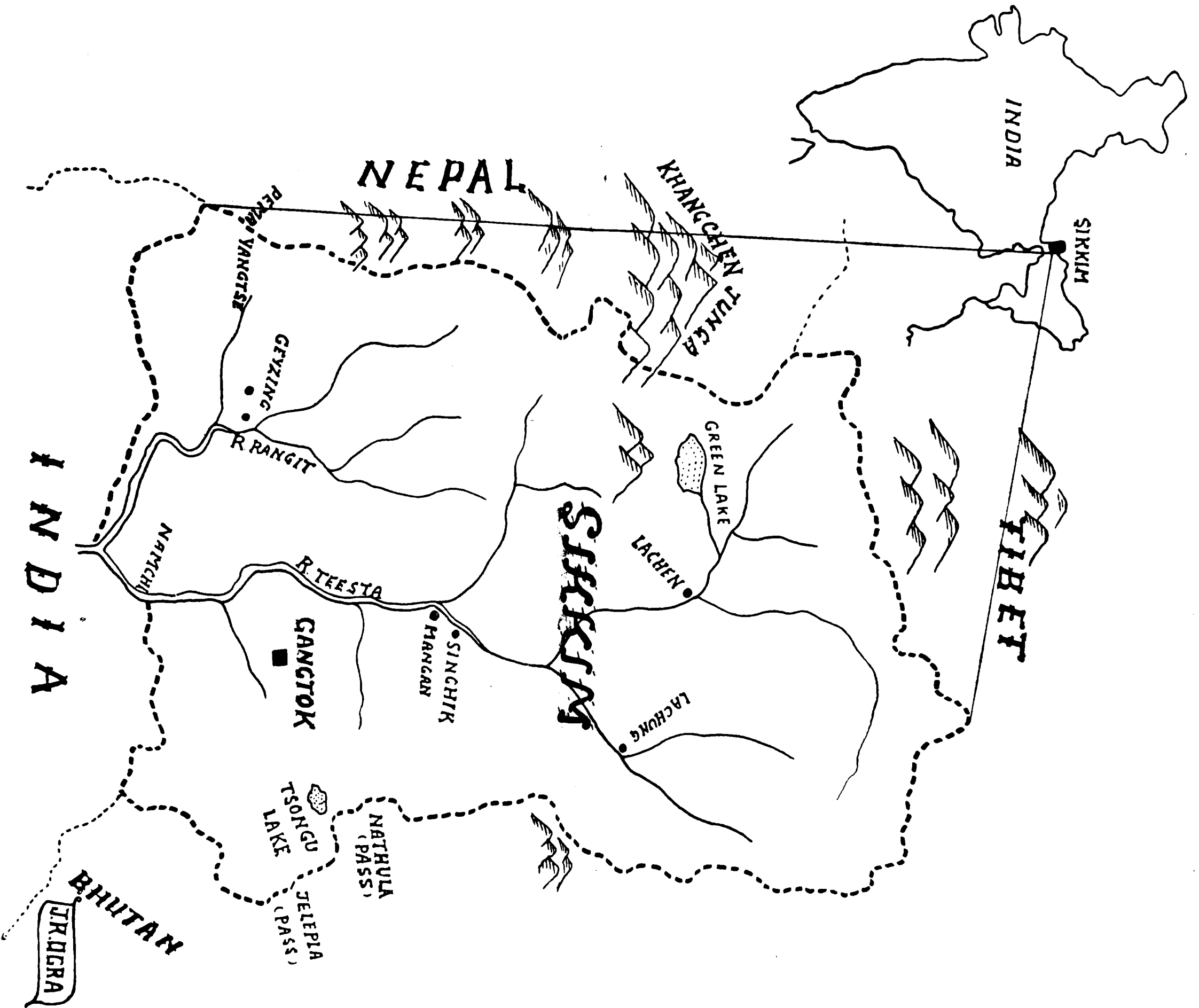


SIKKIM AND INDIA

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B.S.K.GROVER



The Author of the book, Dr. B. S. K. Grover, is teaching in the Department of Political Science, faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Jodhpur, Jodhpur (Rajasthan—India). He received his M. A. degree in Political Science in 1960 from the University of Rajasthan securing first division and standing first in the order of merit. He received his Ph. D. degree from the University of Jodhpur. He is Author of several articles and research papers.

FOCUS ON NEIGHBOURS

**SIKKIM AND
INDIA
1947—1974**

Focus on Neighbours

1. The Changing Bhutan—*Dr. L. S. Rathore.*

SIKKIM AND INDIA

STORM AND CONSOLIDATION

B. S. K. GROVER

M. A., Ph. D.

With an foreword by Hon'ble Kazi Lhendup Dorji
and Introduction by L.M. Singhvi.



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FOREWORD

Sikkim which is virtually squeezed in by the table top shaped Nepal in west, Bhutan and Chumbi Valley in the east, and India in the south was probably the most secluded and isolated political unit in the world when India became independent. But to-day, on account of its most strategic position in the incredibly complex and volatile frontier region between India and China, it occupies a singularly unique position in the chain of Himalayan countries. Besides, under the protective ramparts of Himalayas, Sikkim is bestirring with winds of change. The mystical aura of Himalayas has been completely broken. Sikkim has witnessed dramatic changes during the last fifteen months, ushering the State into an era of democracy.

Since India is our fraternal and intimate neighbour, we ought to maintain very cordial and close relations with it. It is essential that our neighbours must possess reliable knowledge about our people, their aspirations, achievements and problems. Hitherto there has been a paucity of good work on Sikkim. Dr. Grover's interesting and timely book is a praiseworthy attempt towards filling up this gap. He has succeeded in covering in his survey all the significant aspects of Sikkim's political and constitutional developments, its special relations with India and the recent happenings that have brought parliamentary democracy here. In spite of the fact that there is a paucity of material in this field, Dr. Grover has covered a wide field and dealt with a number of issues in Sikkim-India relationship. He had the benefit of visiting the area and meeting the people in Sikkim to discuss with them issues of public importance. His book is a thought provoking, highly informative and a scholarly work. He has covered all the latest happenings in the state.

I welcome this timely and important publication, which I hope will arouse the interest of those who are interested in the study of this area. It is with great pleasure that I commend it for study by people, scholars and statesmen all over the world who are interested in Sikkim's relations with the neighbouring countries and its development in various aspects of life.

Kazi Lhendup Dorji
 11.7.74

Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa of Chakhung
CHIEF MINISTER OF SIKKIM

PREFACE

The 'thimble—sized' Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim has come to occupy a significant position in recent times in view of its strategic position and geopolitical implications. But when one looks at the map of the world, Sikkim appears to be insignificant in the mighty Himalayas. But its strategic location gives it an importance out of all proportion to its size. Wedged in as it is between four different countries—Nepal on the west, Bhutan on the east, Chinese occupied Tibet on the north, and India on the south, this land of orchids and eternal snows, sylvan beauty and mountainous sublimity, has come to occupy today a singularly unique position in the chain of Himalayan kingdoms.

Although historically, Sikkim has figured prominently as a trade link between the Indian subcontinent and the heartland of Asia, the events of last fifteen years have converted the otherwise peaceful Sikkimese frontier into the most remote fronts of cold war, the gun-mounted border between the Indian and the Chinese armies. The Chinese aggression on India in 1962 and the subsequent border clashes between China and India have further dramatized the strategic location of Sikkim and reminded India that without friendly Sikkim, the northern defence system of the country would be greatly weakened and the credible Indian efforts in the eastern Himalayan area would be more difficult to sustain. Militarily microscopic Sikkim is vulnerable and could prove to be a possible area of Chinese expansion and aggression. Sikkim is situated directly in the path of invading Chinese because it provides the easiest natural route between India and Tibet. Hence, tiny Sikkim with about 2,00,000 people, is perched precariously on an explosive frontier between 750 million Chinese and 550 million Indians.

However, these developments have terminated Sikkim's isolation into which it had wrapped itself for the last few centuries.

A major transformation is stirring these highlands. Its enlightened ruler, Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal and the politically conscious leadership of different political parties in the kingdom are attempting to change its middle age feudalism, to herald it into the world of the twentieth century. Sikkim's economic, social, cultural and political institutions are passing through a transitional but momentous stage. The 'mini—revolution' of April 1973 and the Agreement of May 1973 have transformed the Sikkim Scenario tremendously. It has led to the adoption of a new constitution and the first ever popular and responsible government in July 1974.

As against the motives and ulterior objectives of China, India during the last twenty five years has helped Sikkim not only to preserve its independence and integrity, but has given substantial aid to put her on the path of development and modernity. All these aspects of Sikkim's life and activity gave me an impetus to undertake a study of Sikkim—India relations since 1947.

