert opportunists as well as active adventurers." The new government formed on 26 December, however, did not seem to be a cabinet of talents or of integrity by any yardstick. It was composed of breakaway Nepali Congress elements, the chief among them being Dr. Tulsi Giri and Vishwa Bandhu Thapa. Mr. Rishi Kesh Shaha was the third important member of the cabinet which was presided over by the King and they had all been invited to join "in their individual capacity."¹ His Majesty had at the same time completely ignored all the ex-ministers of former cabinets, now his enthusiastic apologists,² who awaited his pleasure in agitated expectancy. As a mark of grace to the people of Nepal, they had been thrown into the dustbin of history.

On 5 January 1961, lashing at "the extravagance, the hypocrisy and the licentiousness" of the parliamentary system, King Mahendra banned all political parties because they "may prove obstacles to the task of creating a favourable climate for the new movement for national reconstruction." He declared that, because "a democratic system imposed from above" had "proved unsuitable", they had now to "build democracy gradually, layer by layer, from the bottom upwards" on the basis of *panchayats* (village councils). He also accused the Koirala

1. Dr. Tulsi Giri was Deputy Foreign Minister in Koirala's cabinet but had resigned in October 1960 because of differences with B. P. Koirala (alleged to be his opposition to the Koirala-Bharat alliance which he subsequently reported to the King. He was arrested after the *coup* but released on 20 Dec 60. Vishwa Bandhu Thapa, Chief whip of the Congress Parliamentary Party, was then in New York, as a member of his country's delegation to the U. N. On 21 December, he too was arrested but released the next day. Rishi Kesh Shaha, ambassador to U.S.A. and permanent delegate to the U. N., was summoned home to join the new cabinet.
2. Tanka Prasad Acharya, Dr. K. I. Singh, D. R. Regmi, M. P. Koirala.

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government of having “no over-all planning outlook” and no regard to “existing conditions, necessary resources, personnel and practicability” with the result that schemes were not properly formulated, “individual and uncoordinated projects were taken up in haste” and, on the one hand, “targets could not be achieved, on the other, the limited resources of the nation were wasted. Aid received from friendly governments could not be properly utilised as they could not make the administrative machinery meet the requirements of the plan.” Early next month, a 16-member National Planning Commission, equal in rank to the council of ministers, was appointed “to exercise supreme authority in matters of planning”. It found the “basic assumptions” of the previous government quite ‘arbitrary and unrealistic’ and applied “corrective action” to set up a new list of “development priorities.” They were, in respective order, improvement in organisation and management, including training, statistics and surveys, expansion of transport, communications and power, agricultural development, development of industries on a selective basis and consolidation and expansion of social services on a selective basis.

On 18 February, a ministry of national guidance was formed to “inspire people in all spheres of cultural, social and ideological activities, in order that they might devote themselves to the service of the nation “to work out a plan of targets and goals in various fields of national activity and attaining these goals within the scheduled period.” The new all-important ministry was entrusted to Vishwa Bandhu Thapa who emerged as the most trusted assistant of His Majesty.

The pattern of *basic* and *guided* democracy which was formulated in the next few months was that of a *party-less*, four-tier, *panchayat* democracy, from the village level upwards, with a National Panchayat presided over by the King to serve as legislature. It was said to rest on five pillars, namely, sovereignty of Popular Will (to be distinguished from the sovereignty of the People), individual liberty, economic freedom, legal and political equality and equality of opportunity. Starting with the premise that the vital need of Nepal at present was economic development in order to bring in economic freedom and a viable economy, “which is the food and substance of civilised living,” the new system hoped to decentralise administration and achieve people’s participation in the country’s development effort.

The official interpreters of Nepali politics argued that in 1951 the question of the form of government to replace the Rana regime was settled without deliberation. The Western parliamentary system was imported merely because it was "the fashion of the day." The parliamentary system failed in Nepal because it lacked the characteristics of a historic growth; the people were poor and uneducated¹ and political leaders self-seeking. The parliamentary experiment in Nepal was therefore, marked by immaturity and short-sightedness of the political parties and their internal dissensions. "This was an experience not peculiar to Nepal but to a number of countries of Asia and Africa. And they decided long before Nepal did that they had to choose for themselves a system of government" more suited to their genius and environment.² However, democracy neither began nor ended with the participation of political parties at the highest policy making level or with day-to-day administration, just as "the adoption of the architectural plan of the British houses of parliament would not import into the country the awareness and standard of their debates." Party politics was a luxury, an amusement and a pretense which should be restricted to areas where it could do little harm. Consequently, Nepal must begin at the beginning, that is, with the village councils, and wait for a parliamentary democracy, till she reaches her economic and political "take-off." The royal democrats of Nepal were certainly providing a history to her democracy!

Incidentally, the idea of *panchayats* seems to recur in Nepal ever since the need for liberalisation was felt in that country. It formed the bed-rock of the constitution prepared by Rana Padma Shamsher in 1948 and it was repeated in the directive principles of state policy in the interim constitution which said (Art 5), "the state shall take steps to organise village *panchayats* and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government." The *panchayats* were no doubt indigenous to the soil and better understood by the illiterate masses in India and Nepal. If efficiently organised and given adequate

1. "Even in the United Kingdom, parliamentary democracy with extension of franchise beyond the strictly limited circle of feudal lords and financial magnates could not become fruitful till the compulsory education act of 1870 had run its full course with the backing of the widespread economic prosperity that the British people enjoyed"—*Panchayat Democracy for National Prosperity*, HMG, Kathmandu, May 62
2. *The Choice of the Nation*, HMG, Kathmandu.

powers, they could certainly ensure greater popular participation and satisfaction and be the real instruments of "popular will." But under existing conditions, the *panchayats* could also be more easily manipulated and controlled by the richer pressure groups operating in the countryside. They could "put the common man of the threshold" only if it was so desired by the power that 'guided' them.

Again, distrust of corrupt politicians is a feature common to all backward countries. Perhaps an underdeveloped country cannot afford the paraphernalia of multiple parties of parliamentary system. One has only to look at the tremendous economic waste involved in the maintenance of parliamentary institutions and political parties, not only in terms of the actual cost to the public exchequer, but also in terms of the human energy that goes into the mug's game, to pass a judgment on their futility. But that is a question of political theory which need not deter us here.

CONSOLIDATION OF ACTUALITY :

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS THAT HIS MAJESTY WAS NATURALLY expected to do was the purging of the administration. This he did with remarkable thoroughness. On 8 February, he changed the top ranks of the civil service dismissing thirteen secretaries and six joint secretraies, some in their thirties, and appointed fourteen administration rectification committees and a coordinating committee at the centre to weed out, in the next three months, "anti-social and anti-progressive" elements from administration in order to "improve" it. The committees were empowered to detain anyone in the interests of public security, and their chairmen were mostly "former politicians of middle rank, either opposed to the holding of the first general elections or defeated at the polls." ¹ Other members were drawn from the defence forces, police and judiciary. A Taxation Enquiry Commission, appointed on 5 February with Tanka Prasad Acharya as chairman, ² was asked to report in a month and it submitted its recommendations on 8 March. It suggested the nationalisation of *birta* land with compensation and a 10% tax on land besides an income tax on salaries, wages, allowances and business incomes. Its proposals were expected to yield Rs. 75 lakhs of revenue every year.

1. *The Times*, London.

2. Mr. Acharya seemed to me to be the most well-informed and clear-headed, if more vigorous, critic of the Koirala government's land reform policy.

On 22 February, B. P. Koirala went on a hunger strike, demanding that he be put on trial or be allowed to contest his detention in a court of law. He was persuaded to break his fast on 6 March (after 13 days) and Rishikesh Shaha told the Indian press three days later that B. P. Koirala and other detainees would be released "reasonably soon," if they cooperated with the regime, but this did not happen then or later. Obviously, B. P. Koirala had refused to cooperate with the Crown.

On 13 April, His Majesty abolished the 15 vassal states including Bhajang and Mustang which had given headache to Mr. B. P. Koirala¹ and divided the kingdom into 14 zones and 75 development districts. A new Land Reforms Commission was appointed to work out the details of land reform in the light of the recommendations of the Taxation Commission. On 22 May, a four-member Committee was appointed to assess Nepal's foreign exchange earnings and an Industrial Enterprises Act, promulgated on 23 May 1961, announced the industrial policy of the government which was to attract foreign capital. A Foreign Aid Negotiating Committee was set up on 22 June. On 15 August, the Finance Minister found the Government incompetent to run public enterprises, such as power houses and ropeways, and he decided to give them over to private enterprise as an attractive gesture.

As regards the economic situation in the country, Rs. 11 crores of currency was in circulation in Nepal in July 1961, compared to Rs. 5.49 crores in May 1960, and the Government issued Rs. 6 crore worth of notes further on 4 July 1961. The Finance Minister, however, assured on 15 August that the Nepali currency was sound and well backed by gold reserves and treasury bonds. He asserted that there was no inflation in the country and Nepal had a favourable trade balance of Rs. 2.40 crores imports, as against 1.47 crores exports, in the preceding year. Government presented a deficit budget of "austerity and economy" on 14 August which depended heavily on foreign aid in regard to developmental activities.

Towards the question of maintaining law and order in his country, King Mahendra displayed confidence, reserve and vigilance. As sporadic arrests continued side by side with sudden releases, it was clear that he was willing to conciliate former enemies of the regime but was determined to have it his own

1. The Prince of Bhajang was killed in Oct 62 in a fight against Government forces and the ruler was deprived of his titles and pension.

way. It was a game of patience between the King and the hundred and odd imprisoned men and a few hundred more supporting them in the realm. The Nepali press was warned not to indulge in "unhelpful" criticism and by and large, security precautions were made tighter or milder according to the exigencies of the situation day by day. Having put himself directly into the saddle, the King waited for the Nepali Congress to move and countered it with necessary, but not excessive, speed and severity.

The Nepali Congress was liable to take some time to recover from the shock it had received. It was taken unawares and had no previous apprehension of the King's action.¹ At the time of the royal *Coup*, the chief financier of the Nepali Congress and the deputy prime minister of its cabinet, General Subarna Shamsher had escaped arrest because he had earlier gone to India.² On 25 January 1961, a convention of leading members of the Nepali Congress held in Patna (India) resolved that the dissolution of parliament was unconstitutional. It appealed to Queen Elizabeth to cancel her impending visit to Nepal.³ On 26 January, a meeting of 39 out of the 101 members of the dissolved parliament in Patna demanded release of B. P. Koirala and the reconvening of parliament.⁴ Otherwise, it warned, "the people of Nepal would be forced to take necessary steps for upholding the sovereignty of the parliament."

1. This was confirmed by ex-home minister S. P. Upadhyaya, when he was released on 16 July 61. He told pressmen that four days before, the Prime Minister had assured them, there was no fear of His Majesty taking any action. However, this statement shows that the relations between the King and the Cabinet had become bitter and the Cabinet was apprehensive,
2. King Mahendra probably expected him to line up with the monarchy but he turned out to be its foe. Shortly after the *coup*, my interview with him at Calcutta gave me the impression that he believed he could really make it hot for the King. I pointed out to him that geography was a compelling factor. While the royal proclamation had been air-dropped throughout the kingdom, the republican case may not reach the people till many months after the event. "It will not be smooth sailing for the King," he replied. "If the terrain is hard, it is hard for the King's forces too." Evidently, he was meditating in terms of a militant action.
3. Queen Elizabeth visited Kathmandu, Pokhara and Patan from 26 February to 1 March with gala pomp and show and hunted a rhino in the jungles of central Nepal.
4. They included 36 Nepali Congress, 2 Gurkha Parishad and 1 Praja Parishad member of Misra group. One wing of Dr. K. I. Singh's party, led by K. P. Srivastava, and the Misra group of Praja Parishad, later merged in the Nepali Congress.

It also purported to give a theoretical justification of its stand by stating that the sovereignty enjoyed by the King was "not original sovereignty, but one derived from the people as a formal head of the state," and "any attempt to convert it into an original sovereignty" would mean "a rebellion against the real sovereignty that still resides with the people and their elected parliament." On the following day, General Subarna threatened to launch a civil disobedience campaign if the King did not respond to their appeal. In reply on 30 January, the home minister appealed to General Subarna and other refugees to return to Nepal, assuring them no restriction upon their freedom of movement, and further arrests were stopped.

In March 1961, according to reports in the Indian press, some "clashes between peasants and feudal lords" led to riots in western Nepal where troops had to be sent from Kathmandu to restore order. Similar incidents of varying importance were reported from other parts of Nepal.¹ The Government denied their occurrence or importance, but on 6 March, by a decree, it issued orders to all its servants, including retired pensioners and landlords, to report on the persons engaged in anti-government activities on pain of dismissal and/or confiscation of property if they failed to do so. The disturbances definitely posed no major challenge to the King's power so that the decree was found to be puzzling by Indian observers. On 14 March, another decree empowered the Government to restrict any activity or association of a Nepali citizen for security reasons, summon home any citizen then abroad and to punish defaulters *in absentia* with imprisonment, fine, confiscation and denial of citizenship. In reply to these measures, General Subarna threatened on 23 March that the Nepali army was not "as dumb as the King might think it to be." His Majesty's Government poured contempt on him by releasing his ally, former leader of the opposition in Parliament, Bharat Shamsheer, on 29 March. On 3 April, following a peasant revolt in western Nepal, press censorship was imposed upon reports of political activity.

On 19 June 1961, a meeting of Nepali Congress workers, held at Gorakhpur (India), discussed the plan of a "real people's

1. Bharat Shamsheer claimed 8 months later (Nov 61) that these "revolts" had been caused by the King's reversal of Koirala government's reforms and his support to "feudal interests." Mr. Kashi Nath Gautam, former minister of health, also claimed on 31 Jan 62 that the armed uprising in the beginning of 1961 was the work of Nepali Congress volunteers who had contact with the central organisation situated in Calcutta.—*TI*, 2 Feb 62. These claims do not fit in the general trend of events and facts as they are known to us.

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movement" against the King's regime. General Subarna expressed his faith in a popular mass agitation, as opposed to subversive activities, and declared that they would soon start a peaceful and non-violent civil disobedience movement in Nepal. He was not in favour of an armed uprising, he said, but feared that the King might goad the people to it by driving them to desperation. While no exact date for the movement was disclosed, General Subarna declared that 'the revolution could not be far off,' since 'its rumblings were being heard.' Four days later, another Congress leader asserted that the King was losing control and he was on the brink of a collapse. On 22 July, a spokesman of the Nepali Communist Party disclosed to pressmen in Darjeeling his party's plan to launch a movement, "without any military help from either India or China", and said that the struggle would be begun in five zones simultaneously. He appealed to the Nepali Congress for a joint front.¹

Nevertheless, Mrs. Sushila Koirala (wife of B. P.) was released on 1 July 1961, The Home Ministry announced cancellation of all pending warrants. It invited all political exiles to return on condition that they observed the laws of the country. S. P. Upadhyaya, home minister in the deposed cabinet, was released on the same day together with Dr. Kesar Jung Raimajhi, general secretary of the Nepali Communist Party, who had been arrested five days earlier.² His Majesty was so confident of the situation at home towards the end of August that he left for a long tour abroad which led him to India, Pakistan, China, Mangolia and Yugoslavia. Before he left Kathmandu, he told a press correspondent, "If I prove by my action that I am more loyal to the people of Nepal than the self-seeking politicians, there would be no cause for worry as to the fate of the Crown. It is better to put the Crown to test here and now, than to allow it to be lost by default."

After upsetting the *apple-cart* of Parliament, the King was contesting with his 'popular' ministers on the polling booth.

1. *Hindusthan Standard*, Calcutta, 24 Jul 61.
2. Dr. Raimajhi, leader of the "moderate", pro-Soviet, faction in the Nepali Communist Party, was in Moscow at the time of the *coup*. His arrest on 11 Jul 61 created a stir in Kathmandu because he was believed to be in India and had entered Nepal without being apprehended. In fact, 14 out of 17 members of the Central Committee and all the 5 members of the politbureau had escaped arrest, and a determined effort was launched in July to round up the Reds. His release suggested that he was against the movement which was controlled by his opponent, the leader of the "extremist", or "die-hard", pro-Chinese faction, Mr. Pushpa Lall.

THE PEOPLE SLEEP

THE PEACE THAT REIGNED IN NEPAL DURING THE KING'S absence from the country in September-October 1961 proved conclusively that there was no articulate public opinion inside Nepal and the Nepali Congress had completely failed in its plans of a civil disobedience movement. The movement had not even been launched. In November, Bharat Shamsheer, released on the usual undertaking not to participate in politics, was granted royal permission to go to Europe to attend to some personal business affairs. He attended the International Socialist Congress at Rome and came to India to stay there and join forces with General Subarna. Security measures were then further tightened in Nepal. A decree empowered district magistrates and commissioners to sentence persons found guilty of destroying the peace of the land to one year's imprisonment. On 16 November, foreign newspapers carrying stories of sporadic unrest in Nepal were subjected to magisterial pre-censorship, before they were allowed to be circulated.

Thus, during the first year of the Emergency, Government had needed all the precautions, but not much force, to keep itself in power. There had been no large scale revolts against the royal take-over. The rumblings of the revolution heard by the Nepali Congress exiles were false. The situation had remained, by and large, normal. No large scale extra expenditure had been incurred on policing or intelligence and a few sporadic riots that occurred were not necessarily against the King's action or for the Koirala cabinet. They were rather the normal feature of this still unorganised kingdom, undergoing a difficult transition, as peasant trouble in certain parts of Nepal had been endemic for a long time. They were hardly inspired, much less organised, by the Nepali Congress. The King's supporters had pleaded in December 1960 that the situation must not be allowed to deteriorate into becoming a contest between the King and the People since it meant a civil war in Nepal, and it had not so deteriorated. Nothing more noteworthy was done by the Nepali Congress leaders during 1961 than the publication of some statements in the Indian press.