The present work is a revised and enlarged version of the thesis submitted by me to the university of Jodhpur in October 1972 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Ph. D. degree.

In this regard, I have a deep sense of gratitude for my guide and supervisor, Dr. L.S. Rathore, Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Jodhpur, who not only inspired and actively encouraged me to undertake this study in the initial stages, but took keen interest in my work and gave to me willing assistance and guidance. He supervised the work at every stage of its preparation. This has helped me tremendously to complete my work.

I express my gratitude to sarvshri K.S. Bajpai, Political Officer of India in Sikkim, I.S. Chopra, former Sidlon of Sikkim, Dr. N.C. Sinha, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Kazini Sahiba of Chakhung, Kalu Rai, Martam Topden, C.D. Rai, S.K. Rai, B.B. Gurung, K.B. Thapa, and several other Officials of the Government of Sikkim and various leaders of political parties in Sikkim whose names have not been mentioned here, who in spite of their own busy schedule of work, found time to discuss with me on matters pertaining to this kingdom during my visit to Sikkim in September-October 1970. I am thankful to Professor Leo E. Rose of California (U.S.A.), who spared his valuable time to discuss with me about developments in

Sikkim during his short visit to New Delhi in September 1972 and gave to me valuable suggestions. My learned teacher, Professor A.B. Mathur, Professor of Political Science, Government college, Ajmer, has been a great source of strength and inspiration to me during the course of this work.

I am extremely grateful to Hon'ble Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa of Chakhung, Chief Minister designate of Sikkim for writing a foreword to my book. I express my gratitude to Dr. L.M. Singhvi for writing Introduction to this book.

I am grateful to my wife, Pushplata, who in spite of her own official duties, found time to go through the manuscript and offer many valuable suggestions.

This work is being brought out with a financial assistance of Rs. 2000/- from the University Grants Commission and the University of Jodhpur for which I am obliged and grateful.

I have received unfailing cooperation from the staff of the Libraries of the University of Jodhpur ; Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi ; Ministry of External Affairs, Patiala House, New Delhi ; and Parliament House for which I shall always remain grateful to them.

I am grateful to Messers P.B.H. Press, Delhi for neat printing of the book.

Finally, I thank Messers Jain Brothers, New Delhi for their effective cooperation and prompt publication of the book.

B.S.K. GROVER

Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
University of Jodhpur,
Jodhpur-342001
Rajasthan-India
July 21, 1974.

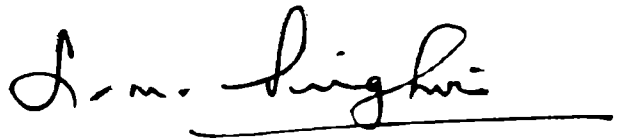
INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to write this introduction to Dr. B.S.K. Grover's Study of Sikkim which promises to occupy a place of pride among contemporary Indian writings on Sikkim and its political evolution.

Dr. Grover's study of Sikkim is comprehensive in its coverage and in its portrayal of the history and socio-political development of the Sikkimese people and their institutions. Dr. Grover has endeavoured to analyse diverse sources including published materials extensively but he has not confined himself to mere library research for his analysis and understanding of these developments. He is a careful and keen observer of the Sikkimese scene. He has diligently documented his study of the relationship between Sikkim and India from 1947 to 1974 and has up-dated his analysis with an engaging narrative of the latest developments leading to what he calls the storm and the consolidation in Sikkim.

The new Constitution of Sikkim and the working of the newly acquired democratic apparatus by the popularly elected and accredited representatives is a matter of profound interest to the academics as well as the informed citizens. Dr. Grover's book provides a wealth of interesting materials and a dependable description of the Sikkimese political processes and of Sikkim's transitional and fledgeling transformation. Hopefully, Dr. Grover's sustained scholarly interest in Sikkim would continue to provide us with an interpretation of Sikkimese affairs and events. This volume holds out a promise which, I am confident, Dr. Grover will not be tardy to fulfil.

I join the Hon'ble Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa of Chakhung in commending Dr. Grover's study to scholars and statesmen and in wishing Dr. Grover's arduous and erudite interest in Sikkim a full flowering.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "L.M. Singhvi", written over a horizontal line.

(L.M. Singhvi)

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Bonds of Fraternity



Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa, Chief Minister—designate of Sikkim, presenting the traditional scarf to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, during his visit to New Delhi in July 1974.

Frank S. Smythe, who climbed its icy slopes predicted that Sikkim would become 'the playground of the eastern Himalaya'.¹³ The country forms part of the inner Himalayan range of mountains which project southwards. Except in the south, it is separated from its neighbours by a wall of great mountains ranging from 10,000 feet to 28,000 feet in height. It may be viewed as a stupendous stairway hewn out of the western border of the Tibetan plateau by glaciers and great rivers and leading down to the Indian plains¹⁴. However, these mountains contain certain important and strategic passes. The Chola range, which forms the eastern boundary of Sikkim with Tibet, is pierced by several passes, the most important being Nathu La (15,512 feet) and Jelep La (13,254 feet). To the west lies the Singalila range which forms the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal and contains the important pass of Chiabhangjang (10,320 feet). The most magnificent group of mountains is Kanchenjunga group which is dominated by Mount Kanchenjunga 'Sikkim's crowning glory' towering to a height of 28,140 feet. The other mountain peaks are Kinchinjhan (22,700 feet), Siniolchu (22,620 feet), and Chomiome (22,386 feet)¹⁵. As such, Sikkim is a land of varied elevations ranging from 800 feet above M.S.L. at the southern foothills to over 28,140 feet along its northern and north-western boundaries.

The wide variations in altitudes account for similar variations in climatic conditions. It comprises every kind of exquisite scenery—from the rank tropical luxuriance of the lower valleys to the magnificence of its great snowy peaks, of which there are no fewer than fourteen, all over 20,000 feet on its northern borders¹⁶. The perpetual snowline in Sikkim is about 16,000 feet and there are often powderings of snow down to 4,500 feet, the level of the most of the towns¹⁷. In this miniscule country, man meets the entire gamut of climate on this earth. In altitudes of 15,000 feet, an arctic climate prevails; those between 15,000 and 7,000 feet are alpine areas. The valleys and plains below 7,000 feet have a temperate and sub-tropical climate¹⁸.

Sikkim is the most humid place in the whole range of the Himalayas, because of its proximity to the Bay of Bengal and direct exposure to the effects of the moisture-laden south-west monsoon, from which the ranges east of Sikkim are partially screened by the mountains on the south flank of the Assam Valley¹⁹. The rainfall varies from fifty inches to two hundred inches a year and in some parts of Sikkim, the rainfall has been as high as two hundred fifty inches a year²⁰.

The important river of Sikkim is the Teesta which winds its way through the country. This river, originating in the Tashi-drag glaciers in the north and fed in its journey to the south by the scores of small tributary streams, form the artery of irrigation as well as of drainage²¹. The main tributaries are the Rangit, the Rongni-chu, the Lachen and the Lachung rivers, all snow fed torrents coming

from the northern hills. Essentially, Sikkim is the catchment area of the headwaters of the Teesta river. Since the whole of the state is situated at a considerable elevation within the Himalayan mountain zone, the ranges that bound it on three sides forming a kind of a horseshoe, from the sides of which dependent spurs project, serving as lateral barriers to the Rangit and the Teesta's greater affluents, the Lachung, Lachen, Zemu, Talung, Rongni and Rangpo. These basins have a southward slope, being broad at the top where they leave the watershed, and gradually contracting, like a fan from its rim to its handle in the Teesta valley near Pashok. The rivers are very rapid and generally run in deep ravines, the ascent from the bank for the first few hundred feet being almost precipitous²².

Flora and Fauna

Sikkim, 'the land of leeches', is noted for its gorgeous flora, its picturesque fauna and its gloriously glittering insect world. An outstanding feature of the physical landscape in Sikkim Himalayas is the immense luxuriance and variety of vegetation. Because of its heavy rainfall, Sikkim is a densely wooded country in the world. Its forests are capable of yielding valuable timber²³. The natural vegetation can be considered as being characteristic of the three separate zones into which the country can be divided. In the sub-tropical zone, which extends upto 5,000 feet, several varieties of bamboo, ferns and tree ferns, pandanus, sal and orchids are to be found. Dense undergrowths and bush vegetation are typical of the sub-tropical zone. In the temperate zone and in the northern valleys the land is covered by the forests of cherry, laurel, oak, chestnut, maple, firs, pine and magnolia. The Rhododendron, the glory of Sikkim, becomes abundant from an altitude of 8,000 feet and above. There are over thirty species, varying in size, of Rhododendron in Sikkim. Magnolias, Conifers, larches and junipers, oaks, walnuts, silver fir, prunus etc. further beautify the landscape²⁴. The more gentle slopes at these high altitudes are often covered by a variety of beautiful flowers like the Primula which add a touch of glorious colour to the sombre grandeur of the lonely mountain sides. The floristic composition of the flora of the Sikkim Himalaya is unique of its kind even within the geographical boundary of India²⁵. Botanically, it is one of the richest areas in the Indian sub-continent, if not in the world. There are roughly four thousand varieties of flowering plants and shrubs in Sikkim²⁶. Orchids are a special feature of Sikkim and nearly seven hundred species are found²⁷ and around these flutter several hundred species of butterflies which can offer a lepidopterist a life time of work and delight²⁸. These many-hued butterflies flash like living jewels from flower to flower, doing a mad dance of ephemeral existence under the stimulus of the sun-laden air. Sikkim is equally famous for its primulas. It may not be any exaggeration to state that perhaps no other country of equal or larger size presents such a wide variety of floral wealth²⁹.

Wild animals are equally abundant in variety in Sikkim. Even animals like snow leopards are found, though it is fast vanishing. The Himalyan black bear is generally found from 4,000 feet to 11,000 feet. Above this altitude, the brown bear has its habitat. Barking deer, musk deer, sambar, marbled cat, the leopard cat, squirrels, tiger, panda, otter, ovis, nahura, ovismon goral and wild boar are also found at different altitudes³⁰.

The birds found in the country are varied enough to make Sikkim an ornithologist's heaven. There are about five hundred species of birds found in Sikkim, the most important being pheasants, partridges, ducks and the lammergeyer. Salmon and trout are the principal fish of Sikkim.

Economic Resources

Minerals

A reasonable measure of economic growth is basic for the political viability of state. In this regard Sikkim has an excellent economic base. The mineral deposits are quite substantial from the point of view of commercial and industrial exploitation. The mineral wealth of Sikkim is mainly in copper, zinc and lead.³¹ Copper veins are widespread and constitute the principal source of mineral wealth. The richest ores are found at Pachikhani and Bhotang. Copper mining at present is being worked by the Sikkim Mining Corporation at Rangpo, an enterprise financed jointly by the Governments of Sikkim and India. It was constituted under a royal proclamation in February 1960 for the purpose of exploiting the mineral deposits in Sikkim. Deposits of copper are found at Dikchu, Rhenock, Lingui, Ronglichu, Londok, Rathokhari, Barmiak, Tukkhani and Rinchinpong also³². Other minerals such as pyrites, limestone and coal are also mined³³.

Agriculture and Forests

By and large, Sikkim's wealth is derived from agriculture and forests. The economy of the land is principally, agrarian with nearly 97 percent of its population living in the rural areas³⁴. Due to wide variation in the elevation and rainfall, the agriculture has been influenced by the nature of the terrain and diversity of climatic factors. Rice and maize are the main monsoon crops. Millet, buckwheat, barley, dhal constitute the subsidiary crops³⁵. Cardamom, potatoes, citrus fruits, apples and pine-apples are major cash crops³⁶.

Forests

About one third of Sikkim's area of 2,818 square miles consists of forests³⁷. Forests constitute a potential and important source of wealth of the country. The forests of sal and bamboo in the south as well as coniferous trees in the north are capable of exploitation and utilization. Attempts to float timber down the Teesta river from the

Lachen-Lachung area have not so far met with success owing to the occurrence of sudden floods in the river. A fuller survey of the prospects for paper pulp production is currently in progress in the country.

Industry

Mining, distillery, fruit preservation, the manufacture of cloth and blankets, local handicrafts, tanning, the production of copper-ware and wooden goods are the principal industries of Sikkim.³⁸ The Sikkim Tannery has been located at Majhitar near Rongphu.³⁹ The Palden Thondup Institute for Cottage Industries situated at Gangtok, is fulfilling the objectives of encouraging and developing native handicrafts.

Trade and Transport

The main exports of Sikkim are cardamom, oranges, potatoes and apples. The cultivations of potato is growing in importance especially in western Sikkim, at altitudes of about 8,000 feet. Tea is a new venture and a government Tea Estate is being developed in Kewzing, in the western part of Sikkim. Distillation of liquors and wines as a large scale commercial undertaking in Sikkim is being done by the Sikkim Distilleries at Rongpo.⁴⁰ The fruit preservation factory at Singtam is selling products processed from oranges and apples. The main imports are machinery, cotton piece goods, food-stuffs and consumer goods.⁴¹

As a results of the impressive road construction programme undertaken since planning began in 1954, almost all parts of Sikkim are now within easy reach from Gangtok. The Sikkim Nationalised Transport operates services on all the important routes of the state⁴². The Sikkim public works department, the central public works department, the border roads organization, the General Reserve Engineer Force have all knitted the different parts of the state into first class roads.

Cultural Setting

The people—The Lepchas

Within this polychrome of nature live a number of races, speaking different languages. The total population of Sikkim is about 1,62,189 (1961 Census) which is composed mainly of the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese⁴³. However, the present total population of the state is well over 2,00,000.⁴⁴

The earliest inhabitants of Sikkim were said to be the Lepchas or as they call themselves, the 'Rong-pa', meaning literally the 'ravine folk'. The hills, mountains and streams have Lepcha names which further indicate that the Lepchas are the original inhabitants

of the country. Not much is known about their history prior to their conversion to Buddhism and the enthronement of Phuntsog Namgyal as the first ruler of Sikkim in 1642. They number about 14,847.⁴⁵ They are believed to have come from the east along the foot of the hills from the direction of Assam and upper Burma⁴⁶. There are two versions regarding the origin of the name 'Lepcha'. According to the first version the name 'Lepcha' had been derived from a nepali word "Lapcha" meaning 'vile speakers'⁴⁷. According to the second version, there is a type of fish in Nepal known as "Lapcha" which is very submissive in nature like the Lepcha people, who are also noted for their mild and quiet disposition. The Nepalese termed them as 'Lepcha' not in contempt but to give them credit for their submissive temperament. The term 'Lapcha' was subsequently modified in English pronunciation as "Lepcha"⁴⁸. They love solitude. His solitary life in the peaceful depth of the great forests makes him timid and shy of strangers. His close companionship with nature has made him a naturalist, a tender lover of flowers. They possess an extraordinary rich zoological and botanical vocabulary of their own. His hard experience of the forces of nature, the storms and floods which wreck his home and scanty crops, and scatter desolation and death around him, has made him "a worshipper of malignant devils, and intensely superstitious"⁴⁹. The Lepchas were originally animists but most of them now profess Buddhism and generally very devout.

The Bhutias

The next group of people to enter Sikkim were the Khambas, popularly known as the 'Bhutias'. They were immigrants from Tibet, of good physique and mangolian features. They number about 14,000. The Bhutias are good traders and agriculturists. Many of them are husky herdsmen looking after the valuable herds of yaks and sheep. They preferred living in the higher cooler regions rather than in the hot humid valleys. The religion of the Bhutias also is a form of Buddhism, specifically called 'Lamaism'. The Bhutiyas of the Lachen and Lachung valleys in northern Sikkim, like the people of the Chumbi valley of Tibet, claim descent from the early immigrants from Ha in western Bhutan⁵⁰.

However, the Bhutias and the Lepchas together number only about a third of Sikkim's population.

The Nepalese

It is indeed curious that the largest group of people in Sikkim should be the Nepali who migrated from Nepal and slowly pushed their way into the country⁵¹. The British first brought or attracted them into Sikkim around the turn of the century, having found Lepchas and Bhutias unsatisfactory for menial work. Before long the Nepalese had spread through southern Sikkim and Bhutan and the governments in both these states tried to prevent them from over-running the northern highlands⁵². They are an industrious,

energetic, sturdy and thrifty people who have made excellent settlers, rising to important positions in business and administration. The group is multiplying the fastest and may take over Sikkim by sheer numbers. The Nepalese, are a phenomenally fertile people, and it is not unusual to find among them families where there are four or five wives and twenty to thirty children. The result is that, in the course of a single century, the original Bhutia-Lepchas of Sikkim became a minority in their own country, and about two-third's of Sikkim's present population is now found to be of Nepalese original⁵³.