The greatest achievement of His Majesty, at the end of 1961, was that he had stabilized himself and belied all critics who had predicted that he had chewed more than he could digest. He had not collapsed or lost control. His team of ministers had

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successfully held together and he had quickly restored normal atmosphere in Kathmandu by releasing a large number of detainees. Despite bureaucratic inconsistency, there had been more concessions than repressions and the strained atmosphere, which one observed in Kathmandu during the first few weeks of the emergency, had vanished sooner than one expected. King Mahendra had put the Crown to test and won the first round.

The net gain of the Nepali Congress was that the King had failed to impair seriously the unity of the Congress as none of its top leaders had really defected to the King. On the other hand, the Praja Parishad of B. K. Misra on 26 February 1961 and a wing of the United Democratic Party of Dr. K. I. Singh had merged with the Nepali Congress. In December 1961, Bharat Shamsher announced the merger of the Gurkha Parishad also, thus making the Congress, *for the first time* a genuine united front of all those who stood for parliament, except the communists. The strength of this united front too was very poor and it had no organisation inside Nepal. The Communist Party was "the only political organisation functioning in Nepal due to its well-perfected "underground activity."¹ By not allowing them to join the united front, the congress lost the only machinery it could depend on inside its Country. It had also lost valuable time in inaction and had permitted the King to consolidate his administration. By not starting any civil liberties movement inside Nepal, the Congress surrendered its pretensions of mass support and the only possibility of raising the people's morale.

AID AND ABUSE

THE GREATEST CASUALTY OF THE KING'S ACTION, HOWEVER, threatened to be Indo-Nepali friendship. The Indian Prime Minister expressed concern on 6 January 1961 at the "virulent anti-Indian campaign" conducted by the Nepali Press and, since newspapers in Nepal could not write freely at that time, he asked if this campaign had the backing of "existing authority". Dr. Tulsi Giri, Nepali Foreign Minister, denied on 8 January that it was "instigated" by Nepal Government and finance minister Rishi Kesh Shaha deplored the "India-baiting" campaign.

Dr. Giri visited Delhi on 19 January bearing a personal message from His Majesty to Prime Minister Nehru and a

1. AR, 1962, p. 4410.

month later, on 19 February, Mrs. Lakshmi Menon, Deputy Minister for External Affairs, reported to *Rajya Sabha* a "marked decline in anti-Indian propaganda in Nepal" since the Government of India had drawn their attention to the matter. The Nepal Government, she said, had issued two Press Notes appealing for a cessation of the campaign. Mr. Nehru added that one of the Nepali ministers had regretted to him and explained that this had occurred before the new administration "properly got going." On 30 January, Vishwa Bandhu Thapa said that, India being Nepal's friend, there was no need to draw her attention to the anti-Nepali activity on the Indian soil. Mr. Shaha said that Indo-Nepali friendship was much too valuable to be sacrificed for anything. The Indo-Nepali goodwill, nevertheless, continued to diminish by the Indian newspapers pressing on their anti-monarchical campaign and the Nepali press accusing India of 'interference' in their internal affairs. As Indian political leaders expressed their shock and resentment at the absolutist ambitions of the King, Nepali officials and even ministers likened India to a "usurper".¹

In April 1961, India gave a Rs. 13.20 million aid to Nepal for village development, irrigation, small power plants and local development works, supplementing the 1959 aid agreement for the same purposes and bringing the total Indian aid to Nepal to Rs. 350 million. His Majesty, then, made half a dozen complimentary references to India and pleaded for greater publicity to Indian aid, but at the same time, Nepal accepted a Rs. 16 crore assistance from China for cement, paper and hydro-electric projects which robbed the Indian aid of all goodwill in India or in Nepal. Nepal utilised the opportunity to strike a hard bargain with China because she refused to bear even "local costs" which ultimately had to be signed by China in June 1961. On 19 May, after the first review of trade and transit between Indian and Nepali delegations in New Delhi, the existing procedure regarding transit of goods through India from and to Nepal was further simplified, especially with regard to personal baggage and air transit of goods.² India agreed to permit transit of goods by road in special cases and the amount of bond was drastically scaled down. Since the

1. Vishwa Bandhu Thapa in a speech on 30 May 61. "The days are past", he said, when a first secretary of the Indian embassy could change cabinets in Nepal overnight."
2. The talks were held under art. 13 of the 1960 treaty which provided for periodic consultations in order to resolve difficulties arising in day to day implementation.

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bond "locked up" Nepali capital for long periods, it was a great relief to Nepali traders. A coordinating committee for Gandak project was also set up and Finance Minister Rishi Kesh Shaha appreciated "India's spirit of accomodation" in the trade talks,

In June-July, concern was expressed in India over the health of B. P. Koirala which was said to be failing for want of adequate medical attention. Jai Prakash Narain, in his capacity as chairman of the Afro-Asian Council, demanded his immediate release. In a statement at New Delhi on 28 June 1961, Narain spoke of "seething discontent" in Nepal and criticised the King's absolutist ambitions. He was duly invited to Nepal three weeks later where he met the King for more than two hours, though his desire to meet B. P. Koirala remained unfulfilled. Retuning to New Delhi on 19 July, J. P. told the press that King Mahendra had no "personal animus" against the Nepali Congress leaders; he was sincerely trying to implement basic democracy; he had a "sincere desire" to decentralise power and he did not contemplate any change for the time being because he had faith in the *panchayat* system. The Gandhian-Socialist leader said, he did not differ much with the King on his criticism of the parliamentary system and His Majesty had assured him "repeatedly" that he had taken over "not due to any desire for personal power, but to his conviction that parliamentary democracy had failed in Nepal." As a true Gandhian, Jai Prakash Narain could not doubt the sincerity of the Nepali monarch but he felt that the *panchayat* system had been introduced in Nepal under a great handicap, unlike India, where *panchayats* were developing "in freedom". He finally advised the King to convert the "take-over" into a "give-over" so that Nepal could have a *bhoodani* monarch, granting an atmosphere of fullest freedom of criticism and party politics for the *panchayats* to prosper. On the whole, this dialogue provided a voice of support in India to the King's action in a situation where only the Hindu Mahasabha had ventured to support him.¹

King Mahendra was perfectly aware of the dangers involved in a worsening of Indo-Nepali relations but he could not

1. Mahant Digvijai Nath, President of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, condemned the Nepali Congress and supported King Mahendra in a statement on 12 July 61. In fact, since the royal take-ove, the Nepal Government had assiduously tried to rally the support of Hindu communal elements in India on the ground that the Nepali monarch was the only Hindu King ruling on this earth in the twentieth century.

stop the India-baiting campaign then started as a diversion by his own supporters, He, however, entrusted the Nepali embassy in India to the ablest of his lieutenants in the Foreign office, Mr. Nar Pratap Thapa, who was relieved of his post of foreign Secretary and sent to India as ambassador as early as April 1961.¹ On 29 July, King Mahendra was satisfied that Nepal's relations with India were essentially sound and, a month later, he told reporters in New Delhi that there was no anti-Indian feeling in Nepal.

In the last week of August, King Mahendra came to India to talk with Nehru and there was a distinct improvement in the Indian atmosphere. His Majesty, however, also visited Pakistan in mid-September (10-15 Sep.) to have cordial and undisclosed talks with President Ayub. He negotiated more Soviet aid, with the Soviets bearing the "local costs" and, going to China (28 September-16 October 1961), he not only signed the border treaty,² but also a £3.5 million economic aid agreement for the construction of a highway connecting Kathmandu with Lhasa.³ The highway, to be constructed between 1 July

1. N. P. Thapa's removal from foreign secretaryship also mollified Indian press and official opinion which had branded him as pro-Chinese for the part he had played in securing Chinese aid for Nepal. The Indian press promptly interpreted his transfer to India as a demotion but it was demonstrated later that Mr. Thapa had been chosen for New Delhi precisely because of his merit and confidence, and because His Majesty realised the need to handle Indo-Nepali relations with caution during that difficult period. Mr. Thapa was succeeded in the foreign ministry by Prof. Yadu Nath Khanal, then a member of the Nepali delegation to the U.N. The importance attached to Nepali embassy in New Delhi is further confirmed by the fact that later, after the sudden death of Mr. N. P. Thapa in an air accident, Prof. Khanal was sent to India as ambassador. The other new ambassadors appointed with Mr. Thapa were: M. P. Koirala for Washington, Kashi Prasad Upadhyaya for London, J.N. Singh for Moscow and Mr. Subarna Shamsheer for Rome.
2. The 300 sq. miles dispute was settled mostly in favour of Nepal. Everest was not mentioned, but on his return, King Mahendra said that Everest belonged to Nepal "as usual." Later it was disclosed that the northern side of Everest remained with China and the peak probably belonged to both China and Nepal. The treaty defined in general the points where the Sino-Nepali frontier meets India in the west and Sikkim in the east. Mrs. Menon stated on 5 Sep 61 that the Government of India had already [made known precise locations of these points to both the governments. Indian official sources said on 13 Oct. that references to the trijunction in the Sino-Nepali treaty, although vague, were consistent with Indian definitions.
3. On the eve of King's departure for China, a 6 pp. document issued by the Nepal Government (24 Sep 61), written by Purna Bahadur, a member of the National Planning Commission, proclaimed that Chinese economic aid to Nepal was the "most unselfish and most genuine of all such aids." Till then the total aid provided to Nepal had been; India 28 crores, USA 25 crores, China 16 crores, Russia 3.5 crores.

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1962 and 30 June 1966 was to be built by Chinese experts and technicians, besides money and material, and the Chinese also promised to train Nepali technicians and skilled workers in road building. The joint communique, issued at the end of King Mahendra's two weeks' visit to China (16 October 1961), assured that China would never adopt a great nation attitude towards Nepal. Liu Shao-chi confessed to the Nepali monarch in private conversation that China had been guilty of this attitude in the past, presumably referring to the previous Manchu and KMT governments. On 24 December, construction on the Indian-aided Tika Bhairav hydro project was inaugurated.

While the Pak-Nepali *tete-a-tete* produced concern, the Nepali Tibet highway was looked upon with alarm in Indian officials circles and it remained a point of "dispute" between India and Nepal for long. The Indian Press thought the road link would result in the "natural buffer" disappearing and would open Nepal to Chinese goods and ideology. The Nepalis insisted that it was merely an economic measure — "nothing more, nothing less" and, while it would increase the volume of trade between Nepal and Tibet, the Nepalis were not interested in an "artificial diversion" of their economy and trade. They promised to "put very severe restrictions on movement of goods imported from India" so as to avoid their re-export to China. Certainly, Nepal was interested in restoring her position of being "an island entrepot between the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia through this traditional route"¹ but she was not scared of Chinese ideological infiltration, because "Communism does not immigrate in a taxi automobile."² In October 1961, efforts were being made to

1. Finance Minister Rishi Kesh Shaha, in an interview with the press at Kathmandu on 31 Dec 61. Mr. Shaha pointed out that the road was to be built on a traditional route, "still existing as a bridal path across the easily accessible 5,000 ft. Rasua Pass", which had been deserted as a result of the Younghusband expedition and the construction of the Kalimpong—Lhasa road by the British.—The *Statesman*, 1 Jan 62.
2. King Mahendra's speech at Pokhara, 18 Nov 61. He added, "As regards saying that communism has stolen a march, I would say that any 'ism' or ideology is not an independent growth to be picked up on a nearby tree or grassy land, that it is something to be adopted or rejected in accordance with time and circumstances and in the inevitable light of the genius, culture, traditions and position of a particular country...The rumour that the projected Kathmandu-Lhasa road will be tantamount to an invitation to communism is worth a good laugh..." He further told the *Hindusthan Samachar* on 6 Feb 62 that the Highway Agreement was not pre-planned and it was he who had

revive Nepal's trade with Tibet, and Indian newspapers alerted Indian businessmen that Indian textiles would henceforth be required to compete with Chinese textiles in the Nepali market, but on 6 December, the Nepal Government banned export of strategic material which was suspected of being used by the Chinese in their military build-up in Tibet.

made the request to the Chinese. Ambassador N.P. Thapa pleaded that "this one road, which in fact already exists as a mule track, will make one more area in our northern region easily accessible to us, as will be other northern areas with the construction of 900 miles of other north-south roads."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Collapse of the Republicans

KING MAHENDRA HAD EVERY REASON TO BE SATISFIED WITH his one year's rule in the teeth of Indian opposition and without any political support worth the name at home or abroad. So he restored fundamental freedoms on 10 December 1961, though he renewed the emergency and extended the ban on political parties indefinitely. In the meantime, the Nepali Congress had reformed its ranks with the added strength of all the elements who had been forced by the circumstances to become republicans. Having failed to start a civil disobedience campaign, the Congress opened the year 1962 with a series of reprisals against His Majesty's Government.

Local disturbances, raids on police posts, attacks on officials and sabotage became increasingly common in December-January and culminated in armed uprisings in several areas. The driving force of this militant action was General Subarna, who had established himself in Calcutta and planted his agents in many key areas with a plan of action.¹ Besides being in overall command, he was personally responsible for operations in eastern Nepal² and Shashi Shamsheer at Gorakhpur for action in the west. The central zone was jointly under the command of Kanchan Shamsheer, second son of General Subarna, and Tej Bahadur Amatya, both residing at Raxaul. On 5 January, King Mahendra lashed at the "traitors" who were trying to seize power in Nepal "*from the sanctuary of a foreign power*". Three days later, when His Majesty was entertaining a messenger of peace (U Nu from Burma) in Kathmandu, at a press conference in Calcutta, Subarna spoke of *spontaneous* uprisings in nine out of 32 districts in Nepal and claimed that the Nepali Congress

1. *The Statesman*, 11 Jan 62

2. According to Nepali government sources, the eastern area command was later placed under Bharat Shamsheer and shifted to Darjeeling. When Dareejling was closed by the Government of India, it seems to have shifted to Jalpaiguri in West Bengal.

and leaders were vanguards of the armed uprisings. "The uprising was spontaneous but not leaderless", he declared and boasted that "underground Congress leaders had spread themselves all over the disturbed areas to take the leadership of armed bands and were in communication with him". The "spontaneous movement" started last month, because of the "insane and tyrannical repression of the King" who had "lost his mental balance in desperation", would gather momentum shortly, he added.¹ Sabotage and rebellion were reported from several areas along the Indo-Nepali border. The tactics of the rebels were said to be "modelled on those of the Malayan communists".²

With characteristic speed and courage, King Mahendra took the bull by the horn and undertook a two-week tour of the kingdom in mid-January. On 22 January, a bomb was thrown at his car in Janakpur, when he was going to attend a reception and the rostrum where he was to speak was dynamited. Dr. Tulsi Giri blamed India for inaction and he and Rishi Kesh Shaha held the Nepali exiles in India responsible for the outrage. Mr. Shaha hinted that the Nepal Government may ask for extradition of Congress rebels, but added that the Government and people of India were not to blame for the incidents. An external affairs spokesman called Dr. Giri's statement "irresponsible" and General Subarna refuted the charge with the counter-allegation that "Whenever a tyrant or a dictator wants to discredit his political opponents, he has recourse to provocations organised by his own agents." King Mahendra warned that Nepal of 1962 was not Nepal of 1950 and guided democracy would not be given up under any provocation. The Indian government was reported to have "repeatedly" warned the Nepali Congress leaders that their methods must always remain peaceful and that they were liable to punishment if they broke the laws of the land.³ This did not seem to have deterred the rebels but General Subarna disclaimed on 31 January 1962 that the Congress was engineering trouble in Nepal from the Indian soil. Replying to Dr. Giri, who had made the charge, he said, Dr. Giri should realise that it was not possible for a few persons living in India to stir up revolt in so many parts of Nepal.⁴ On 27 February, he again refuted the charge that

1. *The Statesman* 9 Jan 62.
2. *The Times*, London.
3. *TI*, 1 Feb 62.
4. *The Statesman*, 3 Feb 62.

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Nepali Congress leaders had made India their base of operations.

UNFORTUNATE CASUALTY

MEANWHILE, REBEL ACTIVITY IN NEPAL WAS BLOWING INDO-Nepali friendship to smithereens. The unsuccessful attempt on King's life led to an anti-Indian demonstration on India's Republic Day before the Indian embassy in Kathmandu. No less a person than Foreign Minister Tulsi Giri delivered a series of speeches between 24-28 January 1962 demanding that India hand over those responsible for the assassination plot. He denounced India's "political trickery" and accused Nehru of using double standards with regards to Cuba and Nepal. The Government of India protested on 30 January against these speeches and assured that the traffic in arms was being checked. The Indian Note said, "according to our information, the incidents were caused by Nepalese nationals inside Nepalese territory and there was an attempt to blame the Government of India for the failure of the Nepalese authorities to maintain law and order inside Nepal". In their reply on 5 February, the Nepali Government explained that Dr. Giri's speeches had been extempore; no official record of those speeches had been kept and he did not recollect having made any offensive statements. On 7 February, King Mehendra himself told a Radio Nepal correspondent that it was necessary to settle the "minor differences" between Nepal and India "so that the communists were not able to take advantage of the current feeling of the Nepali people". The Government of India reasserted on 8 February that "the suggestion that expeditions have been mounted against Nepal from India is clearly far removed from fact" and the Indian government had instructed its border authorities to exercise utmost vigilance. Those instructions had been scrupulously observed, it concluded.

Ex-home Minister S. P. Upadhyaya expressed his anxiety at the deterioration of Indo-Nepali relations and felt that the most disturbing aspect of the current situation was terrorism, "which had made its appearance for the first time". He appealed for sanity, but his voice was heard neither in India nor in Nepal. On 13 February, *Motherland*, supposed to reflect official opinion in Nepal, hinted that Nepal might, in the last resort, ask for international enquiry into the Nepali complaint. Both as a measure of contempt for the Nepali rebels, as well as a warning to India, the Nepal Radio, in contrast with its previous silence, began broadcasting in its news-bulletins incidents of

sabotage "by armed bands coming from India". However, His Majesty confirmed on 18 February 1962 that the Indian government had issued orders to prevent the "highly questionable activities of anti-national elements" along the Indian border.

Sabotage and violence continued unabated during February in Bharatpur, Birganj, Amlekhganj and Koilabash near the Indian border and the Nepali army was reported to be planning an offensive against rebels hiding in the jungles.² In his national day message, King Mahendra repeated his government's resolve to destroy the "traitors" and the Defence Ministry announced later the creation of home guards out of the police force, to be attached to the regular army. The raid on Koilabash was even alleged to be directed by an Indian official and it evoked a formal protest from Nepal on 20 February. The Nepali Note accused the Indian government of "failure to prevent the hostiles from using Indian territory as their base of operations" and demanded disbanding of refugee organisations in India. On 24 February, *Motherland* urged the Nepal Government to abandon its "soft policy" towards India.

Amidst and despite the disturbances, the Ministry of National Guidance observed the Panchayat Day throughout Nepal on 5 January and conducted elections for more than 4,000 *panchayats* on 18 February, at a cost of Rs. 2.5 lakhs, as a first step towards the introduction of *basic* democracy.³ An official statement made earlier promised that they were to be followed by elections to the city, district and zonal councils, and finally a *National Panchayat*, with His Majesty as Chairman, to act as the national legislature. The date of convening the National Panchayat was later announced as 14 April 1963. The village *panchayats*, to which had been elected mostly "village headmen, petty landlords and farmers of influence" (as was to be expected), could nonetheless be dissolved under the law if they were not found to be working satisfactorily.³ A 12-page booklet issued by the Government described the royal take-over as a "common man's revolution" and the *panchayat* system as a step to achieve identity between the government and the governed and towards the evolution of a political system in which the common man could take part in governance."

1. *TI*, 25 Feb 62

2. The *panchayat* elections were held under an Act passed by the Koirala government, with the exception that *panchayats* were not invested with judicial powers, as provided in the Act.

3. *TI*, 22 Feb 62.

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The armed insurrections of the Nepali Congress hardened the King's attitude and he was now more determined than ever not to allow political parties to function in Nepal. On 28 February Tanka Prasad Acharya, as spokesman of five other political leaders who had stood by the monarchy during its gloomiest hour, sought the King's permission to set up a non-political organisation which could "enlighten the people on the danger the country was facing as a result of the activities of anti-national elements" and, incidentally, also to offer 'constructive criticism of official policies and misdeeds of officials'.¹ King Mahendra replied that he would never allow "the old spirit of aggrandizement to reappear" and three weeks later, the Government rejected Mr. Acharya's request. Even though the Acharyas had supported the monarchy for their own political reasons, His Majesty had never depended on their support for his actions or power.

Intensified rebel activity was reported in March-April and on 14 March, the national opera house in Kathmandu, inaugurated by the King a few days before, was gutted. At the same time, a plot to "rescue" B.P. Koirala from his detention camp at Sundarijala, six miles from Kathmandu, was unearthed. Two villages on the Sikkim border were reported to be held by the rebels for nearly a month as a base for frequent attacks on posts and revenue offices. A rebel radio was also heard on 8 April, presumably operating from Sikkim or Darjeeling. In May, the Congress claimed that rebel forces in western Nepal had captured almost all police posts in two districts. Official sources on the other hand stated in August that, since the outbreak of the rebellion, only 23 soldiers and police had been killed and 28 wounded. The rebel casualties were 63 killed and 28 wounded; others, 14 killed and 29 injured.

On 7 March 1962, Nehru disclosed that he had invited King Mahendra to visit India for discussions. On 13 March, the Prime Minister told *Lok Sabha* that the Government of India's policy had been to prevent any arms-being sent across the border or India being made a base for activities against the existing Nepali regime. However, on the open India-Nepal border, despite checkpoints, it was difficult to stop people from crossing, though according to Indian information very few arms had entered Nepal from India. Most of the trouble inside Nepal, Mr. Nehru thought, had been caused locally. On 15th, he said, "We have gone a good long way not

1. *TI*, 1 Mar 62.

to interfere in any way in Nepal. We have continued our economic help, etc. as we used to. But the fact is there is this discontent in Nepal. I cannot say to what extent it is there. But because of this discontent, there was some internal trouble. But to accuse us of fomenting that trouble, it seems to me very extraordinary". Commenting upon the "constitutional freedom" of "the people coming to India" (in this case, Nepali exiles) to express their opinion, he said, "Just as the Chinese seem to imagine we can issue order to our newspapers because they can do so, the Nepalese ministers seem to imagine we can spirit away and pass orders against people or detain them". On the following day, Mrs. Lakshmi Menon stated that the Nepali allegations had been investigated and found baseless. No armed Nepali organisation existed in India and no hostile expeditions had entered Nepal from India. Indian territory had not been used to train or organise Nepalis for subversive activities. The border authorities had been instructed, she repeated, and instructions were being scrupulously carried out. As a further precaution, the Government of India declared Darjeeling a "notified area" on 31 March, entry to which was regulated by permits.

Mr. Rishi Kesh Shah admirably summed up the Indo-Nepali differences on 27 March, when he told the press in Kathmandu that on the Nepali side there were apprehensions that anti-national elements (Nepali rebels) in India might at one stage or another receive aid from the Government of India. On the Indian side, he added, there was fear that the Nepalis might doublecross them and make a deal with China. India had rightly granted asylum to Nepali rebels, he thought, but the latter were abusing Indian hospitality and causing embarrassment to the Indian government.

The explanation given by the Government of India could scarcely be expected to satisfy Nepali government which was certain that the Nepali rebels had not been able to build a stable base inside Nepal for any length of time, apart from gaining minor vantage points on the Indo-Nepali frontier. It need not be denied either that the people and press of India sympathised with the parliamentary aspirations of the Nepali republicans. Therefore, history was repeating itself inasmuch as His Majesty's Government, like its predecessor Rana Government, alleged Indian 'Interference' and charged that the Indian government had afforded freedom to the rebels to operate from Indian territory to launch their acts of sabotage inside Nepal. Almost the lone voice of Rishi Kesh Shaha repeated that the Government

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of India was “not associated” with the rebels and could not be accused of “complicity” in the rebellion. While Nepal Government survived the Nepali Congress ‘insurrection’ and described the rebellion as minor, it is evident that the rebellion was “more than a nuisance”. King Mahendra, accompanied by Dr. Tulsi Giri, therefore, visited India on 18-23 April 1962. A Palace Communique issued on 28 March said that the trip was being undertaken “as it has become necessary to do adequate thinking” on the continuation of “anti-Nepal activity from Indian territory”. On the eve of their departure, the Nepal Government released a 62-page document elaborating its case against India. ¹

The booklet said that the latest statement by the Indian Prime Minister that India wanted to see her type of government in Nepal ² was not only revolting to all conscientious Nepalis but also demolished the foundations on which her basic beliefs, values and virtues rested. It warned that this may “open a Pandora’s box and pose a threat to the maintenance and preservation of peace and tranquility in the world. Profusely quoting the Indian press and communication media which, it said, had a “vested interest in magnifying and distorting the facts”, it asserted that an organisation “maintaining a private army” existed in India, “as evidenced by the reportings of the Indian Press, the captured arms and ammunition, the statements made by arrested persons and ‘pay books’, bearing the signatures of Shashi Shamsher Rana, on behalf of the revolution and distributed for taking part in the armed movement launched by the banned Nepali Congress.” Mentioning Calcutta, Jalpaiguri, Gorakhpur, Raxaul, Patna, Darbhanga, Siliguri and Narkatiaganj as the centres of recruitment, it alleged that one could see the recruited men in formations during their exercises in any of the above-quoted towns. ³ Strangely reminiscent of the Chinese charges with regard to India’s alleged involvement in the Tibetan revolt, it argued that the residence of General Subarna at Calcutta was the *command centre* of the revolt, whose all the active members were in India and, while Nehru himself had received the “over-all commander of the so-called volunteers” General Subarna in person, the ruling party in India, the Indian National Congress, had publicly received a fraternal Nepali

1. *Hostile Expeditions and International Law*, written by Prakash Bahadur, K. C., Dept. of Pub., Ministry of National Guidance, H. M. G., Kathmandu, Apr 62.
2. I have not been able to trace any statement by Mr. Nehru wishing to have an Indian pattern of government in Nepal.
3. This was stretching the “facts” too far, if it was not entirely untrue.

Congress delegation to its annual session at Patna. "To sum up", it concluded, "the hostile expeditions against Nepal are organised, financed and armed in the territories of India and the beginning and setting on foot of military expeditions against Nepal are within the full knowledge of the Indian Union and its constituent states having common border with Nepal." It mentioned that the Nepali Congress mouthpiece, *Awhan*, published in India without the name of the editor, publisher or press, ¹ had been issuing directives and orders to its followers and, referring to Indian denial of the knowledge of these facts, it said, "When crime puts on the apparel of innocence, through a curious reversal peculiar to our age, it is innocence that is called upon to justify itself."

Further, the booklet characterised the usual Indian replies, that the disturbances were internal and the open border made control difficult, as "replies not in the nature of friendly good neighbour but ones to be expected from the defence counsel of the hostiles." It turned down the Indian plea of national constitution and domestic laws and compared India's attitude in this regard to her stand on Cuba, where Mr. Nehru had said that "from all accounts, the base of the invasion was somewhere in the U.S.A. or in Central America", because invasion from outside "could not take place without the organisation, encouragement and help of the authorities, *public or private*, of the U.S.A." It would be none of India's business, the Indian Prime Minister had declared, "if there had been some kind of an internal turmoil", but encouragement to a force from outside was "a kind of intervention" which could set off a chain reaction and India did not want the people of Cuba to destroy themselves in a civil war. ² Did the Indian Prime Minister want people of Nepal to destroy themselves in a fratricidal war, asked the author of this booklet, striking a parallel between Cuba and Nepal, since according to him, there was no internal turmoil in Nepal either.

Again, comparing the Nepali rebels to Naga hostiles or Pakistani invaders, the booklet recalled the Government of India's appeal to the U. N. O. in one case and to the Burmese government in the other, and lauded the latter's help in mopping up Naga rebels, who crossed the Indo-Burmese frontier, and in securing its borders against the escape of hostiles into Burma. Quoting several international lawyers and cases, as well as Indian

1. This is against the Indian press laws.

2. *RS*, 29 Apr 61.

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laws, it sought to impress upon the Government of India that the latter could, and should, prevent injurious use of its territory, suppress arms traffic, prevent armed expeditions, liquidate the Nepali Congress organisation in India, extern or deport the hostiles from India, or confine or detain them.

Lastly, the author condemned the “mischievous and malicious press campaign going on in India against Nepal and the defamatory publications against the Sovereign of a friendly country” which must be stopped by the enforcement of the press laws of the country.¹ In conclusion, the publication warned that the Indian government could not “shirk its international responsibility”, and “India’s acquiescence in allowing her territory to become a base of operations in Nepal” had raised in Nepal a widespread demand for “an agonising reappraisal of the edifice of our relationship with India.”

While Nepal had learnt the lessons of Sino-Indian dispute only too well, the Indian government had indetical replies to give to Nepal as it had given to China at the time of the Dalai’s escape to the south of the Himalayas.

THE LAST DEBUT.

KING MAHENDRA, THUS, CAME TO INDIA FULLY ARMED WITH A prepared brief against the Nepali rebels and the Indian government’s “complicity” in the Nepali rebellion. The joint Nehru-Mahendra communique, issued on 23 April 1962, mentioned eventually, “the situation created by certain activities which handicapped the efforts of His Majesty’s Government of Nepal to execute their plans of social and economic development and introduction of agrarian reforms,” and “the misunderstanding between India and Nepal created by interested Nepalis.” On behalf of the Indian Prime Minister, the communique assured His Majesty that India was “vitaly interested in the stability and prosperity of Nepal” as “vital to the security and prosperity of India” and, “While freedom of expression was permitted in India, the Government of India were against all violent or unlawful activities of any sort.” The Prime Minister also told His Majesty that “it was important to give the people a sense of participation in the country’s development” and repeated “India’s continued readiness to assist Nepal in appropriate

1. As an example, it quoted Subarna’s statement published in Indian papers that the situation in Nepal was “the direct result of the insane and tyrannical repression of the King” and that the King “in his desperation had lost his mental balance.”

spheres in furtherance of His Majesty's plans for social and economic development." Regarding *panchayat* democracy, the two leaders explained their system and efforts to each other.

The communique made it evident that the differences in approach and outlook had remained unbridged. The Indian government continued to take shelter behind the freedom of expression permitted in India because Mr. Nehru believed that return to normalcy was necessary for a success of Nepali plans and reforms, but one gain from the Nepali viewpoint was India's consent to institute "joint informal inquiries" by senior officials designated by the two governments, whenever some misunderstandings arose. ¹ Undoubtedly, the "frank exchange of views had further contributed towards cementing relations between the two governments and peoples" and lessening of tension between the two countries.

It may be recalled that Indian big business had its confidence in Nepal Government's stability restored as early as the beginning of 1962, because on 14 February, the Birlas signed a Rs. 2.19 crore textile mill agreement with the Nepal Government. On 25 April, India signed five agreements with Nepal to the value of Rs. 14.80 million for providing a water-supply system and general post office for Kathmandu, rural irrigation, drainage and water-supply schemes and a 20-mile road from Kathmandu to Daksina-Kali. The new general post office was expected to end the existing Nepali dependence upon Indian embassy for sending foreign telegrams. Work on the 621-mile east-west highway, for which surveys had been made by Soviet experts, was also begun earlier in the same month. On 22 May, a new economic policy was announced by the Nepal Government under which an organisation called *Sujha* (Partnership) was launched to finance small industrial ventures to the extent of 60% of their share capital. The venture, granted Rs. 4 lakhs by Government, was to enrol a lakh of members to raise its capital. On 21 June, foundation stone was laid of an industrial estate in Patan, near Kathmandu.

The effects of King Mahendra's visit were short-lived because it did not lead to any truce between him and the Nepali rebels, or the Indian Press which had been gleefully publishing all the

1. The booklet, *Hostile Expeditions and International Law*, had actually suggested that, "If genuine differences of opinion on factual circumstances exist, such cases might be submitted to a mixed tribunal composed of one representative each from the two countries, and a presiding judge from a third country, or a nominee of the International Court of Justice, or of any recognised international organisation.

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claims made by the rebels without exercising its own judgment. While Indian papers continued to warn against the "Chinese shadow looming large on the Nepali horizon" ¹ and predict that "Nepal may be plunged into chaos in the next 12-18 months", the Nepali government officials, like the Attorney-General S.P. Gyawali, put the Indo-Nepali "friendship on trial" on the ability of India to suppress the Nepali Congress. The Congress rebellion continued without much success but enough to keep the Nepal Government resentful. Nevertheless, His Majesty reshuffled his cabinet on 1 July to appoint Rishi Kesh Shaha, who carried more goodwill in India, as foreign minister. Dr. Giri was raised to the status of Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet. Mr. Shaha repeated on 17 July that India was not responsible for rebel activity and it was not conducted within the knowledge of local authorities. He was, however, grieved at the Indian charge that Nepalis were benefiting from the Sino-Indian conflict. "We have never believed in playing up misunderstandings between our neighbours to promote our selfish interests", he said, because "there was danger inherent in such a game" that one might be "outsmarted by both sides". He asserted that Nepal's security depended largely on cordiality between India and China and the critics accusing Nepal had not been fair.

The Nepal Government's efforts to suppress the revolt consisted in the district magistrates being empowered to use all the necessary force and the setting up of emergency tribunals which could sentence upto six years imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 5,000. General Subarna, Bharat Shamsheer and 74 other exiles, mostly in India, were ordered on 2 March 1962 to report to their respective district authorities within 21 days, failing

1. *TI* special correspondent, P. C. Tandon, wrote in May that three-fourth of Nepal's 7,000 troops, and as many policemen were posted along the southern border, while the Sino-Nepali border was manned by hardly a few platoons guarding 19 of the 30 passes. The Chinese were buying petrol, kerosine, torch cells and iron and steel goods from Nepal at fantastic prices, and their armies on the Nepali border fluctuated between 15-40,000. The Nepali army, before 1952, was very ill-equipped and commanded by 34 hereditary generals. The police was mainly a remnant of the Nepali Congress insurrectionary force. Further, he alleged that the two queen-mothers and two younger brothers of King Mahendra were apprehensive that the utility of the Crown as an emblem of national unity would be lost if it remained too long exposed to public controversies. Another columnist condemned King Mahendra for being "morbidly" Anti-Indian and alleged that he had been behind Dr. K. I. Singh's abortive *Coup* in 1952. Numerous commentators hinted that the late King Tribhuvan was against his crown prince and had thought of disinheriting Mahendra.

which their property was to be confiscated. On 26 March, a similar order was issued against 83 others, including the communist leader Pushpa Lal. As none of the exiles returned home, the property of Subarna, Bharat and 29 others was confiscated on 2 April.¹ On 25 March, the King ordered four assistant ministers to travel to the four corners of his kingdom and report to him the real situation within a month. On 24 August, an emergency tribunal sentenced in *absentia* Subarna, Bharat, Shashi Shamsher, and three others to life imprisonment on charges of violence and sabotage. Ten more were sentenced for twenty years and three for twelve years. The forty persons present in the court were sentenced for three to six years and to fines ranging from Rs. 1,000 to 5,000. In April and May earlier, the tribunals had sentenced 24 persons to varying lengths of imprisonment of lesser severity.