With the exception of the sherpas, who live mainly in the extreme west of the country, and the Tomangs, both of whom are Buddhists, the Nepalese are at present all Hindu by religion. They number about 1,08,165.⁵⁴

There is, in addition, a small but distinct group of people, known as Tsongs, originally settlers from the Tsang-po valley in Tibet in what is now the Limbuwana district of Nepal, which was at one time a part of western Sikkim. Some of the Tsongs overflowed into and settled down in Sikkim.

There is also a very much smaller but economically stable and influential community of Indian traders in the state.

Of the present total population of about 2,00,000, the Nepalese are 72 per cent, while the balance, except for the small group of Tsongs, is divided roughly equally between the Lepchas and the Bhutias. However, on the market days in Gangtok and other towns, people of all the three ethnic groups mingle as neighbours.

The principal languages of Sikkim are Bhutia, Nepali and Lepcha which are spoken by 36,577 ; 74,359 ; and 14,847 people respectively⁵⁵. However, English is used extensively and officially, for internal and external correspondences and communications⁵⁶.

Religion

Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion of Sikkim. But the Sikkimese are allowed full freedom of worship. There are about sixty seven monasteries in Sikkim. The most important monasteries from religious and historical sense are located at Pemayangtse, Tashiding, Phensang, Phodang, Rumtek and Rolang etc⁵⁷. The Buddhist Sikkimese annually worship the God of Mount Kangchenjunga in their monasteries. They perform a war dance in honour of this God and invoke his blessings for the welfare of the people and the country⁵⁸.

Education

The principal objective of the Education Department in Sikkim has been to provide a pattern of education consistent both with the cultural heritage and the economic conditions of Sikkim. Particular importance is attached to training in handicrafts, to the fostering of

a love for the land, and to the practising of traditional songs and dances⁵⁹.

There are five higher secondary schools, one public school, seven junior high schools and 191 primary schools, one basic training school at Temi, providing education to nearly 15,000 children of whom about one fifth are girls.

Education is practically free and needy students are being further assisted in the form of scholarships and boarderships. A good number of boys and girls are also receiving higher education and vocational training in India and other countries.

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, is a centre for the study of mahayana Buddhism. There is an excellent library of Tibetan literature. The Inchey school imparts knowledge in Buddhist scriptures to young lamas and others⁶⁰.

Government

Sikkim is a hereditary monarchy. The Chogyal of Sikkim was the source of all State power in the kingdom. However, the April 1973 upheaval and the Tripartite Agreement of May 1973 has left the Chogyal as a constitutional head of state.

His chief aid and executive officer is termed as chief executive officer. The powers and position of the chief executive have been elaborately defined in the Agreement of 8th May, 1973. He shall have a special responsibility to ensure the proper implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes in Sikkim, the smooth and efficient running of its administration, the continued enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms by all sections of the population of Sikkim, and the optimum utilisation for the benefit of the people of Sikkim of the funds allocated for the economic and social development of Sikkim.⁶¹ He shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the advice of the Government of India. In fact the Chief Executive shall be the kingpin of the new system.

The administration of the kingdom is run by a Secretariat headed by a Chief Secretary under whom are departmental secretaries responsible for individual departments such as finance, panchayats, land revenues, education, public works and law and order.

At the village level panchayats have been established since 1966. The panchayats are responsible for village administration and co-ordination of the development programmes.

The Assembly

Under the proclamation of 1953, a legislative body called the Sikkim State council was formed. Since 1973, it has been replaced by an Assembly'. The May, 1973 Agreement lays down that the

Assembly shall be elected every four years. Elections to the Assembly shall be conducted under the supervision of a representative of the Election Commission of India. The first elections to the 32-member Assembly were held on April 15, 1974.

The Assembly shall have the power to propose laws and adopt resolutions on education, public health, excise, bazars, press and publicity, transport, forests, public works, agriculture, food supplies, economic and social planning, home and establishment, finance and land revenue. These powers shall help in the growth of people's sense of participation in the administration of the kingdom. In fact it shall usher in responsible government in the state. The present working of the newly elected Assembly and the traditions developed therein, shall decide the future of the working of democratic institutions in the kingdom.

The Executive Council

According to May, 1973 agreement, there shall be an Executive council consisting of the elected members of the Assembly, who shall be appointed to the Executive Council by the Chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive shall preside over the meetings of the Executive Council.⁶²

The traditions developed in the working of the newly constituted Executive Council after April, 1974 elections to the Sikkim Assembly shall decide the success or otherwise of this innovation in this remote Himalayan Kingdom.

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The Political History of Sikkim and British India's Relations with Sikkim

Early History of Sikkim

The origin of Sikkim is obscure. The history of its remote past has not come to light. Sikkim does not appear in the historical complex of the Himalayan border countries until the early 1640's. Its early history is mostly legendary and mythical.¹ A few lepcha and limbu legends do speak of something of the ancient Sikkim but nothing has so far been proved historically. In pre-Buddhist era primitive people lived here. According to one account, they were the Kiratas, the then rulers of Nepal. Later on Padmasambhava, the architect of tantric Buddhism in Tibet is supposed to have sojourned in Sikkim on his way to Tibet. Natural inference can be that Buddhism brought civilization to Sikkim.² The Namgyal kings had been ruling over the Chumbi valley and the Teesta valley for at least three centuries prior to 1642. The Namgyals were scions of the Minyak House (Eastern Tibet) and were on pilgrimage in Central Tibet at the opening of the thirteenth century. It is said that Khye-Bumsa, a Namgyal Prince, helped in the construction of the great Sa-kya monastery (1268). Khye-Bumsa married the daughter of the Sa-kya heirarch and settled in the nearby Chumbi valley which became the nucleus of the later kingdom of Sikkim. Khye-Bumsa came in contact with the Lepchas and a deep friendship between the newcomers and the Lepchas grew ; a blood brotherhood was sworn between Khye-Bumsa and Thekongtek, the Lepcha chief, at Khabi Longtsok.³ However, the modern history of Sikkim begins with the consecration of Phuntsog Namgyal in A.D. 1642 as the Chogyal (Temporal and Religious king). Phuntsog Namgyal, it is said, descended from Raja Indrabodhi who was at one time ruler of what is to-day called Himachal Pradesh in northern India.⁴

Phuntsog Namgyal ruled over a widespread area, many times the size of Sikkim of to-day. His authority extended in the north to Thang La, beyond Phari in Tibet, towards the east of Tagong La, near Paro in Bhutan and to the South to Titalia, near the borders of Bihar and Bengal in India. It extended also to the west, the region of the Timar Chorten, on the banks of the Timar river in Nepal.⁵ He organised the first centralized administration in the country and created twelve dzongs—namely, Lassu, Dallom, Yangthang, Gangtok, Rhenok, Barmiak, Tashiading, Song, Libing, Maling, Simik and Pandom—each under a Lepcha dzongpon belonging to one of the leading Lepcha families of the country.⁶ Phungsog Namgyal chose Yaksam as his capital.

His son Tensung Namgyal (born 1644 A.D.) who was consecrated in 1670 moved the capital to Rabdentse. Tensung married three times. His first wife was a Tibetan named Numbe Ongmu by whom he had a daughter, Pedit Wangmo, who was destined to play an important but disastrous role in the history of Sikkim. His second wife was a Sikkimese, Debasam-Serpa, who bore him a son, Chador.

In the time of Chador Namgyal (1686-1716), the third ruler of Sikkim, there were fratricidal wars between members of the royal family which resulted in the loss of territory for the kingdom. In 1700, Pedit Wangmo, the elder half-sister of Chador Namgyal fell out with him and sought the help of Bhutan in her scheme to dethrone him and if possible to murder him.⁷ The Bhutanese invaded and occupied Sikkim as far west as Rabdantse. A loyal councillor, Yugthing Tishe, carried off the ruler to Lhasa where during his asylum, he distinguished himself in Buddhist learning and Tibetan literature. Chador Namgyal's presence in Tibet for eight long years from 1700 to 1708 was utilized by the Government of Tibet for serving the political ends of Tibet.⁸ Actually this reduced Sikkim to the position of a mere dependency of Tibet.⁹ After eight years of occupation, the Deb Raja of Bhutan eventually withdrew the Bhutanese expedition upon the mediation of the Tibetan Government except certain south-east areas near and extending upto the Tagona La.¹⁰ Chador Namgyal then returned and began to consolidate his kingdom. Pedit Wangmo, the king's half sister, however, was not reconciled and while the king was at Ralung hot springs in 1716, she conspired with a Tibetan doctor to arrange blood-letting from a main artery and thus caused the king's death. The doctor was eventually executed at Namchi and Pedit Wangmo strangled to death with a silken scarf.¹¹

Gyurmed Namgyal (1707-1733) succeeded his father in 1717. To secure the eastern borders of the country against the increasing Bhutanese raids across it, he built extensive fortifications there. However, this reign saw the loss of Limbuana which was later on merged with Nepal.¹²

Namgyal Phuntsog, posthumous son of Gyurmed succeeded in 1733. This reign saw the threat of the expanding Gurkha kingdom under Raja Prithvinarayan Shah of Nepal.¹³ In 1773-74 Nepal occupied Sikkimese territory west of the Teesta. A treaty concluded in 1775 fixed the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal at the Sango Chu, Sangdi Dzong, Malliyang, and the Lhachu (the sacred Kankai river), a western tributary of the Meehi river, and also settled all outstanding issues relating to trade and commerce between Sikkim and Nepal.¹⁴ Bhutanese forces invaded Sikkim a second time, but after negotiations at Rhenock in eastern Sikkim withdrew to the present boundaries.