In early February 1962, the Communist Party of Nepal had also squared up its internal dissensions to emerge as a striking force in the gathering revolt. General Subarna had alleged on 8 January that the communists were supporting the King against the Congress because of China's desire to win the King's favour. Pushpa Lal, leader of the pro-Chinese faction, who had escaped to India, said on 8 March that they too were fighting the King though he admitted that some communists had defected to His Majesty. Reports in the Nepali press confirmed that a strong section of communists was cooperating with the Congress rebels. On 18 May 1962, the Raimajhi faction, which was accused of being monarchist, offered to build a joint front with the Nepali Congress, but the latter rejected it on the plea that it could not associate itself with a party which believed in violence! During that month, the Communist Party of Nepal was at any rate rid of all moderates, for it expelled Dr. Raimajhi and M. M. Adhikari "for sabotaging the struggle". Announcing this at Banaras on 23 May, the new General Secretary, Tulsi Lal Amatya, once again repeated the offer of joint front which was spurned. In the same month, the formation of a new political party, called Madhes Congress of Nepal, was announced in the Marchwar area of Western Nepal, with Ram Briksa Upadhyaya as its leader, to champion the cause of 4.5 million *madhesias* who

1. The list included Tulsi Lal Amatya, Kashi Prasad Upadhyaya, Bhadra Kâli Misra, K. N. Gautam, P. N. Chaudhari and Mrs. Dwarka Devi. Subarna and Bharat lost their old palaces and land in Nepal worth a few lakhs of rupees but they have assets estimated at several crores of rupees outside Nepal.

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inhabit the plains of Nepal. Nothing was heard of this party, however, thereafter.

By April 1962, the supporters of the King in India had also been activated. A demonstration by a hundred Nepalis in front of General Subarna's house in Calcutta was followed by two bombs hurled at Bharat Shamsheer's residence on 25 April. On 30 May, the house of Tej Bahadur Amatya was dynamited in Raxaul. Another attempt on Bharat Shamsheer's life was made on 10 August. However, the royalists in India, as a rule, occupied themselves with organisation and propaganda rather than violence against the Nepali Congress. Their activities centred round educational, literary and cultural circles, whom they tried to organise in Indo-Nepali friendship associations and Nepali literary societies.

His Majesty thought he had gathered enough intellectual support by May 1962 to lift the ban and censorship on newspapers, and on 8 May, he appointed a drafting committee for a new constitution. The Committee, headed by Rishi Kesh Shaha, included the attorney-general, chief justice of the revenue court and secretary to the ministry of national guidance, and it submitted its draft on 1 June. On 6-13 June, he called another conference of 136 intellectuals, "free to discuss any subject," and its results were no different from the previous one.¹ Many delegates to the conference violently criticised the administration and called the *panchayat* elections fraudulent. As usual, the most militant speaker was Dr. K. I Singh, who said that the royal minister's achievements were a big zero and warned that, if the Government failed to seek people's cooperation, within six months the sovereignty and independence of Nepal would come to an end. The most dejected and sober speaker was S. P. Upadhyaya who felt that a very dangerous situation was being created wherein the King and the people were being estranged from each other. This was, he said, due to some elements in charge of administration who stood as a "barrier" between the two and thrived on the current emergency. Consequently, he demanded return to normal conditions by ending the emergency, restoring fundamental rights, releasing political prisoners and allowing the exiles to return to Nepal. The *panchayat* elections, he said, should have been held by secret ballot, and stressed that the division of people between pro-national and anti-national elements was arbitrary. Tanka Prasad Acharya condemned the

1. See p. 63

suppression of newspapers and charged that "vested interests" were "rampant in the Council of Ministers." The conference ended, however, with resolutions supporting neutralism, *panchayat* system and Lhasa-Kathmandu road and condemning the anti-national elements.

On 1 August, Nepal lost the chief architect of her foreign policy, Mr. Nar Pratap Thapa, who died in an air crash.

On 14 August, pasturing across the border on the Nepal-Tibet frontier was abolished by an agreement signed between Nepal and China.

On 27 September, His Majesty announced a Rs. 48-crore, three-year development plan, which depended heavily on foreign aid, Nepal's share in the plan expenditure being only 13% (Rs. 7 crores). It placed the greatest emphasis on construction of 925 miles of roads, 23 air-strips and 22,000 kilowatts of power, allocating to them half of the planned expenditure. The share of the U. S. A. and India in the plan was Rs. 21 and 12 crores respectively. The King again reshuffled his cabinet on 22 September, taking Rishi Kesh Shaha out, to be appointed as special ambassador with the rank of a minister and restoring Dr. Giri to foreign ministership. Mr. Shaha had, during the month, spent several weeks in India and impressed Indian officials and pressmen with his sincerity and goodwill. His "explosion" from the cabinet could be indicative of a new strain in the Nepali government's relations with India¹ but it was not so. On the other hand, with rebel activity petering out, Dr. Giri seemed to have turned more sober and friendly to the Indian people.

NEPAL OF 1962

IN OCTOBER, INDIA HERSELF WAS IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY consequent upon a Chinese invasion of India's northern border and she had little time to attend to Nepali affairs, though His Majesty was drawing the attention of his people "to the possibility of our age-old friendly relations with a friendly country India being spoiled despite our wishes to the contrary, by the activities of elements engaged in obstructing the peaceful flow of Nepalese life on the strength of their having a safe haven

1. This was the reaction of Indian commentators.

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in India” and was advising that “India too should understand this.”¹

The Government of India’s embarrassment was finally removed by the Nepali Congress suspending its agitation in November, as a mark of goodwill to India. King Mahendra welcomed the suspension but said that ultimately his stand had been vindicated. On 9 December 1962, he extended the emergency and gave the new *panchayat* constitution to the nation on 16th. As the year ended, the Nepali government was “in no mood for compromise with the rebels.” His Majesty “insisted on their absolute surrender”² but he had taken an important step towards the liberalisation of his regime, a step which he thought reconciled monarchical absolutism and popular democratic aspirations. How far a *panchayat* democracy would not come in conflict with the King remains to be seen.

King Mahendra was perfectly right when he said that Nepal of 1962 was not the Nepal of 1950. As we have observed earlier, the Nepali Congress in 1950 fought in the King’s name and wore the mantle of his prestige and protection. The Indian government too was able, in 1950, to extend its official recognition to King Tribhuvan as against the Rana Prime Minister and bring pressure upon the Ranas to compromise. In 1961-62, however, the Nepali Congress rebels were fighting the monarchy for a cause which inspired little understanding and lesser sacrifice among the masses of Nepalis. They were political refugees, if not fugitives, whose leader could not be accorded any formal recognition internationally to uphold their cause. Besides, the Nepal Government of 1962, compared to that of 1950, was immeasurably stronger, more ordered and in abler hands. As King Mahendra’s fate seemed to be in balance in the year 1961, when even Nepali observers doubted his strength to enjoy ‘absolute’ power in a country which had been democratically aroused, the outcome of the unequal struggle between him and the rebels in 1962 was never in doubt. Every day that passed after 15 December 1960 had consolidated the King’s power and prestige.

Towards the end of the year, the realisation also dawned upon Indian official circles and commentators that King Mahen-

1. Royal message on Vijaya Dashami, 8 Oct 62. “However, there is still time for the correction of such mistakes,” King Mahendra continued. “Facts demand that India should revise her thinking on this matter from the standpoint of the welfare of both the countries...Nepal is never prepared to play second fiddle to any country.”
2. *TI*, 18 Dec 62

dra had acquired absolute control over his country and his government was more stable than it was first reckoned to be. Consequently, Indian newspapers began to see some bright aspects in an otherwise bleak picture and they cautiously welcomed the new Nepali constitution. At the same time, it was rumoured that King Mahendra may, after all, release B. P. Koirala and make some sort of compromise with Nepali Congress leaders. It is dangerous as well as uncalled for, however, to predict the future developments in this isolated country, where more rumours fog the skies than information lightens the firmament.

As the situation stands today, parliamentary democracy in Nepal seems to be doomed for long years to come, if not for ever. Nepal must undergo some industrial development, its feudalism abolished, and its national leadership pass from ex-Generals and feudal lords to the hands of commoners, before a republican movement can find its roots in the Nepali soil. None may dispute that the democratic forces would need hard years of labour among the people to raise their political consciousness and active will to rise above their present morass.

For India, it is needless to say, the only course open is to develop her friendly relations with the Nepali people and government on the basis of "strict non-interference and national equality."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Passport to Tibet

SIKKIM IS THE SMALLEST STATE IN THE HIMALAYAS WITH AN area of 2,800 square miles and a population of 130,000 but it has the distinction of possessing the most accessible route between India and Tibet and through the Tibetan enclave to Bhutan.

Sikkim was a vassal of Nepal until 1816 when, as a result of the Anglo-Nepali war, it became a separate state under British influence. In 1861, the British army invaded it and forced a treaty making it a British protectorate. The treaty compelled the Maharajah (Ruler) to "remove the seat of government from Tibet¹ to Sikkim and reside in Gangtok for nine months in an year." This was naturally resented by the Tibetans who invaded it in 1888 only to be expelled by superior British forces. Two years later, the British compelled China to sign a Convention recognising Sikkim's status as a British protectorate with their "direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of the state" and a British political officer was stationed in Gangtok. The boundary of Sikkim with Tibet was defined at "the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gimpochi on the Bhutan frontier and follows the above mentioned water parting to the point where it meets Nepal territory."² This agreement was further confirmed with Tibet in 1904 and the boundary was demarcated on the ground in 1895.³ In 1918 Britain restored the internal autonomy of Sikkim.

1. The rulers of Sikkim used to live in Chumbi Valley, which was once a part of Sikkim but was later annexed by Tibet.
2. Art. I, *British and Foreign State Papers*, LXXXII, pp. 9-11.
3. *Nehru*, 22 Mar 59, *White Paper I*, p. 55.

Four-fifth of Sikkim's population is Nepali Hindus who gravitated to this state during the period of Nepal's domination and multiplied faster, being polygamous, than the other tribes who were polyandrous.¹ The other one-fifth consists of Buddhist (lamaist) *bhotias*, *lepchas* and *lamas*. The original inhabitants are the Lepchas; the Bhotia immigration from Tibet started in the 14th century and continues to this day. The Nepalis are in a majority and the Bhotias in authority. The Ruler is of Tibetan descent and so are his personal adherents called the *Kazis*, who form the majority of landlords and jagirdars and control the State Council and the Secretariat. They are the revenue collectors and are vested with magisterial powers in both civil and criminal matters. Various forms of forced labour are exacted not only by the landlords but also by the state and slavery is still prevalent. Sikkim has had no constitution and it is ruled by proclamations from the *Durbar* (Palace).² The population follows lamaism and has intimate economic and cultural contacts with Tibet. There are floating populations in the north living in Tibet or Sikkim for half the year. The country is densely forested³ and communications rudimentary; they are practically nil in the north. The present ruler of Sikkim, the eleventh in his dynasty, is Sir Toshi Namgyal but the state is looked after by his son Maharajakumar (Prince) P. T. Namgyal.⁴

In view of the character of the population inhabiting these 2,000 sq. miles, what happens in Nepal and Tibet must have important repercussions on this state. India's major interest in Sikkim is strategic. The traditional route from India to Tibet has been from Darjeeling-Kalimpong through Sikkim to Gyantse. Lying in the middle of the Himalayan border, at its most vulnerable point, Sikkim forms a vital point in India's defences. The Indian army units were stationed in Gangtok in 1861 and they have continued to stay after 1947.

REPUBLICAN GUARDS FOR ROYALTY

DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN SIKKIM STARTED SHORTLY BEFORE Indian independence and, during the latter half of 1946, several

- 1 According to 1952 census, there were 107,194 Nepalis in a total population of 137,725. The 1961 census recorded a 16.96% increase in population, bringing it to 161,080, with more than proportionate increase in the number of Nepalis.
2. Sikkim State Congress President's letter to Indira Gandhi, 26 Sep 59. Also *A Few Facts about Sikkim*, paper submitted to the Ruler by the Sikkim State Congress in Dec 47; published by *Mankind*, Feb 60
3. Reputed to be the most densely forested mountains region in the world.
4. The Maharajah died on 2 Dec 63.

deputations waited on the authorities for abolition of slavery, protection against forced labour and to demand that the people be allowed to pay their taxes direct to the state instead of to the landlords who often cheated them in recording the payments. Sikkim State Congress was organised in 1947 and it was predominantly supported by the Nepalis, they being a major element of the population as also more enlightened than others. In the next few years other parties came into existence, the chief among them being the Sikkim National Party, Swatantra Dal and the Sikkim Scheduled Castes League. Inspired by the All India States' Peoples' Conference, Sikkim State Congress demanded popular or responsible government, abolition of landlordism, an interim government as a "precursor of the democratic form of government to come" and immediate accession to India on the model of other princely states. ¹

The Sikkim National Party was in fact sponsored by the Ruler to fight the democratic agitation and to emphasise the communal and racial differences as breakwaters to democratic development. It asserted that "a time-honoured institution" like landlordism could not "be suddenly wiped out of existence, root and branch, without giving rise to grave consequences," called "democratic government in a small state" a "farce" and strongly opposed accession to India "under any circumstances". On the other hand, it demanded *revision in "Sikkim's political relations with the Indian Union on the basis of equality"* pleading that Sikkim was in every way closer to Tibet than to India. ²

1. State Congress petition to the Ruler, Gangtok, 8 Dec 47 *op. cit.*
2. Resolution passed by the Sikkim National Party on 30 Apr 48. Full text published by *Mankind*, Feb 60. It gave the following reasons: "(a) Historically, socially, culturally and linguistically, Sikkim has closer affinities with Bhutan and Tibet. (b) From geographical and ethnic point of view Sikkim is not a part of India. She has only political relations with the latter which were imposed on her. (c) From the religious point of view, being lamaist, she is quite distinct from India. (d) The policy of the Party was by all means to maintain intact the indigenous character of Sikkim and to preserve its integrity. The party also declared that it would make all out efforts to establish a separate entity and to remain outside the Indian Union. To force Sikkim to accede to the Indian Union, either by direct or indirect means, would be unfair, it said, because it would be a denial to Sikkim of her right to stick to her natural affinities. Quoting Sir Charles Bell to support its claims, it pleaded that "from India's point of view, a happy Sikkim as a buffer state would be of great advantage than an unhappy Sikkim in India on one of her *future* international boundaries of great importance, which would be of disadvantage, indeed a danger to India."

On 1 May 1949, the State Congress launched an agitation which virtually took the form of an insurrection. Summoning a mass meeting in front of the Palace, it overpowered the civil police and demanded the surrender of the Ruler, but this development was probably unforeseen by the Congress which was not inclined to capture either the Palace or state power. Consequently, it allowed enough time for a detachment of the Indian Army, posted in Gangtok, to intervene and rescue the Ruler to its protection in the Indian Residency. This was followed by the formation of a popular ministry headed by the State Congress president. The Ruler, however, proved more calculating than the Congress leaders. He dismissed the ministry within 28 days, with a company of Indian soldiers standing by in case disturbances broke out, and requested the Indian government to loan an Indian administrative officer to act as Dewan (Prime Minister) in the state.

Disappointed and frustrated by India, for whom the State Congress had fought, the Congress leaders then made their pilgrimage to New Delhi in March 1950 where the Indian Prime Minister sympathised with their aspirations but *discouraged them from demanding accession to India*.¹

On 5 December 1950, an India-Sikkim peace Treaty was signed in Gangtok which clarified Sikkim's political relation with free India. Confirming that Sikkim was a "protectorate" of India, "enjoying autonomy in regard to its internal affairs," the treaty restated that the Government of India shall be responsible for her "defence and territorial integrity" towards which end it "shall have the right to take such measures as it considers necessary" including stationing of troops, construction and maintenance of strategic roads and communications, "as far as possible in consultation with the Government of Sikkim", and that India shall exercise absolute control over her external relations. In return, the Government of India granted an annual subsidy of Rs. 300,000 as an expression of its desire to assist "in the development and good administration in Sikkim".²

The Indo-Sikkimese treaty disappointed both the pro-Tibetans who wanted Sikkim to become independent as well as pro-Indians who wanted Sikkim's full accession to India in

1. State Congress President to Indira Gandhi, 26 Sep 59.

2. Text in *Foreign Policy of India*, pp. 25-30. It may be noted that this treaty did not cancel the previous ones, so that all the implications of 1861 treaty could be invoked in case it was found wanting in some respect.

the interests of her democratic development. The State Congress and Swatantra Dal, together said to command the support of 90% of the population, continued to demand *gradual extension of Indian Constitution to the state* and Sikkim's representation in Indian Parliament on the pattern of Jammu and Kashmir¹ but, because the Indian government's attitude was clear on the question and the treaty was a compromise on *status quo*, it was generally accepted by all the parties. Sikkim's political leaders were indeed unhappy that India had treated Sikkim not unlike the British and had favoured the Ruler as against the democratic movement. In 1950, they firmly believed that the monarchy had saved itself due to the strength adduced to it by the Indian army.

The Indian government was prompted in Sikkim purely by its own considerations and the treaty was hailed in India as a "big step in strengthening the frontier defence" and as a "safeguard."² Nehru did not apply here the principle he had advocated for Nepal, that adequate defence lay in a stability achieved through the democratic development of the country. In preserving *a status quo*, India appeased the pro-Tibetan minority in power in Sikkim, as it expected to control her through the Ruler, but at the cost of alienating the vast majority of the population. India did not take a forward looking view either that a quicker economic development of the state, which was vital to augment its defence potential, could not be achieved without political changes in the state. Perhaps it wanted Sikkim's 'autonomy' to act as a model for for China in Tibet.

While the treaty was being drawn up, the future of Sikkim's administrative set-up was discussed among the representatives of the political parties, the Palace and the Indian government. The Ruler promised to associate his people more and more with the governance of state. In lieu of his promise, however, he introduced dyarchy in March 1953 with an elected State Council as a deliberative body and a separate, elected Executive Council led by the Dewan as an executive body. He introduced communal electorates to divide the population and to neutralise the weight of the Nepalis. A large number of Nepalis, it may be mention-

1. Sikkim was allotted a seat in the Council of State under the Government of India Act, 1935. In 1954, the State Congress again sent a deputation to wait on Nehru demanding their representation on "a Parliament which controls their external affairs, defence and communications" but Nehru said there were constitutional difficulties.
2. Editorial, *H T*, 7 Dec 50 ; quoted with the text of the treaty, *op. cit.*

ed, were already denied citizenship rights which were accorded only to those who had been residents for 15 years prior to 1951 and possessed landed property while Nepalis, under the rules in vogue, were forbidden to hold land in several parts of Sikkim. Not content with this, the Ruler further devised a complicated system of calculating results which often elected a person getting 500 votes as against another polling five times as many.¹ Consequently, the first elections held in May 1953 reduced the Nepalis to a minority in the State Council² and failed to satisfy the people. Having achieved this, the Maharajakumar (Prince) went on a Western tour.

The second elections, which took place in 1957 under the same lawless electoral law, gave no better results and were boycotted by large sections of the population. The Ruler, in the meantime, was also cautious to reduce the power of his nobles and he slowly took away some of the revenue and magisterial powers from them.

THE UNSAFE FORESTS

IN 1959, AT THE TIME OF THE TIBETAN REVOLT, THE INDIAN garrison at Gangtok was reinforced but effective patrolling of the border was found extremely difficult due to lack of communications and even a knowledge of the area. In September 1959 for the first time, therefore, 5,000 Tibetan refugees were put to the task of building roads. Over 7,000 Tibetan refugees had entered Sikkim by then who were intensely disliked by the native population. Being mostly *khambas*, they were "virtually lawless bands living off the land" and inclined to "press towards the

1. In the language of the Maharaja's Proclamation, the system of calculation was this: "The candidate securing the highest number of votes of the community which he represents will ordinarily be required to have secured at least 15% of the total votes of the other community for which seats have been reserved to entitle him to be returned. If however, he fails to secure 15% of the votes of the other community, the candidate securing the next highest votes of his own community and who has also succeeded in securing 15% of the votes of the other community will be eligible to be returned, provided the difference between the number of votes of his own community secured by him and the highest candidate does not exceed 15% of the total votes secured by the latter. If the difference is in excess of 15%, the latter will be regarded as returned, notwithstanding that he shall not have secured 15% of the votes of the other community." --Punyapriya Dasgupta, Sikkim II, *TI*, 15 Oct 59.
2. In the 14-member State Council, the Nepalis had 6 seats as against 6 for Bhotia-Lepcha and 1 each for lamas and general, while in 1952, out of 60,000 voters, there were 47,000 Nepalis, (1,000 Indians included) and 12,000 Bhotias and Lepchas.

border and attempt forays against the Chinese from bases inside Sikkim".¹ The Chinese were reported to be behaving sweetly with the Sikkimese going to Tibet in order to impress upon them favourably and the Indian press now turned its attention to Sikkim. It urged upon the Government to develop communications so as to divert Sikkim's trade and contacts towards the south. On 18 September 1959, Government of India announced that Sikkim would be developed along the lines of NEFA.

It was then that outsiders had some glimpse into the urges and aspirations of the people of Sikkim. It was discovered at last that there had been virtually no change in her political, economic or social conditions in the preceding one decade and the people were discontented against Indian officials drawing higher salaries and allowances, who were referred to as "highly paid *foreign experts*."² On 22 September 1959, the Sikkim State Congress again demanded Sikkim's accession to India. This demand was ignored but Sikkim's first seven-year plan, with Rs. 3 crore aid from India, was announced. On 23-24 September all the four political parties in the state, including the pro-Ruler National Party, met in a joint convention and demanded "a full-fledged responsible government with immediate effect", a "coalition interim government" as a precursor to it and the framing of a democratic constitution. In order to realise their demands, the Convention decided to boycott the bye-elections which were necessitated because their best leaders had been unseated by the election tribunal on charges of "misleading the electorate by false propaganda." The Convention further threatened to start a state-wide *satyagraha*. Again, in a joint meeting on 22 October, they demanded "joint electorate system based on universal adult franchise as in India" and a fully constitutional monarchy with Dewan to act as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.³ The intervention of the Indian government, however, persuaded them to postpone the movement *sine die*.

Sikkim was thus proceeding much along lines of Nepal with similar internal and external pressures except that, being an Indian protectorate, she could not have its own foreign relations. Her population demanded accession to India because its democratic aspirations could be better fulfilled in

- 1 Punyapriya Dasgupta, Sikkim III, *TI*, 16 Oct 59.
- 2 Sikkim's Political Status, by our staff correspondent lately in Sikkim, *HT*, 20 Nov 59.
- 3 Texts in *Mankind*, Feb 60

this way. The Ruler depended for his strength upon the Indian government's willing support on the one hand and upon the nobility on the other. The latter, however, was gradually being alienated from him because, both in the interests of his own absolutism and no less to withstand popular pressure, he was compelled to reduce the feudal powers of the nobility. The Sikkimese democrats on their part, for reasons almost identical with Nepalis, were being forced to ally themselves with the nobility in order to struggle for responsible government.

In early 1960, the third general elections in Sikkim returned eight National Congress candidates, out of a total of 14, in the State Executive Council but six of the successful candidates were declared disqualified and debarred from standing for elections for a period of six years, on the ground that they had used fraudulent propaganda during their campaign. In a bye-election in December 1960 Mr. E. Kazi, leader of the National Congress, secured 2,275 votes as against 841 of his rival National Party candidate. Nonetheless, his rival was declared elected. Consequently, Kazi declared on 13 December 1960 that the National Congress would not contest the elections any more but would resort to direct action.

In regard to economic development, a joint (Indo-) Sikkim Mining Corporation was constituted on 22 March 1960 in order to locate and exploit mineral deposits in Sikkim, especially copper. The Sikkim Government held a controlling share in the Corporation, which was headed by the Prince.

The worsening situation on the Sino-Indian border, if not a threat to the state's internal stability, brought the Maharajah and the Prince to New Delhi towards the end of January 1961. They asked for Indian technical assistance in Sikkim's second plan¹ and met the Planning Commission but their more important mission was the formation of a local militia, ostensibly to protect Sikkim from Chinese infiltration, which met the Government of India's approval. Two months later, a team consisting of experts in different fields of development, like programme administration, agriculture, livestock, forestry, soil conservation, roads and power, was appointed by the Planning Commission. The team toured Sikkim for a fortnight in April and recommended an outlay of Rs. 8.13 crores

1. Sikkim's first seven-year plan ended on 31 Mar 61 and the total expenditure on it was Rs. 3.40 crores.

for Sikkim's second five-year plan and a little over Rs. one crore as outlay for the annual plan, 1961-62.

Talks between the two governments were resumed on 31 May when the Prince returned to Delhi. It was announced on 6 June 1961 that they had accepted the recommendations of the technical team wherein emphasis was laid on expansion of agriculture, development of power, exploitation of forests, improvement of communications and transport and establishment of village and small-scale industries. Government of India agreed to pay the total plan outlay as grants-in-aid and to employ Sikkimese subjects as far as possible. The maintenance of roads was to be handed over to the state public works department.

The internal situation in Sikkim should also have figured in the talks because on 9 June new citizenship and franchise regulations were announced together with an expansion of the Maharaja's Palace Guards. The new regulations removed the property clause from citizenship qualifications and thus naturalised many Nepalis, increasing the total electorate by as much as 50%. The regulations were, however, further liberalised for Bhotias, Lepchas and Tsongs, who could now claim Sikkimese citizenship if their fathers or grandfathers were born in Sikkim or if their ancestors had been Sikkimese subjects before 1950. The Government of India's approval to the new regulations, which was needed because all Sikkimese subjects are India's "protected persons", was duly given.

ALL EGGS IN ONE BASKET

IN OCTOBER 1960, THE KAMANI ENGINEERING GROUP OF BOMBAY signed a thirty-year agreement with the Sikkim government to set up a Sikkim Industrial Corporation, with the latter contributing 7½% of the share capital. The Corporation, granted a tax-holiday of seven years, was to take over the existing distillery and fruit preservation factory, exploit the forests, establish factories for synthetic jewels, synthetic camphor and wood pulp and study, plan and execute all industrial and commercial projects in Sikkim. The agreement virtually meant that "the Bombay firm had underwritten the industrial development of the state."¹

In January 1962, following a cessation of Indo-Tibetan trade, a ban was imposed upon the entry of Tibetans into Sikkim. The Maharaja's palace guards were expanded to two

1. *Financial Express*, Bombay.

companies, one of which was to be attached to the Indian army for border security duties. India promised to assist in the recruitment, training and command of the expanded force as also bear its costs. The Maharaja also proposed a local militia for the northern areas to meet the growing Chinese threat though the Prince told the press in Gangtok on 16 January that there was no Chinese build-up on the Sikkimese frontier. "We are a very small country and I do not think the Chinese will worry too much about us", he said. The proposal of the militia was abandoned because of strong Nepali opposition which was rightly afraid that the militia would be used to suppress political agitation inside the state.

The Prince also declared that, as from 16 January 1962, all reference to communities in the Sikkim Subjects Regulation of July 1961 had been deleted but the principle of ethnic representation in the electoral law would not be discarded. Thus, the Sikkim National Congress had won equality of citizenship for persons of Nepali origin but the battle was half-won since communal electorates remained.

Incidentally, on 26 January, the Prince sought to divert India's attention to Nepal by telling the press in Gangtok that heavy concentration of Chinese troops was reported on the Nepal border. The Nepali foreign ministry promptly denied this "rumour" and, in a strongly worded press note, advised the Prince of Sikkim to mind his own business. The Nepali statement hit back at the Sikkimese government at its most sore point by pointing out that the Prince could be more "constructive in his interest in Nepal by granting legitimate rights to the Nepali community in Sikkim."

In its annual session on 2 March 1962, the Sikkimese National Congress demanded reduction in the strength of the Sikkim Council, increase in the number of elected seats, joint electorates and appointment of a land reforms committee. It once again threatened civil disobedience movement if its demands were not fulfilled.

Despite the self-assurance of the Sikkimese Prince, the Chinese did turn their attention to his "very very small country", for they alleged intrusions from Sikkimese border in August 1962. The Prince on his part said on 4 August in Hong Kong, in an exclusive interview to the *Times of India news service*, that the unrestricted movement of Indians to Sikkim should be controlled because "a lot of undesirables were entering their

territory and moving upto the border." And this was Sikkim Government's reply to Chinese threats !

Nevertheless, together with the rest of India, a state of emergency was declared in Sikkim on 13 November 1962 and on 19 December, an all-party, 32-member, Sikkim People's Consultative Committee was nominated with the Prince as President. Earlier on 11 December, civil defence plans were being made with the constitution of three 5-member committees to look after air-raid precautions and other defence measures. On 28 January 1963, a strict check on Tibetan's entry into Sikkim was announced and on 2 February, a screening of Tibetans who had already entered with a view to checking the infiltration of Chinese spies.

India's communications with Sikkim are by no means perfect. While Gangtok can be reached from Siliguri by a bus road, only one road has so far been completed inside Sikkim from Gangtok to Nathu La pass. Another road from Gangtok to La Chan is under construction.

A review of the Sikkimese situation thus shows that the Indian government has chosen to lay all its eggs in one basket, namely, the Ruler and it may come to grief some day for its shortsightedness. The Maharajah, himself of Tibetan descent, draws his chief strength in the populace from Bhotias and landlords, who would like Sikkim to become independent and look more towards the north, and he is less afraid of the Chinese danger than is the Government of India. The Sikkim National Congress, on the other hand, frustrated in its pro-Indian trend by the Government of India itself, and forced to postpone or withdraw its struggles on Indian advice, is bound to seek compromises with pro-Tibetan elements. The Congress represents the Nepali population of Sikkim and it is liable to be strongly influenced by developments in Nepal. With Nepal vocally asserting her 'independence' from India, the danger cannot be ruled out that Sikkim National Congress may take up an anti-Indian attitude at some stage. The underwriting of the industrial development of the state to the Sikkim Durbar and a single private industrial concern of India is also fraught with undependable possibilities.



CHAPTER NINE

Doors to the South

EAST OF THE NEW FAMOUS KALIMPONG, BETWEEN THE RIVERS Teesta and Manas which fall north and south of the great bend in the mighty Brahmaputra, the narrow plains are called *Duars*, meaning the 'doors', because steep but quick defiles along the river-beds once used to bring the mountainous tribes from the north down upon the richest valleys of Coochbehar in north Bengal and the plantations in Assam. Once a part of Bhutan, the *Duars* also lead to shorter, though undeveloped, routes for central Tibet.

Stretching along the southern slopes of the Himalayas for 250 miles, over a territory of 18,000 sq. miles, Bhutan has barely 300,000 souls, completely Tibetan in stock, culture and outlook. Lamaism is the prevailing religion, though the spiritual head *Shab-ting Rimpo-che*¹ no longer controls the temporal ruler *Reb Raja*, himself a priest who was once elected to office. For over a century now, real power has been vested in the *Penlop* (chief) of Tongsa district who, elected by the Bhutani Council in early nineteenth century, soon became a hereditary king, much like the hereditary Rana prime ministers in Nepal. The present Maharajah, His Highness Jigme Dorji *Wangchuk*, is a descendant of the above dynasty.

In 1865, the British forced the Wangchuk Ruler to sign the Sinchula Treaty by which he ceded Kalimpong and *Duars* to India and promised to stop Bhutani raids into British territory. He was granted an annual subsidy of Rs. 50,000 in return. British influence steadily grew thereafter and in 1904, the Ruler accompanied Col. Younghusband on his expedition to Lhasa. He was a great help in negotiating with the Tibetans the terms of the Convention imposed by the British and it also meant a severance of Bhutan's relations with Tibet. The Chinese *Amban* indeed warned the Bhutan Ruler that he was

1. Dharmaraja, King-preserver of the Order.

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nonetheless under the suzerainty of China and would suffer the Imperial ire for opening the *Gate on the South*¹ to British entry but the Maharajah found the British more inescapable suzerains than the dying Manchus and he preferred to serve them loyally.

In 1910 a fresh treaty was drawn up between Bhutan and British India by which Bhutan surrendered her foreign relations to British India and accepted the latter as arbiter in her disputes with Coochbehar and Sikkim. Again, in return for this gesture, Bhutan's subsidy was doubled to an annual of Rs. 100,000 and the British reassured the Ruler that they would not interfere in his internal affairs. Sir Charles Bell, reputed British expert on Tibet who negotiated this treaty, was a firm believer in the "desirability of Home Rule in our states of Bhutan and Sikkim as well as in Tibet itself" because "the people themselves preferred it" and it did "much to our good name, and thereby increased our influence on the long Tibetan frontier and far beyond,"² but the British Government was not inclined to attempt a liberalisation of the primitive Himalayan region.

ISOLATED SEMI-SOVEREIGNTY

WHEN BRITAIN PREPARED TO WITHDRAW FROM INDIA IN 1946, a Bhutani delegation visited India to discuss the future status of Bhutan. The British were hardly concerned with such problems at the time : for them all the princely states of India were to regain their full sovereignty after they had left and there were conflicting views between the Indian and Bhutani government spokesmen. Bhutan's position under the British rule had been one of isolated semi-sovereignty : she had been under tighter British control than Nepal but not written down with Sikkim as a protectorate. Therefore, she could well attempt to become wholly independent and possibly want closer relationship with Tibet with whom she had many more ties than with India. The Bhutanis at any rate were not expected to look upon India with warmth, while their genuine urge could be to advance from semi-sovereignty to full sovereignty.

Nehru, on the other hand, offered them continuation of their political tutelage to India coupled with an assurance that

1. The Chinese called Bhutan, *Dug-yul*, or the Land of Electricity, and the Gate on the South. Incidentally, Darjeeling was for Tibetans Dorje-long, or The Island of Thunderbolt.
2. *Tibet, Past and Present*

India would respect their autonomy and integrity. The Bhutan Ruler's dilemma was perhaps solved by a Red victory in China because in 1949 he agreed to a new treaty of 'perpetual peace and friendship' with India which substantially preserved the *status quo*. The Bhutan Government agreed "to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to her external relations" in return for autonomy in its internal affairs and an annuity of Rs 500,000. India's relations with Bhutan thus continued to be predatory, for the new government had agreed to pay Bhutan five times as much as its predecessors, now not to prevent Bhutani raids into Indian territory but to prevent Bhutan's advances towards Tibet. India returned some territory in Davangiri area to Bhutan and promised facilities for transport of all imports-exports, including arms, machinery and stores. This was not a perfect arrangement as was apparent soon after when the Bhutani Prime Minister Jigme Dorje ¹ said that the treaty contained no clause relating to Bhutan's defence nor did it mean that India was to conduct Bhutan's foreign policy. According to the advice rendered by her new-found, England-returned, constitutional adviser Sardar D. K. Sen, Bhutan was not an Indian protectorate and she could establish diplomatic relations with any country, only subject to the restriction that she had to consult India before concluding any economic or military aid treaty. ²

In the next ten years, India had little to do with Bhutan except that the Indian Political Officer for Sikkim 'traditionally' became her Political Officer for Bhutan too and kept an eye upon the developments (or rather the lack of developments) in the State. Bhutan's political, social or economic conditions suffered no change. A Bhutan State Congress came into existence in 1953 but its numerous memorials to the Ruler for "quick democratisation of administration", for "a speedier amelioration of the wretched conditions of the oppressed Bhutani masses", or for "the rapid development of surface communications with India's help" bore no fruit. ³ No worthwhile defence measures were undertaken to protect the country⁴ and political life in Bhutan remained "tentative and subject to interests which may often be both feudal and selfish." ⁵

1. Not to be confused with the Ruler whose name is Jigme Dorji.
2. D. K. Sen and Jigme Dorji on 28 Aug and 15 Sep 59.
3. D. B. Gurung, Bhutan State Congress President's handout published in Oct 59, text in *Mankind*, Feb 60
4. *ibid*
5. Mahesh Chandra, Political Commentary, the *Statesman*, 17 Sep 59.