Namgyal Phuntsog was succeeded by his son Tenzing Namgyal (born in 1769 A.D. of his third Queen) in 1780. Notwithstanding the treaty of 1775, the Gorkhas under Damodar Pande, the Gorkha General, again invaded through Ilam and reoccupied southern Sikkim in 1788. The capital, Rabdentse was also captured by a surprise attack and the entire lower Teesta was devastated and occupied. The Raja Tenzing, the Rani and their son fled from Rabdentse to Lhasa in Tibet in order to reassemble their troops and to solicit aid from Tibet.¹⁵ Tibet which was already involved in a conflict with Nepal, could render no assistance. Sikkim finally turned to the British for help against the Gorkhas.

Tenzing Namgyal died in Lhasa in 1793 and was succeeded by his son Tsugphud Namgyal, who had a long reign (1793-1864). His reign witnessed the penetration of British power into the Himalayas and of British efforts to trade with Tibet across the Himalayas. In 1814, Rabdentse being considered too close to the Nepalese frontier, the capital was shifted to Tumlong.¹⁶

Sikkim's Contact with the East India Company

The attention of the East India Company was attracted towards Sikkim, due to its strategic importance, in the year 1814 when it was involved in a war with Nepal.¹⁷ The opening of relations with Sikkim became a political and military necessity on account of three reasons :

1. it was easily accessible,¹⁸
2. it would facilitate communication with China via Tibet since the Princes of Sikkim were closely connected by matrimonial relations as well as religious affinities with Tibet ;
3. to prevent possible Nepalese-Bhutanese intrigues against the Company.

In view of these advantages the company instructed Captain Barre Latter of the Bengal Army to establish contacts with Tsugphud

Nangyal, the ruler of Sikkim.¹⁹ Captain Barre Latter after establishing contacts with the Sikkimese authorities, promised to help Sikkim, to recover its territories lost to Nepal during the Nepalese invasion of Sikkim in 1780.²⁰ Sikkim agreed to support the company and undertook to play the role of a faithful ally. The Nepal war came to an end with the signing of the treaty of Segauly on December 2, 1815 between the company and Nepal.²¹ Apart from the territories secured by it, the company made the Nepalese government to agree not to molest or disturb the Rajah of Sikkim and British arbitration was accepted in case of all differences arising between these two states.²²

The Treaty of Titalia 1817 and its Significance

To establish the company's relations with Sikkim on a firmer footing, Lord Moira (afterwards Marques of Hastings), the Governor General of India, restored to Sikkim the territory lying between the rivers Meehi and Teesta (wrested from Nepal) by signing a treaty with the Raja Teugphud Namgyal on February 10, 1817. The British, however, reserved to themselves the right to arbitrate in any dispute that might arise between Sikkim and Nepal.²³ The political significance of the treaty was tremendous :

1. It helped to check the Nepalese expansion towards the east. Sikkim became a strong buffer state between Nepal and Bhutan with the restoration of the territory between the rivers Meehi and the Teesta.
2. It brought Sikkim for the first time under the influence of the company and the freedom of action of Sikkim was limited to a great extent by the provisions of the treaty.
3. The company gained trade privileges and the right to trade upto Tibetan frontier.

The Treaty of Titalia, thus marked the beginning of the British interest in Sikkim as a trade route to Tibet and as a factor in India's security²⁴.

Two months after the signing of the Treaty of Titalia, in order to strengthen Sikkim as a buffer between Nepal and British India, Lord Moira ceded to Sikkim an additional territory of the Morang—the low lands laying between the rivers Meehi and the Mahandi²⁵.

Sikkim though now had security against external aggression, it had no respite yet from its own internal feuds. The Lepchas, who had been in the vanguard of the struggle against the Gorkha invaders were opposed to the domination of the Bhotiyas in the affairs of the kingdom. This tendency was not liked by the ruling group. The ruler and his group went so far as to accomplish the assassination of a Lepcha minister in 1826.²⁶ This led to the migration of hundreds of Lepchas to the Ilam area of Eastern

Nepal on account of the feeling of insecurity, with the connivance of the Gorkhas, they frequently raided Western Sikkim and caused several border disputes between Nepal and Sikkim. In pursuance of the terms of 1817 treaty, Sikkim referred the matter for arbitration to the Governor General of the East India Company. The Governor General deputed J.W. Grant, who was Commercial Resident at Malda, and Captain Goerge William Aylmer Lloyd, who commanded the British frontier force at Titalia, to look into the matter and make an award²⁷. As a result of their intervention, the Lepcha raiders of eastern Nepal were compelled to return to Nepal²⁸.

The Cession of Darjeeling

Grant and Lloyd during this tour came across a small hill village called Darjeeling. They suggested to the Governor General that the site would not only make an ideal health resort and as a suitable site for a sanatorium for the convalescence of the British troops, but will also confer considerable commercial and political benefits on the company in the Eastern Himalayas²⁹. The British Government offered to buy the site or to exchange some other territory for it. But in the initial stages Sikkim appeared reluctant to part with it. However, after prolonged communication and having regard to the constant need for British help and protection in putting down the hostile elements of the Lepchas and the uncertain attitude of Tibet, Tsugphud Namgyal changed his mind. He presented to the British Government on February 1, 1835³⁰ in the language of the Grant Deed "all the land south of the Great Rangeet River, east of the Balasun, Kahil and little Rangeet rivers, and west of the Rungno and Mahanadi rivers"³¹. Instead of an equivalent tract in exchange the British Government sanctioned an annual subsidy of Rs. 3,000 as compensation to Sikkim in 1841. It was increased to Rs. 6,000 in 1846.³²

The territory thus ceded to the British later on became the nucleus of the district of Darjeeling. The British Government first placed it under a Superintendent who besides the administration and development of Darjeeling, held charge of British political relations with Sikkim also. In 1850, the designation of the Superintendent was changed to that of Deputy Commissioner³³. The cession of Darjeeling was an important event in the history of East India Company's relations with Sikkim. Darjeeling became an important observation post of the British in the Himalayas and enhanced the possibilities of trade with Tibet.

The Grant of Darjeeling and the Sikkimese theory of land holding

It will be interesting to examine in this connection the grant of Darjeeling in the light of the Sikkimese theory of landholding brought forward by Hope Namgyal, the present Gyalmo of Sikkim.

According to Hope Namgyal, Sikkimese law provides that all land belongs to the King³⁴ and according to Hope Namgyal only usufructage, not outright ownership devolves on the occupants of the land. Therefore, she raises the issue, whether Darjeeling was not given "in the traditional context of a grant for usufructage only ; ultimate jurisdiction, authority and the right to resume the land being implicitly retained".³⁵

However, the argument has been overstretched since in all transactions between the sovereign powers only the principles of International law are applied. Therefore the Sikkimese law of land-holding cannot be applied to the Grant of Darjeeling.

But ever since the establishment of the Darjeeling Settlement, the relations between the company and Sikkim were unfriendly for several reasons :

1. The Raja of Sikkim was embittered with the company for not receiving adequate compensation for the cession of Darjeeling.
2. The posting of Dr. A. Campbell of the Indian Medical Service in 1839 as Superintendent of Darjeeling and incharge of political relations with Sikkim.³⁶ Dr. Campbell could not get along well with the Raja of Sikkim. The Sikkimese authorities were dissatisfied with the treatment received after cession of Darjeeling and he became closely connected with the worsening of British relations with Sikkim.³⁷
3. The growth of Darjeeling from an uninhabited place in 1835 to a flourishing settlement of 10,000 people within a decade had roused further the jealousy of the Sikkimese.
4. The loss of Ontoo hill by Sikkim³⁸.
5. The arrest and imprisonment of Campbell and Dr. Hooker, the distinguished English naturalist in November-December 1849 on account of repeated defiance of Raja's wishes and authority not to cross Sikkim-Tibet border, caused a serious crisis in British-Sikkim relations.