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Bhutani rulers enjoyed their absolute sovereignty inside the state, in isolation from the rest of the world as in the preceding one hundred years.

The Indian government repeatedly offered them technical and financial assistance which they declined "in accordance with their traditional policy" and preferred to get increased 'subsidies' instead. There were at least three good reasons for their reluctance to utilise the proffered "technical aid". First of all, historically and "traditionally", subsidy was a kind of 'ransom' or 'purchase price' paid to the Bhutani rulers to keep them well to India's side; ¹ it did not convey to them a sense of dependence or surrender of authority to a foreign government which an aid programme did. ² In the second place, an aid must be used for the purpose for which it was meant while a subsidy could be freely used or wasted in the personal or class interests of the Ruler. ³ Lastly, and this reason must be ranked uppermost, technical aid should inevitably bring in Indian "experts and supervisory staff" and increased communication with India, which was naturally the first objective of such aid, and open up the country to modern influences posing a threat to their obsolete social system. ⁴ The developments in Tibet must have convinced them more than ever that the real culprits to disturb the eternally quiet Himalayan regions were the new roads, wheeled traffic and foreign experts. It was natural that they should have liked to live in their secure haven of peace, not eager to invite the inroads of republican India in any form with its new-fangled ideas of democracy. So Bhutan remained far removed from India all these years, not only due to the general incapacity of the Indian government to be seized of the matter in time, but also because of the unwillingness of her Ruler to suffer any change in Bhutan whatsoever.

It was only in the autumn of 1958 that the physical remoteness of Bhutan was fully appreciated in India when no less

1. It is like a 'tribute' extracted by proving one's nuisance value to the adjoining country.
2. The Nepalis and Indians too have similar psychological reactions towards foreign assistance.
3. The State Congress leader, D. B. Gurung, warned: "The Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigme Dorje has made a recent pilgrimage to New Delhi to wangle outside help and sympathy for Bhutan...It has been announced that India is going to subsidise Bhutan...The Bhutan State Congress fervently hopes that a good part of this amount will be appropriated for Bhutanese nation-building activities." *op. cit.*
4. The Bhutani Rulers' attitude was not unlike that of Nepal's Rana prime ministers.

a person than her Prime Minister had to travel full six days—flying, motoring and riding—to reach the capital of Bhutan.¹ Besides, he had to wait for Chinese permission to cross the Tibetan enclave, which falls on the traditional route between Sikkim and Bhutan, due to an error somewhere in the information sent to the Chinese frontier guards.² Since then, some anxiety was displayed and some activity pursued—negotiations and planning to build direct communications between Bengal, Assam and Bhutan through the *Duars*. No construction work had begun, however, till the end of 1960.

WOOING THE FRIGID

IN SEPTEMBER 1958, WHEN INDIA'S DISCOVERY OF AKSAI CHIN road made the border question more serious, the Indian Prime Minister turned his attention towards Bhutan and paid a visit to this country, being "the first foreign guest" ever to enter that territory. It was described as a romantic and picturesque journey, despite (or because of) the hurdles, over high passes (Nathu La, 14,120 ft) and across the tongue of Chumbi valley, once a part of Sikkim, now in Tibet. He had discussions with the Maharaja and the Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigme Dorje who resides in Kalimpong, India, for the greater part of the year, but had arrived in Paro for the occasion. Addressing a public meeting in Paro on 23 September, Nehru said that India and Bhutan were both "members of the same Himalayan family" and should live "as friendly neighbours so as to safeguard the freedom of both the countries. If he were a Bhutani, he said, he would be very anxious to avoid a too rapid "influx of civilisation" into Bhutan, because Bhutan should gradually adapt herself and "not in a sudden rush".

No communique was issued at the end of Nehru's six-day visit (21-27 September) but the Press authoritatively learnt that problems of road and economic developments were discussed and Nehru had emphasised the need of a mineral survey, a model agricultural farm, development of small and cottage industries and Indian technical assistance. At the same time, he made it clear that India had no desire to interfere in Bhutan's internal affairs or her "own way of life." On his

1. By air to Bogdogra, then by jeep to Nathu-La pass via Gangtok, capital of Sikkim, and onwards on simple good ponies and yaks to Paro, the Capital of Bhutan.
2. Some 'insider' suggested that it was deliberate action on China's part to show Nehru that Bhutan's lifeline to India depended upon them and further that Nehru was so annoyed at their discourtesy that his future resentment with the Chinese could be partly explained by this incident.

return to Delhi, the Prime Minister told the press that he had made no formal offer of help as such an offer had already been made previously. "You will be surprised how reluctant the Maharaja is", he said. "He could have had the aid during the last two or three years if he had asked for it." He further confirmed in Calcutta on 4 October that the Maharaja had been reluctant to accept Indian aid but two metalled roads of 20 and 3 miles were being proposed between Jalpaiguri in north Bengal and Bhutan.

Three days later, some preliminary steps in this connection were announced by the Indian government and on 5 March 1959, a Rs. 5-crore Jaldakha river project was announced to supply power to Bhutan and West Bengal. The agreement on the project, which came *eight months later*,¹ was in every way favourable to Bhutan. By it, Bhutan would receive 250 kilowatts of power free of cost and the West Bengal Government would, in addition, pay a royalty of Rs. 8 per kilowatt for the power consumed by it. The initial capacity of the power house would be 18,000 kilowatts to be doubled later, if justified by demand. The project would take three years to complete.

The net gain was that the Indian Prime Minister had at last succeeded in allaying the fears of the Ruler regarding his safety in extending his links with India by forsaking the "desirability of a home rule" which Sir Charles Ball had recommended half a century ago.

The Chinese maps include about 200 sq. miles of territory which, according to the MacMahon Line and Indian maps, belongs to Bhutan. The Indian government was, therefore, concerned with Bhutan's borders. In his two letters to Chou En-lai on 14 December 1958 and 22 March 1959, Mr. Nehru referred to the boundaries of Bhutan and Sikkim, to which Chou En-lai replied on 8 September 1959 that the boundary between China and Bhutan and Sikkim did not fall within the scope of the "present discussion" though he assured that China was "willing to live together in friendship with Sikkim and Bhutan without committing aggression against each other" and she had "always respected the proper relations between them and India". Nehru hastened to write back on 26 September that, "under treaty relationships with Bhutan, the Government of

1. Signed on 2 Nov 59. Jaldakha is a tributary of Brahmaputra which rises in Sikkim and forms the boundary of Bhutan and West Bengal for 12 miles of its course.

India are the only competent authority to take up with other governments matters concerning Bhutan's external relations, and in fact, we have taken with your government a number of matters on behalf of the Bhutan Government. The rectification of errors in Chinese maps regarding the boundary of Bhutan and Tibet is, therefore, a matter which has to be discussed along with the boundary of India with the Tibet region of China in the same sector."¹

Finally, on 29 December 1959, the Chinese government declared unequivocally that it had no quarrel with Bhutan.² As a part of her set policy, China was not to quarrel with any other Himalayan kingdom in order to isolate her major enemy, India.

More than the boundary question, it was the Tibetan revolt which shook the Bhutan government out of its torpor. Being closer to Tibet, it received more reports (and rumours) about developments in Tibet, and its Prime Minister Jime Dorje made frequent trips to Calcutta and New Delhi from the beginning of March 1959 to express his anxiety about the Dalai-Lama's government. Because of their religious and cultural links with the latter, the Bhutani rulers were naturally concerned with Dalai's fortunes and certainly did not want to suffer the same fate. The debacle of lamaism in Tibet closed Tibet to Bhutan and made the latter's friendship with India inevitable.³

Accordingly on 12 August 1959, Jigme Dorje reported to New Delhi that Chinese troops were stationed close to the Bhutani border and Bhutani armed guards were being strengthened by his government. He had come to India, he said, to get a written guarantee of support from the Indian government in the event of a Chinese attack.⁴ On 23 August, he repeated in Calcutta that, "although the Chinese were scrupulously keeping

1. *White Paper II*, pp. 30, 41
2. "With regard to Bhutan and Sikkim, some explanations may be given in passing. Concerning the boundary between China and Bhutan, there is only a certain discrepancy between the delineation on the maps of the two sides in the sector south of the so-called MacMahon Line. But it has always been tranquil along the border between the two countries...All allegations that China wants to 'encroach on' Bhutan and Sikkim...are sheer nonsense," --Chinese Note, 26 Dec 59, *White Paper III*, p 79.
3. Dorje's statement, 26 Aug 59, *TI*, 27 Aug 59.
4. His coming to India meant coming to the Indian government with Bhutani request.

out of Bhutani territory, the danger of a border incursion definitely existed." His government's decision to stockpile rice and wheat for winter and to stop exporting them to Tibet was being interpreted in China as a "hostile act under the influence of expansionist India", he said. "On many occasions", he reported, "the Chinese troops had come very close to the Bhutani border chasing Tibetan refugees" and, while Bhutan's trade with Tibet had almost stopped, her defence bill had lately increased tenfold because "she had to reinforce her armed guards and set up more checkposts." Bhutan had therefore decided, he added, to accept aid from India as a "departure from her traditional policy" and he would meet the Indian Prime Minister to discuss with him the border developments.

It is evident that Jigme Dorje was angling for more subsidy from the Indian government. His statements had the required effect of raising the Bhutan question in the Indian parliament. On 25 August, Nehru declared that India was responsible for her defence "under treaty obligations" and, while he could not imagine "any foreign authority" infringing Bhutan's sovereignty, "any such infringement would be an infringement of our undertaking with Sikkim and Bhutan and we will defend them against any intrusion." Three days later, he confirmed that the traditional route from India to Bhutan through Chumbi valley had been closed and Bhutanis were using other routes which were "longer and sometimes more difficult", but those routes were being improved.¹ On 18 September, following ten-day discussions with the Bhutani Prime Minister and the Indian Political Officer, Appa Saheb Pant, New Delhi announced that it had completed a detailed review of the requirements of the Himalayan states of Bhutan and Sikkim and reached broad agreement about many proposals, specially regarding the India-Bhutan road links for which a sum of 16 crores was sanctioned. Work was soon to begin on the Jalgaon-Paro road and other road-links with Assam, which would take "many years to complete" and possibly cost Rs. 100 crores. Bhutan's local defence needs of raising and equipping a militia were to be fully met by India and *Bhutan's subsidy was raised from Rs. 0.5 to 1.2 millions.*

DANGER OR DIPLOMACY

APPARENTLY, THE BHUTAN GOVERNMENT WAS APPREHENSIVE OF Chinese "aggression" since their traditional communication

1. LS,25 and 28 Aug 59.

route with India had been closed, They, however, wanted from India not only an assurance of help in case the worst happened but also more money forthwith to tide over their troubles. Dorje was crying out for economic help in no uncertain words and it is significant that what he still wanted was not road-building assistance but only an increased subsidy. Then, was their "fear" of China genuine, or was it but a pretext and bargaining counter to get India accept their demands? And did the Indian government submit to their blackmail because they had talked over the border to China? This suspicion seemed far-fetched at that time but it was later confirmed that the Chinese had made overtures. We may ask nonetheless, why was it that the Bhutanis were not eager even at that stage to execute the road-development programme sanctioned by India, which had indeed to be 'negotiated' before it could be accepted. Further, why did they start talking of their sovereignty on that same occasion?

It seems incongruous that, about the same time that Dorje was pleading for Indian help, Sardar D. K. Sen disclosed on 28 August his "personal views" that Bhutan was considering diplomatic relations with U.S.S.R., U.S.A., U.K., and "some other Buddhist neighbours." Was the reference to "Buddhist neighbours" a veiled threat that Bhutan might open diplomatic relations with China? Or was U.S.S.R. put in as an eyewash in what may be interpreted as a gesture to the West? Dorje explained a few days later that it was only a report submitted by D. K. Sen which was being "studied" by the Bhutani government. It may be presumed, however, that "the idea of complete sovereignty must have been mooted by Bhutan's rulers first and that Sardar D. K. Sen was merely called upon to give expression to it."¹

In his press conference on 15 September 1959, Dorje made several contradictory statements regarding Bhutan's considerations. He said for example that the 1949 treaty did not restrict Bhutan's right to have external relations and the "Government of Bhutan is most anxious to emphasise its sovereign rights" but added, "it has not yet formed any definite views which can only be done after consultations with the Government of India." Again, he "was not aware" that the Bhutan Government wished to make any foreign contacts "at this moment or in the immediate future" but he had chosen that particular moment for airing those controversial views. Bhutan, he said, was not affected

1. B. B. Gurung, *op. cit.*

by the controversy on the MacMahon line *but* "we definitely come in because 400 sq. miles of our territory is shown as Chinese on their maps."¹ He welcomed Nehru's assurances and said that his present mission to New Delhi was to secure financial and technical assistance for roadbuilding *but* he denied Chinese incursions or infiltration and hoped that China had "no such intentions." Roads at any rate could not be built overnight but neither Indian nor Bhutani government displayed any extra energy to begin the task forthwith, or speedily. Finally, Mr. Dorje's fear of China seems to have waned within a few weeks as he explained the fact that the Chinese had taken away the arms of the Bhutani administrator in their enclave in the region of mount Kailas so as to avoid their being "stolen or forced away" from him "by Tibetan rebels. Bhutan was just "a little worried but not alarmed" by Chinese activities, he stated, and added that Bhutan had not allowed asylum to Tibetan refugees *in order to avoid "misunderstanding with her northern neighbour."*

Was the sudden thirst for complete sovereignty meant to warn India or it was to allay the fears of China prior to accepting Indian aid? Was the Chinese threat averted by their secret assurances? Or was all this equivocation and double-talk a specific brand of Bhutani neutrality? All accounts agree that the Chinese behaviour towards Nepalis, Bhutanis and Sikkimis had been cordial throughout, in contrast with their rigidity towards Indians, and if the Chinese thrust against India was to intimidate the three Himalayan kingdoms into adopting anti-Indian postures, they had admirably succeeded in their aim.

In June 1960, the Bhutani National Assembly (Tsongdu) demanded that the Indo-Bhutanese border should be marked as an international border on Indian maps.

The Maharaja of Bhutan disclosed on 30 January 1961 at Calcutta that China had made overtures in 1959 "through private sources" to his Prime Minister, for initiating direct negotiations on the border dispute between the two countries. They had also offered economic aid. "I have not given any thought to it", he added. Describing their relations with China "neither friendly, nor hostile," he stated that he would think over China's proposal when it was "made at official level" though "not at the moment." As if to mollify Indian sentiment at this staggering revelation, he added that he would

1. The figure, formerly 200 sq. miles, was deliberately inflated.

discuss the proposal with Mr. Nehru and seek his advice. Nevertheless, regarding Chinese claims over 300 sq. miles¹ of Bhutani territory, he thought, they were "a mistake which I hope they will correct" but thundered that he would not "concede an inch of territory to *any* country" and fight to the last. At the same time, he wished to review and modify the clause of 1949 treaty dealing with Bhutan's external relations because Bhutan was "a sovereign, independent state." The Bhutani National Assembly, he said, wanted him to assert Bhutan's sovereignty "to the full" and he declined to express an opinion whether India's guidance on foreign affairs, prescribed in the 1949 treaty, was binding upon Bhutan. He repudiated reports that Bhutan and Sikkim were negotiating a federation.

The Maharaja visited New Delhi on 8-15 February and met the Indian Prime Minister, but the latter now refused to yield his ground. On conclusion of the visit, the Maharaja announced that he had requested Mr. Nehru to "initiate or take up any question with China regarding our (Bhutanese) northern border." Mr. Nehru reaffirmed his previous assurances and disclosed that the Chinese had failed to reply to two *Bhutani* protests against Chinese maps. On 15 February, Mr. Nehru told *Lok sabha* that India had taken full responsibility for the defence of Bhutan and aggression on Bhutan would be considered aggression on India. Saadat Ali Khan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of External Affairs, stated on 6 March 1961 that, whereas Soviet maps of 1954 had shown both Sikkim and Bhutan as Indian protectorates, their 1959 maps showed both of them as independent states. India had called their attention to it, he said, but had elicited no reply.

It is now abundantly clear that the Bhutan Ruler wanted complete independence for his state in 1946 and with typical shrewdness characteristic of Chinese and Tibetans, he postponed the question until he was forced to sign a treaty in 1949. Thereafter, for ten years, he refused to open up his kingdom to India. When at last he agreed to do so, it was to exact a heavy cost from India to strengthen his personal defences in the state against 'democratic' elements, not only in terms of money and equipment for his palace guards but also in terms of an Indian assurance *not* to sympathise with the political elements inside the state. Again, while Mr. Nehru was writing to Chou En-lai and Jigme Dorje was crying in India for more Indian subsidies,

1. It may be noted that the figure is again changed.

the latter had already put himself in touch with the Chinese and probably obtained their assurances of non-infiltration and support to Bhutani "independence". Besides, the Bhutani government had also *directly* protested to the Chinese government regarding the border maps. It must be on the strength of Chinese tacit support, reflected in the alterations on Soviet maps, that Mr. Dorji, and later the Ruler, raised the question of Bhutan's "full sovereignty" in 1959 and 1961. The Bhutani rulers were scarcely alarmed at the Chinese threat. They had, on the other hand, tried to benefit from India's crisis in order to gain what they had failed to achieve in 1949. The 'democratic' movement inside Bhutan had languished by this time for want of support from India.

Having failed in his attempt, the Ruler now pressed the Government of India for more aid but the latter had become wiser with its past experiences. So, instead of advancing more subsidies now, an expert team of the Planning Commission was sent to Bhutan in June 1961 to examine the prospects of certain hydro-electric projects, exploration of copper, manufacture of paper pulp, establishment of secondary schools and hospitals, training of craftsmen and to draw up a development plan on Sikkimese model. A coordinated five-year programme for economic development, involving an outlay of Rs. 17.5 crores, was announced on 30 July, of which Rs. 12 crores were to be spent on road-building. In September, Jigme Dorje met the Indian Prime Minister and, expressing his appreciation for Indian aid, indicated that Bhutani government administration was being modernised in order to utilise the aid fully.

As regards road-building, the Government of India asked the Central Public Works Department to choose its staff for Bhutan in September 1959 but the selection was put off in January 1960. On 25 April 1960, it was announced that a party of surveyors had completed a survey of 500 miles of Bhutan border and a detailed map of Bhutan might be prepared by the coming winter. Work on the first 100 mile¹ Phuncholing - Paro national highway seems to have started towards the end of 1960 and it was once expected to be completed² by June 1961. Later, it was announced that the highway would be opened to traffic on 13 February 1962, "ahead of schedule." (!) Nonetheless, its inauguration by the Indian Prime Minister, scheduled

1. The actual length has been variously described by the press as 107, 125 or 158 miles.
2. *Statesman*, 24 May 61.

for 7 May 1962, was postponed by one year because of the "inauspicious Tibetan black year" and incidentally, due to "a slight delay in its completion."¹ Other roads between Darrang (Assam) and Tashigang (eastern Bhutan), as well as an "ambitious" Rs. 15 crore scheme to build further 100 miles of roads in Bhutan, were announced in March 1961 by the Indian Political Officer, Appa B. Pant. The actual stages of completion of these schemes is unknown because of their being treated as security secrets.

ANOTHER VERSION OF EQUI-DISTANCE

IN AUGUST 1962, THE BHUTANI PRIME MINISTER JIGME DORJE once again stated that China no longer claimed any part of Bhutan and questions were asked in the Indian parliament regarding the source of this information. Mr. Nehru replied, "So far as we know, there are no direct communications between the governments of Bhutan and China". He thought that Dorje had merely given his own appraisal of the situation. To the question whether the Chinese were making efforts to upset the existing relationship between India and Bhutan, the Prime Minister replied, he did not know.²

On 26 October 1962, addressing a press conference in New Delhi, the Bhutani Prime Minister once again asserted that the latest Chinese maps did not lay claims to Bhutani territory³ and he was not afraid of any "repercussions of Nefu happenings" except slight effects on his country's development plans, for he apprehended no danger from China. The reference was clearly to the possibility of a reduction in the amount of Indian aid, in view of India's own emergency, and Dorje had discussions with the Planning Commission in this connection. Returning from a Western tour, he had brought a Swedish proposal to establish a paper mill in Bhutan. He had gone to Europe, he said, to contact industrialists for Bhutan's economic development.

Dorje was reluctant to be drawn into an elaborate discussion on the security of his country in the context of Chinese aggression but was bold enough to declare that his government had not asked India to defend them nor had it asked for arms. Also the Government of India had not offered to defend Bhutan and

1. Reported to RS, 27 Jun 62. Mr. Nehru had agreed to travel full length on the road despite his health and exhaustion in May 1962.

2. LS, 16 Aug 62.

3. We have no means to check upon it at present.

Indian officers were *not* training the Bhutanese army, he added. He repeated that Bhutan was an independent country "with special treaty regulations" under which "we agree to be guided by the advice of the Government of India" and, as a mark of grace, "Bhutan was quite happy with her relations with India."

We may now conclude, by looking at the last 14 years of Bhutan's semi-sovereignty under her "treaty regulations" with India, that sooner or later, a demand must arise in Bhutan to revise and end these treaty regulations. Bhutan is not under India's political tutelage because India is scarcely affecting the internal scene in that country. Even before Bhutan has developed safe lines of communication with India and is capable of fully utilising all the aid that India can offer, she is seeking European industrialists to assist in her economic development and other Buddhist neighbours to bolster up her full sovereignty. She has been as anxious to exhibit her distance from India as Nepal is in order to keep China appeased, and Indian official circles may wake up one day to find themselves 'shocked' at a Bhutani highway agreement with Peking bringing Lhasa closer to their new capital Thimbu. On that day, the Indian Political Officer would not even be a proud man quoting Macaulay that India had helped a backward country rise to modern civilisation and political freedoms.

CHAPTER TEN

An Aryan Transmitter

A FRONTIER PROVINCE IN THE NORTHEASTERN CORNER, ENCLOSED on all sides by international frontiers (China, Burma and Pakistan) and almost separated from India but for the narrow strip of the *duars* in the northwest, Assam is a riverine plain shut in from three sides by a tangled mass of mountains whose summits rise to 12,000 ft. and more—the Patkai ranges in the east, the Mishmo Hills¹ curving round the head of the Brahmaputra Valley in the northeast, and the Himalayan regions of Bhutan and Tibet in the north. However, this natural geographical barrier is not insuperable. The passes are not difficult: at least seven *duars* connect the *tarai* with Bhutan and through it to Tibet and even to Kabul and far off Bactria, while defiles of Subansiri, Dihang, Brahmaputra and Lohit rivers provide tracks to Tibet and China. McCosh refers to at least five routes from Sadiya to Tibet or China, and *Tabqat-i Nasiri* mentioned 35 passes through which horses were brought to Lakhnauti. These land routes were in use, in addition to the sea-route, since the second century before Christ though the easiest route was over the Patkai through Upper Burma and Yunnan. Thus inter-communication has been plentiful and constant. Assam has been in contact with the whole of north and east Asia through its northern mountains² and with Magadh (India) since at least the Mauryan times (300 B.C.).

Linguistic and anthropological evidence indicates that the earliest inhabitants of Assam, anterior to the Aryans, were speakers of an Indo-Chinese language of the *Mon-Khmer* family, which is a part of the Austric family of languages, with

1. Jai Chandra Vidyalkar, *Bhartiya Itihasa ki Rup-rekha*, in Hindi, vol I, Allahabad, p. 64. I have taken his pronunciation *mishmo* (and not *mishmi*) as correct.
2. B.K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam*, vol I, Gulhati University, 1951, pp. 99-102. A Chinese musical piece composed after 619 AD became popular in Kamarupa by 638 AD.

traces of a Negrito substratum.¹ The next to enter were the Tibeto-Burmans who left their original home in northwest China by the Yangtse and Hwangho to migrate down the Brahmaputra and Irawady rivers and ultimately spread to the Assam hills. In fact their most important group, the *Bodo*, settled all over Assam except in the Khasi and Jaintia hills and built strong kingdoms under various tribal names. After them, the *Tais* or *Shans*, who had migrated to Burma from Yunnan in the sixth century, threw their one branch, the *Ahoms* who overran, conquered and occupied the land in the thirteenth century. Other Shan tribes came after them and settled mostly in the eastern parts of the state, which was known as Assam after the Ahoms.²

The Mongoloid element in the Assamese population is patent and Tibeto-Burmans and Shans constitute the bulk of the population. The Aryans too came fairly early, though not in sufficient numbers to supplant the Mongoloids. They were however sufficiently virile to Aryanise the people in their religion, rites and language.³ "As a frontier region, Assam appears to be a veritable asylum for all kinds of beliefs and superstitions" and, since early times, a "meeting ground" of all races, from Negroes and Austriacs to Aryans. "The aboriginal beliefs, cults and myths of these diverse races and tribes mingled together in a witch-cauldron", and the strange fusion of Hinduism found in *Vajrayana* and *Mantrayana* is said to have taken its birth in Assam thence to spread to other lands. Thus, Assam "played an important role as a transmitter of Aryan civilisation in lands like Tibet, Nepal and Burma."⁴ Indeed, "The Assam hills round the Valley⁵ contain a great variety of tribes with probably more diversity of custom and language than any comparable in the world."⁶

Through the heart of the province runs the Brahmaputra, the chief artery and highway, building a wide alluvial plain almost

1. *kirata, china*, etc., called *mleccha* and *asura* by the Aryans, were Chinese who entered Assam long before the Christian era.
2. In Assamese language 's' becomes 'h' and the Assamese still call their people and land 'Ahomiya' and 'Ahom'. Ahom means 'peerless'. Baden-Powell thinks 'ha-com' means 'the lower country'—*The Indian Village Community*, p. 136.
3. Assamese language is a speech developed out of Sanskrit in the tenth century.
4. Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-200.
5. Brahmaputra valley.
6. J.H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, Oxford, 1951, p. 27

450 by 50 miles, comprising about half its total area. The Valley, as a "compact geographical unit" includes the frontier tracts of Balipara and Sadiya and the broken hills of Assam Range—*Garo, Khasi, Jaintia*, North *Cachar* and *Naga* hills inhabited by tribes called by the same name. Although "the political boundaries of the country have changed from age to age, its geographical limits have been marked out by nature in such a manner that it retained its cultural identity through the ages".¹ Of the total area of 54,000 sq. miles of present Assam, a little over 24,000 sq. miles constitute the plains and 19,500 square miles of southern and eastern hill tracts.²

A BORE FRONTIER

BETWEEN 1769-1824, THE AHOMS FACED REVOLTS FROM THE lower ranks resulting in a temporary eclipse of royal power" and mushroom appearance of numerous petty *rajahs* in the various parts of the distracted country, to be followed by a Burmese invasion (1810-24) and final occupation by the British, as a result of the first Burmese War (1824-26). The British took three decades (1824-54) to subjugate the freedom-loving tribes in the hills. So they annexed only the Valley proper into the Company's dominions and left several petty states like Manipur, Tripura, Cooch Behar, Jaintia and Khasi as their dependent principalities. Some tribes they drove to the north-east to maintain the tribal area as a "screen" between their Indian dominions and Burma, which at that time was not in their empire, with "political officers" for "settlement of the tribal disputes and eradication of the predatory habits of the surrounding hill tribes."³ Lord Dalhousie called the Assam frontier "a bore"⁴ because the British had a very low opinion of the tribes whom they called "treacherous and intriguing. They left them generally to look after themselves and did not seek to establish any detailed administration in the tribal areas.

Nevertheless, British imperial policy dictated a political integration of the hills in and bordering on Assam with the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley, "giving this eastern most region of India the territorial integrity it must possess as a

1. Barua, *op. cit.*, p.3
2. Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 1. He does not include Nefa area in Assam proper while giving these figures.
3. R.M. Lahiri, *Annexation of Assam*, Calcutta, 1954, pp 1-2, 35, 43, 211
4. Verrier Elwin, *India's North Eastern Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1959

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bastion of defence against foreign powers." At the same time, "to ensure success of imperialist rule," they "did not encourage social and cultural integration either among the hillmen themselves, or amongst the hillmen and the people of the plains."¹ The eastern tribes, known by the generic name of the Nagas, remained primitive and unsubjected, never having a feeling that they were part of the Indian people. It should be mentioned that the Nagas consist of various tribes and dialects, warring with each other and with the population of the Assamese plains throughout their history. They have some things in common, among which is inter-marriage, weapons (javelins and spears) and the same physical conformation. Their women till the fields and their men prepare for and are ever ready for assault in battle. Till the end of the nineteenth century, the appellation Naga was entirely unknown to any of the hill tribes themselves.²

The meaning and derivation of the word Naga has been disputed. According to J. H. Hutton and Waddell, it means a hillsman or a dweller of inaccessible places. Indians in general believe that it means 'naked' which is probably indicative of their ignorance about them. The Nagas may be "head-hunters by predilection,"³ which euphemism reflects that they are warlike, but they are no more naked barbarians as seems to be the common notion in India. Many of their leaders are Christians converted and educated by American missionaries in the first part of this century. Again the Nagas, hostile to the Indian government, are nevertheless not oriented towards Burma or China. The extent of their contact with the outside world is indicated by an example that they learnt tea-drinking from British India in the nineteenth century but learnt to prepare it in the Chinese style from Burmese and Tibetans. Further, the greatest crime in their community is theft, not plunder.

This bit of tribal history is recounted here in order to understand the Naga problem and to appreciate the difficulties in the way of the Indian government to consolidate its eastern frontier. In 1946, proposals were put forward to constitute the hill tribes on the India/Burma frontier into a separate British colony. The Naga National Council, founded that

1. N.N. Dutta, *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, 1958, pp 13-4
2. W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, 1841, p. 380
3. Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 28

year with official encouragement, agreed to accept Indian suzerainty for ten years.¹ After India adopted the new constitution in 1950, however, the Indian government decided “as a matter of policy to bring these frontier areas under more direct administrative control to enable them to share the benefits of a welfare state, subject to the protection of their distinct social and cultural pattern.”² Consequently, all the petty states and tribal areas were incorporated into the Assam province³ and the entire border was constituted into a North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) divided into six divisions, namely, from west to east respectively, Kameng (Bomdi-la), Subansiri (Ziro), Siang (Along) and Lohit (Teju) in the north and Tirap (Khela) and Tuensang (Tuensang) in southeast.⁴

CIVILISING MISSION

THE FIRST AIM OF THE INDIAN ADMINISTRATION WAS A gradual extension of welfare measures to this region which meant a four-fold objective : spread of education, eradication of disease especially malaria which was rampant, development of tribal culture and preservation of their traditional patterns, and the achievement of self-sufficiency in food. India tried to avoid imposing on them too much ; trained Indian personnel was introduced with caution and not too hastily. But there was the “inherent compulsion of its being a border area” and its communications had to be developed rather speedily.

The Naga National Council led by A. Z. Phizo, however, denounced the 1950 Constitution as a ‘breach of faith’ and demanded “complete independence of Nagaland.” In 1952, Nehru visited Nefa, “to draw a report for the guidance of Nefa officials in their dealings with the tribal people” and there were several meetings in the following years between him, Phizo and other tribal chiefs which proved fruitless. In the spring of 1955, widespread disorders broke out in the Naga hills-Tuenseng area on the Burma frontier. It assumed serious proportions in the ensuing summer, calling for the Indian army which was posted in April. In July, it was declared a ‘disturbed area’. Reporting to Parliament in September 1955, the Indian Prime Minister described the Naga demand for indepen-

1. Copeland Plan
2. Nehru, 23 Aug 56, *LS*
3. Assam (Alteration of Boundaries) Act, 1951
4. divisional headquarters are given in brackets.

dence as “absurd” but pointed out that under the British rule, the tribal areas were “almost completely cut off from the rest of India” so that they had “never experienced the sensation of being in a country called India.”

At the beginning of 1956, fresh strife started with increased acts of terrorism against Indian government personnel. Nehru was unduly optimistic in March that year when he said that conditions had returned to normal because army operations had to be pursued more consistently in the next three months and a Federated Naga government, formed by Phizo in place of the Naga National Council, carried on incessant guerilla warfare against the Indian government. In August, as the rebels surrounded the Indian army headquarters in Kohima, Reishang Keishang (Socialist), the only Naga member of the Indian Parliament, charged the Indian army of having perpetrated an “orgy of rape and murder” upon the Nagas and appealed for a general amnesty. Mr. Nehru denied these charges and asserted that the army had shown “remarkable patience and moderation” in dealing with the situation. “It is all very well for the honourable members to say that we must deal with it in a human way and not send the army. But then, what exactly is to be done when other people start killing? Do we send messages of goodwill or do we try to stop the killing? In military operations, things are not done as if we were sitting in a drawing room and...it is no good talking to me about independence for that area. I consider it fantastic for that hill corner between China and Burma and India to be called an independent state.” He, however, admitted that “many of these areas were for the first time brought under some kind of administration during the last six to eight years” and “what is called Assamisation has perhaps been injudiciously pursued.”¹

A convention of loyal Naga leaders, sponsored by the Assam government, was held on 22-26 August 1956 in Kohima which resolved that the Naga hills districts of Assam and Tuensang frontier division should be merged into a single administrative unit to be administered directly by the external affairs ministry. In return, they abandoned their demand for independence and the “cult of violence”. In September, a Naga delegation met Mr. Nehru and a general amnesty was granted to all the rebels who laid down their arms by 26 October. On 25 November a Naga Hills-Tuensang Area

1. *LS*, 23 Aug 56, *Speeches*, III, pp. 490-1, 494, 496-7

(NHTA) was constituted, as separate from Nefa, to accord a homeland to the Nagas. Phizo's federated government, however, continued the warfare and he was reported to be seeking foreign aid through his visits to Burma and Pakistan were fruitless. In November 1959, it was rumoured that he was in China.

The third Naga People's Convention of 'moderate' Naga leaders, held in October 1959 at Mokokchung (Assam), repudiated the demand for independence but demanded the creation with the consent of the people of a separate A-class state called Nagaland consisting of contiguous Naga areas in Assam, Manipur, Nefa and NHTA, with a state assembly and a regular ministry. Its other demands were that local government should continue to be in the hands of village councils and tribal courts, reserve forests included in Assam should be restored to the Nagas, a Naga regiment should be formed in the Indian army, the state of Nagaland should continue to be a 'protected' area entry to which should be regulated by permission and it should have its own constitution. The Chairman of the Convention, Dr. Inkongliba Ao, said on 18 November that the relinquishing of the demand for sovereignty was a big "climb down" for the Naga rebels who would take some time to settle their mind. The Convention formed a negotiating body to confer with the underground Nagas and appealed to the Government of India to extend the period of amnesty as well as relax patrolling operations and other restrictions to enable a free contact between overground and underground Nagas during the amnesty period.