During the period 1839-1861, when A. Campbell was superintendent of Darjeeling, the relations between the British and Sikkim deteriorated. Darjeeling provided numerous facilities for free trade, both in mercantile commodities and in labour. Its extensive forest lands which could be re-claimed for cultivation, attracted large number of Lepchas and the Nepalese to migrate and to settle over there. Such developments not only threatened the privileges traditionally enjoyed by certain Bhōtiya families of Sikkim (for instance, their monopoly of trade in this part of the Himalaya) but also disturbed the age-old population balance and inter-tribal relations in Sikkim.

The presence of the British so close to Sikkim also became a source of embarrassment in Sikkim's relations with other Himalayan states of Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. In 1844, the ruler of Sikkim and the Paro Penlop of Bhutan clashed at Phari in Tibet³⁹. The Government of Tibet also gave vent to its displeasure by curtailing the grazing rights that Sikkimese on the border had always enjoyed in Tibet⁴⁰.

The Arrest and Imprisonment of Campbell and Hooker

In 1847, therefore the ruler of Sikkim appointed as his Dewan, one Tokhang Namguay a Tibetan of strong anti-British convictions. Tokhang Namguay was also his relative being the husband of an illegitimate daughter of the ruler.

In 1848 Tokhang Namguay refused permission to J.D. Hooker, a distinguished British botanist, to explore Sikkim. Permission was granted when Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent threatened to report the matter to the Governor General of India.

In 1849, Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling and Dr. Hooker, who were travelling in Sikkim with the prior permission of the Raja were suddenly seized by the Sikkimese authorities and made prisoner near the Sikkim Tibet border by the order of the Dewan Namguay⁴¹. This arrest which occurred near the border between Sikkim and Tibet was in fact meant :—

1. to show Sikkim's resentment of the British rejection of the Sikkimese demand to stop collecting tax in the Sikkim Morang ;
2. to demonstrate unhappiness towards the British for settling a number of Nepalese on the Sikkim side of the border between Sikkim and Darjeeling ;
3. to express annoyance towards the British for refusing to surrender certain fugitives from Sikkim taking shelter in the Indian territory, and
4. to get the runaway slaves of Sikkim restored.

Annexation of Morang

However, a British ultimatum forced Sikkim to release Campbell and Hooker on December 24, 1849, six weeks after their seizure⁴². The British Government in India retaliated by annexing the Sikkim Morang and the hill tract around Darjeeling bounded by the Ramman river on the north, by the Great Rangeet and the Teesta on the east, and by Nepal on the West and by suspending the payment of its annual subsidy of Rs. 6000.⁴³ Thus Darjeeling ceased to be enclave in Sikkimese territory. After the above annexations, it became contiguous with the British Indian districts of Purnea and Rangpur in the plains.

The British Expedition to Sikkim and the Treaty of 1861

The crisis of 1849 resulted in the loss of 640 square miles of fertile territory of Sikkim. This loss, together with the refusal of the Government of India to renew the annual allowance of Rs. 6,000/- embittered Raja Tsugphud Namgyal very much towards the British. Taking advantages of the Raja's strained relations with the British, ex-Dewan Namguay, who was reported to have been banished from the country on account of his involvement in the crisis of 1849, staged a comeback and began to take a prominent part in Sikkimese politics. The Raja, as he became too old to govern the country himself, retired to Chumbi in Tibet, leaving the administration in the hands of Namguay⁴⁴. During this period of strained relations several British subjects from Bengal, were carried off and sold as slaves or detained in Sikkim⁴⁵.

The Advance and Retreat of Campbell 1860

In 1860, in retaliation for the kidnapping of the British subjects in violation of the 1817 treaty, Campbell laid siege on the Sikkimese area between the Rammam and the Rangeet rivers. Unexpectedly, he suffered heavy casualties and was obliged to retreat from Rinchingpong in Sikkim and fall back to Darjeeling⁴⁶. Campbell's expedition to Sikkim had not solved any of the problems then facing the British with that kingdom.

The Expedition of Colonel J.C. Gawler

Campbell's retreat was a blow to the British prestige. The Government of India, therefore, thought it necessary to take immediate steps, not only to show its power but also to counter-act the likely adverse political effects Campbell's retreat might have upon Tibet and Bhutan. Consequently, to avenge the disgrace, the British Government dispatched a strong military force in 1861 under Colonel J.C. Gawler, accompanied by Ashley Eden as Envoy and Special Commissioner. The British Expeditionary force left Darjeeling on February 1, 1861 and met with little or no opposition. Dewan Namguay, the source of all the trouble, fled to Tibet, the moment the British troops approached the Teesta⁴⁷.

The Treaty of 1861

On March 28, 1861 at Tum-long, a detailed treaty containing 23 Articles was signed on behalf of the Government of India by the Hon'ble Asley Eden and by the Maharaja's son, Sidkeong Namgyal⁴⁸. Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal was in Chumbi and declined to return to Sikkim. It was about this time that the title of Maharaja came to be used for the rulers of Sikkim⁴⁹.

The treaty embodied recognition by Sikkim of the defacto British protectorate over Sikkim and of the right of the Government of India to construct roads through Sikkim to the Tibetan border,

the banishment of Ex-Dewan Namguay and his blood relations to Tibet,⁵⁰ and the transfer of the seat of the Government from Chumbi in Tibet to Sikkim for at least nine months in a year⁵¹. Matters relating to the trade and extradition were also settled to the satisfaction of the British. Further, the Government of Sikkim would not cede or lease any portion of its territory to any other state without the permission of the British Government⁵².

The Significance of the Treaty of 1861

The Treaty of 1861 was very significant in the British-Sikkim relations. It brought also Sikkim under the British Control. Almost all the demands of the Government of India were realized by the Treaty. The Treaty checked Tibetan influence in Sikkim for a time. The Government of India were then in a position to annex Sikkim, but did not contemplate such a step in view of the British disinclination to involve in any conflict with Tibet, which had vague claims over Sikkim.

Although the British had gained substantial advantages, without having the need to annex Sikkim, still the treaty suffered from two weaknesses. One was the non-definition of the de-jure status of Sikkim, and the other was the privilege granted to the Mahakaja of Sikkim under Article 22 to stay in Chumbi for three months in a year. These two weaknesses manifested themselves within next three decades and were mainly responsible for the subsequent difficulties of the Government of India with Tibet and China.

The Relations of the British Crown With Sikkim since 1861

Succession of the Maharaja Sidkeong Namgyal

In 1862 the ageing Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal abdicated in favour of his legitimate eldest son Sidkeong Namgyal, who succeeded him as the Eighth consecrated Chogyal in 1863. The rule of Sidkeong was the most happy period in the British-Sikkim relations. In 1862, the Government of India restored the annual grant of Rs. 6,000 and in 1868 increased it to Rs. 9000⁵³ and in 1873, he paid a friendly visit to Sir George Campbell, then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal at Darjeeling. He wanted to reorganise the Sikkim Army which he wished shed to be trained by the British but was unsuccessful in the negotiations.⁵⁴

Maharaja Sidkeong died in April 1874 and was succeeded by his half-brother Thutob Namgyal (1860-1914), the ninth consecrated ruler of Sikkim. At the time of his succession the British Empire in Asia was paramount and Sikkim was already feeling the bywinds of British diplomacy. The year 1874 witnessed a striking assertion of British supremacy over Sikkim. The Government of India succeed

ed in nominating its own candidate as the ruler of the kingdom, on the death of the Maharaja Sidkeong Namgyal in April 1874. The late Maharaja had no issue but only two half brothers—one legitimate and the other illegitimate, Thutob Namgyal and Tinley Namgyal respectively. Ex-Dewan Namguayl wanted to instal Tinley Namgyal on the throne to gain firm foothold on the administration of Sikkim. But John Ware Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling informed the Sikkim Darbar that the Government of India would not recognize any succession which would have for its object, the restoration of ex-Dewan Namguay's influence in Sikkim. H.H. Riseley, afterwards the Secretary to the Government of India commented on this episode thus :

“Not a whisper was heard on the frontier of the remonstrance against this vigorous piece of king-making, and Tibet acquiesced silently in an act which struck at the roots of any claim on her part to exercise a permanent influence in the affairs of the Sikkim State⁵⁵”.

The subsequent events in Sikkim were in tune with the British paramount position in that kingdom. A road was constructed from Darjeeling to the Tibetan frontier at Jelep La⁵⁶.

The increased British influence in Sikkim made the pro-Tibetan party uneasy. John Ware Edgar, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling who had been deputed to investigate the possibility of re-establishing British trade with Tibet, brought to the notice of Bengal administration on his return from a visit to the border between Tibet and Sikkim in 1873, a communication addressed by the Chinese Amban in Lhasa to the ruler of Sikkim, calling upon him not to encourage road building in his territory and to prevent British officers from crossing the border into Tibet⁵⁷. Although these were grave provocations, the British overlooked them in view of Edgar's other favourable observations and the conclusion of a Sino-British convention in Chefu (in China) on September 13, 1876⁵⁸. A road was constructed through Sikkim to the Jelep La on the Tibet frontier.

Settlement of the Nepalese in Sikkim

The pro-Tibetan party in Sikkim and Tinley Namgyal, who had fled to Tibet in 1874, after his failure to secure the throne, tried to undermine the British position in Sikkim by exploiting the resentment of the local people against the settlement of the Nepalese. It may be pointed out here that ever since the British had gained influence in Sikkim, they made it a policy to settle Nepalese in that kingdom. This they did,

1. to accelerate the economic growth of the sparsely populated Sikkim by settling the hardworking Nepalese who were well suited to work in the hills,

2. to counteract the possible danger to their supremacy from the Sikkim Royal family, whose allegiance was suspected by them, by settling foreign Nepalese who would naturally look towards the British for protection and patronage.

H.R. Risley said,

“Most of all will our position be strengthened by the change which is insensibly but steadily taking place in the composition of the population of Sikkim. The Lepchas as has been stated, are rapidly dying out; while from the west, the industrious Newars and Goorkhas of Nepal are pressing forward to clear and cultivate large areas of unoccupied land on which the European tea-planters of Darjeeling have already cast longing eyes. The influx of these hereditary enemies of Tibet is our surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence. Here also religion will play a leading part. In Sikkim, as in India, Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism and the praying wheel of the lama will give place to the sacrificial implements of the Brahman. The land will follow the creed; the Tibetan proprietors will gradually be dispossessed, and will betake themselves to the petty trade for which they have an undeniable aptitude.

Thus race and religion the prime movers of the Asiatic world, will settle the Sikkim difficulty for us, in their own way. We have only to look on and see that the operation of these causes is not artificially hindered by the interference of Tibet and Nepal⁵⁹”.

The Nepalese settlers, by their industry and their fecundity soon began to displace the local inhabitants. The local inhabitants were afraid lest they were reduced to minority. Maharaja Thotub Namgyal visited Kalimpong in November 1878, to request Sir Asley Eden, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, to restrict the number of Nepali settlers in Sikkim. The Lieutenant Governor agreed to restrict the settlement of Nepalese to South Sikkim⁶⁰. But this arrangement was vehemently opposed by an influential section of the Bhotiyas of Sikkim. There were riots at Rhenok between the Bhotiyas and the Nepalese in 1880. The Government of Bengal deputed its officer, A.W. Paul, Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling to pacify the two groups. Consequently an understanding was reached on April 14, 1880⁶¹.

Thutab Namgyal, who had risen to power with British support, could not stand upto the pressure of the anti-British Bhotiyas and Tibetans. He drifted away from the British influence and succumbed to pressure from the anti-British Bhotiyas and Tibetans. Early in 1886, he abruptly disavowed his subordination to the Government of India, as enjoined by the 1861 treaty⁶².

Macaulay Mission 1886 and the Occupation of Lingtu

The trade route between India and Tibet lay through Sikkim and the question of promoting commercial intercourse with Tibet

involved the Indian Government into complications. In 1886, the Government of India sent a mission to Tibet under Colman Macaulay, who was Secretary to the Government of Bengal at that time, to explore the possibilities of trade with that country. The mission, however, withdrew from Tibet without completing its work in deference to the wishes of the Chinese. No sooner had the mission withdrawn, the Tibetans occupied a strip of the territory of Sikkim south of Jelep La, called Lingtu nearly twenty miles deep⁶³. Thutab Nomgyal, in tune with the anti-British sentiment then prevailing in the ruling circles of the kingdom, instead of protesting against it, condoned the Tibetan action. The Government of India felt that the Tibetans had resorted to that action due to their fear of the Macaulay Mission and hoped that the Tibetans would withdraw on learning about the abandonment of the Mission. But Tibetans further consolidated their position by building a stone fort there, commanding the road between India and Tibet⁶⁴. The Maharaja of Sikkim, Thotab Namgyal, who was then staying in the Chumbi Valley of Tibet not only supported the Tibetan action but declared that the land under occupation really belonged to Tibet, even though Sikkim as a matter of grace was allowed to use it⁶⁵. This event placed the British in a great dilemma. The leaders and people of Sikkim were mostly pro-Tibetan and as they did not ask for British help, nor desired it, there was no ostensible ground for interference by the British. At the same time the British could not afford to tolerate the spread of Tibetan influence in Sikkim. Urged by these considerations the British Government decided to send a military expedition. It commenced its operations early in March 1888, and drove the Tibetans out of Lingtu by September. After the Anglo-Tibetan war of 1888, the Government of India exercised effective influence in the administration of Sikkim by appointing a political officer at Gangtok in June 1889, primarily as a British observer on the Tibet frontier and eventually as a British representative for Bhutan and Tibet. The first political officer, J.C. White of the Public Works Department, reorganised the entire system of administration in Sikkim. He created a state council to advise Thutab Namgyal in the administration of the state, conducted land and mineral surveys and settled unoccupied waste land and the land occupied by the monasteries⁶⁶.

Anglo-Chinese Convention 1890

A settlement of the Sikkim Tibet hostilities in which the British were actively involved was, however, reached only on March 17, 1890 with the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Convention at Calcutta by Lord Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor General of India and the Amban Shen Tai⁶⁷ (Imperial Associate Resident in Tibet).

It was laid down that the boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be 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.

It recognised the status of Sikkim as a British Protectorate and the right of the British Government to have direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that State⁶⁹.

The Convention settled once for all the status of Sikkim, which for all practical purposes, became part and parcel of British India and lost its separate existence and identity and the Britishers came to exercise paramount political control over Sikkim⁶⁹. Peking gave up the Sino-Tibetan claims to suzerainty over Sikkim⁷⁰.

The Trade Regulations 1893

After the conclusion of the Convention, the Government of India suggested to the Chinese Government that the three unsettled matters relating to pasturage, communications and trade should be taken up immediately. Consequently on December 5, 1893 Regulations regarding trade, communication and pasturage (to be appended to the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890) were signed at Darjeeling by A.W. Paul for the Government of India and by James H. Hart and Ho Chang-Jung for China⁷¹.

This protocol provided, inter-alia, for the establishment of a trade mart at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the frontier, a mart which was opened in 1894. British subjects trading at Yatung shall be at liberty to travel freely to and from between the frontier and Yatung⁷². But the mart was on an altogether unsuitable site, in a narrow side-valley running down from Sikkim towards the Chumbi Valley. A few yards farther down this little valley a wall was built from side to side and manned by soldiers to prevent British traders and travellers from going any farther into Tibetan territory⁷³.

Maharaja Thotab Namgyal was at this time virtually under the supervision and control of Claude White, who had been appointed as the first British political officer in Sikkim in 1889, and had been invested with the authority of a defacto ruler. For a time both the Maharaja and the Maharani were forced to remain in Kalimpong in North Bengal since the Government of India felt that he had caused considerable embarrassment to the British by showing his obedience and respect to the Tibetans and the Amban of China in Lhasa. However, in February 1891, he was allowed to come back to Sikkim with restricted freedom of movement. The king brooding over his fancied wrongs fled from Sikkim in 1892 with the intention to reach Tibet but was captured by the Nepalese authorities and was handed over to the Indian Government. He was kept under surveillance in Kurseong in Darjeeling district and was restored only in 1896.⁷⁴ During this period the Political officer carried on the administration of Sikkim with the assistance of a three member State Council⁷⁵. The Maharaja was asked to call back his eldest son Tehoda Namgyal from Tibet to Sikkim⁷⁶. In spite of several warnings Tehoda Namgyal did not come back to

Sikkim. As such Lord Curzon in February 1899 recognized Sidkeong Namgyal as the successor designate to the Sikkim throne⁷⁷, ignoring the claims of the eldest son Tehoda Namgyal. At the same time Tehoda Namgyal was prohibited from entering Sikkim.