Terrorism was, however, revived in December especially in Manipur. A fifth of the underground rebel force was said to consist of deserters from the army and the police.¹ In March 1960, it was reported that other smaller tribes in the area, like *Kuki-Chin* and *Hmar*, had become apprehensive of the formation of a Naga state in which they would be in a minority and they were demanding autonomous districts for themselves.² In April 1960, therefore, ended the "phase in which the Government of India was prepared to give 'moderate' Nagas whatever political concessions they wanted except independence in an attempt to isolate the hostiles" and the Governor of Assam told the 'moderate' leadership, "composed of government servants" and "created and fostered

1. Assam newsletter, *TI*, 4 Nov 59

2. Assam newsletter, *TI*, 5 Mar 60

by the NHTA administration", that there could be no political settlement with them till peace was restored. They and their Convention, it was reported, had failed to unify the Nagas and persuade them to negotiate with the Government.¹

Meanwhile, the outlook for either the government or the rebels appeared to be no better. An Assam government spokesman admitted on 9 June 1960 that a serious situation existed in the Naga area. Phizo arrived in London on 12 June, leaving Karachi on a Salvadorean passport bought in black market in Manila by Rev. Michael Scott who played his host in London.² Consequently, when a fifteen-man Naga delegation headed by Dr. Ao met the Indian Prime Minister on 26 July, both the delegation as well as the Prime Minister were eager to arrive at some solution. The delegation was said to represent eleven out of fourteen tribes and 90% of the Naga population.

A SEPARATE STATE

ON 30 JULY AN AGREEMENT WAS REACHED WHEREBY THE existing Naga Hills- Tuensang Area was to become a separate state of Nagaland, with a legislative assembly and a responsible cabinet, after a transitional period of three years during which an Interim Body and an Executive Council were to act in an advisory capacity. The Governor of Assam, who was also to be the Governor of Nagaland, had the responsibility for law and order until such time as the situation remained disturbed. He had also general responsibility "for ensuring that the funds made available by the Government of India were expended for the purposes for which they were approved". Safeguards were provided for religious and social practices of the tribes and for their customary law and local justice. The new state had an area of 6, 236 sq. miles and a population of of less than four lakhs.

Phizo in London, on the other hand, was spinning tales of blood curdling atrocities committed by the Indian army in the Naga area.³ His list of 72 alleged atrocities given to pressmen included destruction of whole villages, torture, cruci-

1. Assam newsletter, *TI*, 19 Apr 60
2. Rev. Scott came to India in Dec-Jan 60-61 and twice met Mr. Nehru. He had not come here as Phizo's emissary, he stated on 1 Jan 61, but he had given shelter to Phizo because he "should be given hospitality by a country friendly to India rather than by one that might wish to harm India".
3. 26 Jul 60

fixion, scalping, flogging of women, rape, concentration camps¹ and starvation. He called the Naga People's Convention a "puppet assembly" of "traitors". Mr. Nehru repudiated all these delegations in *Lok Sabha* on 4 August and disclosed that he had received a telegram on 19 July asking for safe conduct to Phizo to visit Delhi in order to discuss a cease-fire, appointment of an independent commission to enquire into the alleged atrocities and settlement of the constitutional future of Nagaland. The Prime minister said, he had refused the request due to Phizo's reckless allegations and also because he rejected Phizo's claim to speak on behalf of the Nagas. Phizo was wanted for murder, he added, though India did not call for extradition because they did not want him here.²

Mr. Nehru also reported that between 1956 and July 1960, Rs. 2,628 crores had been spent in the NHTA on welfare activities and, while Naga rebel action had been sporadic throughout 1958-59, their number by December 1959 had fallen to 2,000 against a maximum of 5,000 in 1956-57. The number of hostiles in the middle of 1960 was estimated at a bare 1,500, mainly on the Burma border, but they replied to the Convention's appeals for cooperation by beginning their acts of reprisal against the members of the Convention and against villages refusing them supplies. Elections to tribal councils, held amidst such conditions of insecurity for those elected, could therefore be held only in Kohima, the headquarters of the new state, and not in the other two districts, namely, Mokokchung and Tuensang. The 45-member interim body elected Dr. Ao as chairman and an Executive Council of 5 headed by Mr. Shilu Ao, who was one of the founders of Phizo's Naga National Council in 1946 before that body launched upon a course of violence. Mr. Shilu Ao, called the Chief Executive Councillor, thus occupied the position of the future chief minister of the state.

By October 1960, an all-Assam Hill Leaders' Conference led by members of the Assam assembly, was also gearing itself for demanding autonomy for the five hill districts of Assam, namely, United Khasi-Jaintia, Garo, North Cachar, Mikir and Mizo. Captain Williamson Sangma of the Mizo Hills

1. Villages in Naga areas were sometimes grouped together and fenced for security purpose by the Indian army. These were called concentration camps by the rebels.
2. *LS*, 8 Dec 60. Nehru said Phizo was a British subject on the basis of his Indian citizenship and he could not be expelled until a special extradition treaty was entered into with Britain.

Union, who was minister for tribal affairs in the Assam government, resigned his post in October to lead this new opposition. On 24-26 November 1960, he led a delegation of the above five districts to Mr. Nehru to demand a separate "Eastern Frontier State" comprising of these districts, the tribal areas of contiguous Manipur and Tripura and the Nefa. The Prime Minister rejected their demand but suggested that the concerned members of the Assembly might form a Committee to be responsible for the development of their region, and special funds should be set aside for this purpose. He also advised the Assam cabinet to have a separate minister for hill districts. Mr. Sangma was succeeded in the cabinet by Mr. Maham Singh from the Khasi hills.

A separate Nagaland state was granted by the Government of India not only as a concession to the loyal Nagas but as a rejoinder to Phizo's demand for a sovereign and independent Naga country. The interim regime was expected "to demonstrate to the Nagas that statehood within the Indian Union could be satisfying to even peripheral and unintegrated communities like theirs" and that it was really an alternative to secession.¹ Accordingly, a press party permitted to visit Nagaland in mid-December 1960 for the first time since disturbances had begun, found the "overground" hostiles it was able to meet in difficulties "to explain to their supporters the special benefits of independence." The Naga desire to rule themselves meant only their management of internal affairs without intrusion by outsiders whom they resented. Therefore, the "excesses" and primitive measures of Indian security forces had made them unpopular, the report said, but the hostiles too had alienated the sympathy of villagers by their ruthless methods of "extorting" cooperation.² The road to peace in Nagaland was bound to be more tortuous, however, than the press party's optimism suggested, because there were difficulties in selling the democratic way of life to the tribals.

KOHIMA VS. SHILLONG

FIRST OF ALL, THE NEW STATE OF NAGALAND DID NOT SATISFY the full territorial ambitions of even the loyal Nagas. While the People's Convention had demanded a state consisting of all the contiguous Naga areas in Assam, Manipur, Nefa and NHTA, the new state comprised only the NHTA region for

1. *The Statesman*, quoted by *Keesings Contemporary Archives*.
2. *The Statesman*, 24 Jan 61

fear of the wrath of smaller tribes inhabiting the larger area and also to discourage similar demands from other tribes. Consequently, a minority leadership in the Convention was "determined to wreck the experiment in Nagaland" from the start. In the second place, a conflict between Kohima and Shillong was inherent in the President's Nagaland (Transitional Provisions) Regulation which came into force on 24 January 1961.

Sharp differences of opinion consequently arose in the Interim Body right at its inception over the manner of entering into negotiations with the hostiles and of gauging and reacting to popular opinion. Though the outlook for the hostiles was said to be poor, the political front provided by the People's Convention was equally poor and hesitant. Each time security measures had been relaxed, in order to make it easier for the rebels to come out to negotiate and compromise, they had seized the opportunity to reorganise themselves and increase their reprisals. Mr. Shilu Ao promised to dissolve the interim regime if a *jirga* kind of public meeting in Mukokchung made a demand to that effect because "how could they continue against the wishes of the people."¹ Nonetheless, terrorism continued unabated. Nehru described it as "acts of desperation" to put difficulties in the way of change.²

The Interim Body was sworn in at Kohima on 18 February and the Executive Council at Shillong on 16 March 1961.

On 4 April, the Mizo Hills Union, holding two-thirds of seats for Mizo district in the state assembly, left the Congress party in protest against inadequate measures to cope with famine in their area. On 27 April, leader of the Union, Mr. A. Thanlira resigned his post of chief parliamentary secretary to the Assam government. Mr. Nehru had discussions with the All Party Hill Leaders Conference on 21 May, but on 1 July, the latter rejected Mr. Nehru's proposals for local autonomy for hill districts. Re-stating their demand for a separate state, they decided to launch a non-cooperation movement and were prevented from doing so because their decision was rejected by their local units and congress committees. By the end of October, however, eight out of fifteen members belonging to the hill districts resigned their seats in the Assam Assembly. Heartened by the example of the Nagas, a movement for regional autonomy was spreading fast among the other hill tribes.

1. *ibid*

2. *LS*, 15 Feb 61

In Nagaland, on the other hand, the situation remained unchanged. Nehru told *Lok Sabha* on 19 April that the rebels seemed to secure part of their supply of arms out of "leakages" from Burmese and Indian sources. He admitted that Naga home guards sometimes handed over their guns to the rebels though he had no information about foreign help to the Nagas. The Government of India eventually represented to the Burmese government that the hostiles "in difficulties" crossed over and used their territory to engage in operations against India. The latter replied on 16 May that they took "a most serious view" of the situation and would take all the necessary measures.

On 5 July, the majority of members of the Manipur Naga Council rejected the merger of Naga areas of Manipur into Nagaland. On 22 August, Dr. Ao fell a victim to a terrorist's bullet to which he succumbed two days later. Mr. T.N. Angami was elected chairman of the Interim Body in his place.

By the time the second session of the Interim Body was held on 21 September, expected differences had also arisen between Kohima and Shillong. On the one hand, the executive councillors felt they were running the persistent risk of being killed by the hostiles because, in the absence of real power, they "merely functioned as agents of the Centre." The officials on the other hand were "prone to qualify the status of the Convention with the failure of its appeals to the hostiles."¹ Political commentators were rather harsh when they said that because "dead men wield no power" the councillors wanted "power here and now while they were alive,"² but it was a fact that the political effectivity of the councillors, no less than the political appeal of the new set-up before the Naga rebels, lay in the real power that the new executive could command.

As early as 1879, a British officer had opined that "the entire Naga problem must be taken up sooner or later and properly settled, or it will be a source of constant trouble to us." He had observed that the Nagas hated *babus* and departmental government agents and a chief was needed who "elects to live and work and die for them."³ A. Z. Phizo was one such chief, even though misguided, and the Nagas loyal to India had failed to produce a parallel chief among themselves. Or if there was one, he was not given due recognition by the

1. *The Statesman*, 13 Sep 61

2. *ibid*

3. S.E. Seal, *A Tour Diary of 1879*, quoted by Elwin, *op. cit.*

Assam government. It is true that the executive council's record of inducing the hostiles to surrender and give up their demand of independence was not impressive but the council had been given too little freedom and too little time to manoeuvre the situation its own way. The tangled skein of Naga popular consciousness—their primitive fears and aspirations—“could not be rooted out by routine methods.” They required “a flexible personality at the helm of affairs”¹ and a more flexible approach than Shillong's superintendence could allow.

Shillong or Delhi on their part were making attempts to bring elements of Naga hostiles into the administration because they believed that a change in the composition of the provisional government could possibly achieve the secession of violence which, and not a political settlement, was the prime need of Nagaland. In fact, it was reported that a split on this question had been induced between the “armed wing” and the “political wing” of the “underground” led respectively by general Kaito and Vice-President of the Naga National Council Imkongmeran Ao.² But these reports, whether true or false, merely added to the anxiety of the interim regime and gave a shock to its prestige among the Naga people. In August 1961, the hostiles ambushed four Indian airmen and kept them as hostages in the thick jungles of Burma from where they were released to Burmese constabulary nine months later on 5 May 1962.

The Interim Body demanded, therefore, that it should forthwith be allowed to function as an assembly and the Council as a ministry. The Commissioner of Nagaland should act as chief secretary to the government and adviser to the Governor who should make no interference in their day-to-day policies and administration. The transitional provisions regulations, the Body said, must be scrapped as they were “vague and intricate” and “took away all powers from the Executive Council” to vest in the Administration. Mr. Shilu Ao said that six months of the working of the interim regime had shown that finance and law and order, whose control was reserved to the Governor, overlapped the entire field of administration and left little scope for the Council. He claimed that the Interim Body had made substantial progress towards bringing into existence a responsible government, capable of dealing with the Naga problem effectively, and it must be fully empowered to “take the people into confidence and create conditions for

1. *The Statesman*, 13 Sep 61
2. *The Statesman*, 27 Sep 61

the smooth ushering in of the new state.” He announced government permission to some administrative changes and expansion which “would pay the wave for an immediate responsible government in the State.”

Prime Minister Nehru finally displayed his political wisdom on 30 October 1961 by agreeing in principle to the demand that the Council and the Interim Body should act as *de facto* cabinet and legislature.

The Interim Body, however, continue to be bitterly divided between those favouring negotiations with the hostiles and others opposing it. On the one side, hostile ranks were reported to be cracking up and a *jirga*, or national assembly of all Naga representatives, was again mooted to be held at Mokokchung in March. On the other, it was argued that the moment the Executive Council entertained the rebel representatives, the latter would go about telling that agreement had been reached on a dissolution of the Interim Body, thus creating confusion among the villagers.¹ Therefore, no talks should be held with the hostiles until tribal councils had been reorganised. The election of the councils, however, depended upon return to peaceful conditions, or in other words, upon some kind of truce with the hostiles.

VICIOUS CIRCLE

NAGALAND WAS THUS INVOLVED IN A VICIOUS CIRCLE WHOSE thread was held by the Naga rebels. Phizo held a news conference in London on 21 January 1962 to broadcast to the world that he had offered to India a negotiated solution of the Naga problem and if he received no response in three weeks, he would approach the International Commission of Jurists to investigate the behaviour of Indian troops “occupying key positions in Nagaland.” He claimed to possess documentation of 75,000 men, women and children having been killed there during 1955 and 1959. The Naga National Council was the legitimate government of Nagaland, he asserted, and threatened that in case he failed to move India, he would ask Chinese or Burmese help for the Naga cause. As a concession to the Indian government, he offered that he was willing to discuss the “possibility of permitting India to use military bases within Nagaland necessary for her defence” as also permit

1. It was recalled that each time Nehru met Phizo, the latter told his supporters that the Indian government had agreed to his demands.

India's participation "in the development of Nagaland's natural resources." All this, however, on the basic acceptance that Nagas were not Indians and Nagaland was an independent country.

Contrary to wistful reports of the hostile ranks cracking up, the wife of the Vice-President of the Naga National Council, Mrs. Imkongmeran Ao told a *Times of India* reporter on 23 January that the rebels were determined to fight to the bitter end. Released from Indian imprisonment a few days earlier, Mrs. Ao claimed that the 'underground' were the entire Naga people, all of whom without exception favoured independence and it were the Naga people who had sent Phizo to London. On 28 January, an orgy of loot and arson, disruption of communications and firing on trains began afresh. There was an official denial on 2 February that security measures were being tightened but a President's Regulation on the model of security of state acts in other states was enforced in Nagaland in early March.

A. Z. Phizo also wrote to the Chief Executive Councillor, Shilu Ao, that he was in favour of discussions for a final and peaceful settlement of the Naga problem and agreed with the latter that a conference of all Naga tribes and sects should seek a settlement acceptable to the Nagas. Simultaneously, he applied to the Indian High Commission in London to permit him safe conduct to Nagaland to participate in the proposed conference. The High Commission stated on 2 March 1962 that Phizo's application had been rejected because he had become a British citizen "at his own request." Mr. Ao on his part wrote to Phizo on 24 February that the present settlement regarding Nagaland's political status was final and the object of the general meeting was only to review the progress made and find out ways and means to restore peace. Mr. Ao said, he was willing to consider the question of safety of underground Nagas when they surrendered.

The formation of a separate state of Nagaland had beyond doubt compelled the rebels to a reappraisal of their situation in which task they were eager to consult Mr. Phizo who evidently continued to be their unquestioned leader and spokesman. Consequently, on 2 May 1962, about 150 hostiles led by Kaito, the leader of the Naga military wing, crossed into East Pakistan

where they were given asylum on 30 May. ¹ Phizo too arrived in Karachi on 20 May and left for East Pakistan on 25 May to meet his escaped followers. President Ayub stated three days later that his arrival had greatly embarrassed the Pakistan Government and no government in exile was being contemplated in Pakistan. Phizo could arrive, Mr. Ayub added, because he had a British passport but he was persuaded to go back. The Pak Foreign Secretary, S.K. Dehlavi, told newsmen on 30 May that, as far as he could see, the Nagas were not interested in setting up a government in exile but in carrying on the fight in their own homeland. "The Nagas are a persecuted people," he thought, but American missionaries who had converted them and Christians should sympathise with them more rather than Pakistan.

In India on 7 May, a conference of officials and Naga representatives presided over by the Governor, made an overall review of the situation. In the first fortnight of June, a special session of the Interim Body discussed the draft Nagaland state bill and demanded a revision of the financial arrangements made in the bill as well as the special responsibility of the Governor in various matters. On 29 August 1962, the *Lok Sabha* passed the bill which provided that no acts of Indian Parliament would apply to the religious and social practices, customary law and system of the Nagas without concurrence of their own legislature. The Act provided for a legislative assembly of 46 members, to be increased to 60 after ten years and a representative each for the *Lok Sabha* and *Rajya Sabha*. The Tuensang area, which was the hotbed of rebel activity, was given a special treatment. Its six representatives for the assembly were to be chosen by a regional council and it was to remain for ten years under the Governor's direct administration in the interests of law and order. The special responsibilities of the Governor remained and Nagaland was to share with Assam a common governor, high court and bar council.

38. Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon told *LS* on 13 Jan 62 that the escape of Naga hostiles had been possible because of lack of coordination between different authorities in Nagaland, but "remedial measures" were being undertaken.