This incident demonstrated that the Government of India did not want (as in 1874) a person suspected of Tibetan proclivities to sit on the throne of Sikkim. It further showed a high degree of British influence as no monastery dared to protest against the succession of Avtari Lama⁷⁸. It revealed the power of the local British officers to meddle successfully in the important issues concerning the Sikkim Royal family. In 1874 Edgar had decided the successor by getting the claims of Thotab Namgyal recognized. In 1899, White to a large extent was responsible for having Sidkeong Namgyal selected as the successor designate to the Sikkim throne.

From the above survey it is evident that within a decade after the signing of the Sikkim-Tibet convention in 1890, the Government of India consolidated its authority in Sikkim to such an extent that it was able to meddle with impunity in important affairs of Sikkimese life and administration.

Younghusband Expedition to Tibet

As Tibet was not a party to the convention of 1890, and the protocol of 1893, and considered both agreements as imposed upon it by China, it frequently violated the border agreed upon in these agreements just to show that it was not bound by them, and even refused to recognise them.⁷⁹ The British, therefore, decided in the summer of 1894 to appoint, in consultation with the Chinese, a joint boundary commission to demarcate the boundary on the ground⁸⁰. At a preliminary meeting of the Chinese, Tibetan and British delegates at Yatung on April 5, 1895, it was decided that the representatives of three Governments should meet on May 7, 1895 at Permaringo Pass to commence the work of demarcation⁸¹. A British party led by White reached the border to start the work of demarcation, but as the Chinese and Tibetans did not turn up, it returned disappointed. White, however, erected a few boundary pillars on Jelep La and the neighbouring passes leading into the Chumbi Valley. Demarcation of the rest of the border especially around Giagong was temporarily postponed. In June 1902, military party accompanied by White expelled Tibetan intruders from Giagong and also took the opportunity to complete the work of the boundary survey and demarcation left incomplected in 1895.⁸² The relations between Tibet and the British, however, became cool and tense. In June 1903, Lord Curzon, after obtaining the consent of the British Government, despatched an expedition to Tibet under the leadership of Colonel Francis Younghusband, the British Resident at Indore. The Expedition went as far as Lhasa.

The Lhasa Convention 1904

A convention was signed in the audience hall of the Potala on September 7, 1904 popularly known as Lhasa Convention⁶³.

It embodied among other things, the Tibetan endorsement of the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet as defined in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and also of commercial rights that the British had secured in Tibet through the Trade Regulations of 1893. The Convention of 1904 stated that Tibet would uphold the Convention of 1890 and reference was made to the "relations of friendship and good understanding which had existed between the British Government and the Government of Tibet". It contained nine Articles. Article IX of the 1904 Convention is of paramount importance. This article specified that the Government of Tibet would guarantee that, without the previous consent of the British Government it would allow :

1. No portion of Tibetan territory to be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise given for occupation to any foreign power ;
2. No foreign power to intervene in Tibetan affairs ;
3. No representative of any foreign power to be admitted to Tibet ;
4. No concession for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining, or other rights to be granted to any foreign power or the subject of any foreign power ; and
5. No Tibetan revenues whether in kind or cash, to be pledged or assigned to any foreign power or the subject of any foreign power.

Hence this Convention served to intensify Tibet's isolation from the rest of the world.

The Peking Convention

The Lhasa Convention was not final, as the assent of China whose suzerainty over Tibet, Great Britain had recognized, was not obtained. Therefore after the return of the Expedition to the British territory, the necessary negotiations with China were undertaken. On April 27, 1906, the Convention between Great Britain and China, generally known as the Peking Convention was signed at Peking. It contained six articles.

The British had always classed Sikkim as a Princely State like many other states of India such as Bashahr, Manipur and Pataila⁶⁴. Hence the Government of India used to conduct its affairs with Sikkim through the medium of the Government of Bengal. But Lord Curzon in 1901 decided that while the internal administration

of Sikkim should remain under the control of the Bengal Government, on political and commercial questions, the Political Officer should correspond directly with the foreign Department of the Government of India⁸⁵.

In 1914, the Simla Convention signed by the representatives of Britain, China and Tibet ratified the delimitation of the northern frontiers of Sikkim, as had been set down in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890.

The Government of India exploited the dispute concerning Sikkim-Tibet boundary to open Tibet. The success of the Younghusband Expedition in opening Tibet and forcing it to sign Lhasa Convention on September 7, 1904 had solved all the British difficulties regarding the status of Sikkim and its boundary with Tibet. Tibet had not only recognized the protectorate of the Government of India over Sikkim but also confirmed the Sikkim-Tibet boundary as laid down in the Convention of 1890. China confirmed the Lhasa convention by signing the Peking Convention with British in 1906. Thus the influence of these two treaties on Sikkim was far reaching. The *de jure* status of Sikkim as the protectorate of the Government of India had received international sanction.

By 1906, the Government of India had consolidated its position in Sikkim to such an extent that it had no trouble whatsoever, for the remaining period of British rule in India, either from the Maharaja or from outside powers like Tibet and China.

Sidkeong Namgyal became the tenth consecrated ruler of Sikkim on February 11, 1914 after the death of his father Thotab Namgyal. He was not only educated in English school at Darjeeling under expert care but was sent to England for higher studies in September 1906. Sidkeong Namgyal was indeed an extraordinary man and had developed high intelligence and a forceful personality. On becoming the Maharaja of Sikkim, Sidkeong made no secret of his desire to remove vested interests, and his proposal to liquidate the system of landlords created staunch enemies among a large number of landlords⁸⁶. However, he was not destined to rule for a long time. He died unmarried on December 5, 1914 and was succeeded by his younger half brother, Tashi Namgyal, who was born at Kurseong in Darjeeling district in 1893 during his father's captivity there. For a time, he was under the tutelage of Sir Charles Bell, who was the then Political Officer in Sikkim. Complete restoration of governmental authority was given to the new ruler when he became formally the Maharaja in April 1918. In this year, the British restored to Sikkim its complete internal autonomy.⁸⁷ Tashi Namgyal's long and enlightened rule of fifty years saw many social and economic reforms and all round development of the State. Far reaching changes were effected in

the judiciary in Sikkim. A modern type of court designated chief court, was set up and a full time judge was appointed in 1916, thereby bringing the judicial functions of the landlords under the supervision of a superior court⁸⁸. Himself a devout follower of the Mahayana Nyingma tradition, the Maharaja never suffered from bigotry or intolerance in administration and academic fields. The fruitful and momentous reign of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal came to an end on his passing away on December 2, 1963.

Lord Linlithgow visits Sikkim 1938

No Viceroy had ever set foot in Sikkim, but in 1938 Lord and Lady Linlithgow decided to visit the Maharaja of Sikkim.⁸⁹

They stayed at the Residency. The visit was welcome as an indication of the increased interest which the Government of India were taking in the north east frontier. It helped to widen the horizon of the Maharaja and his family and to lessen their shyness of the outer world⁹⁰.

There occurred no important event until the British withdrawal from India and the consequent lapse of British paramountcy over Sikkim in the summer of 1947. However, the British never relaxed their hold on Sikkim till their withdrawal from India. Sikkim due to its strategic location between Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and India, formed a vital point of India's defence in the Eastern Himalaya. Its location enabled the Government of India to watch the developments in the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. Another important British interest in Sikkim was trade. The traditional trade from India to southern Tibet was from Darjeeling to Gyantse through Sikkim. The British always recognized Sikkim's importance both for the defence of India and for the development of its trade with Tibet and the countries beyond.

Pending negotiations for a fresh or modified treaty spelling out precisely the nature and extent of its relations with independent India, Sikkim signed a standstill agreement with India on February 27, 1948. According to the terms of this agreement, "all agreements, relations and administrative arrangements as to matters of common concern existing between the crown and the Sikkim State on August 14, 1947" were deemed to continue between the Dominion of India and the Sikkim Darbar pending the conclusion of a new agreement or a treaty⁹¹. This became essential since the Indian Independence Act, 1947 passed by the British Parliament had stipulated that : "the suzerainty of His Majesty over the Indian States lapses, and with it, all treaties and agreements in force at the date of the passing of this Act between His Majesty and the rulers of India States, all functions exercisable by His Majesty at that date with respect to Indian States, all obligations of His Majesty existing at that date towards Indian States or rulers thereof, and all

powers, rights, authority or jurisdiction exercisable by His Majesty at that date in or in relation to Indian States by treaty, grant, usage, sufferance or otherwise.⁹².

Negotiations for the final and a new treaty between the Sikkim Darbar and the Government of India proceeded favourably and the Treaty was signed in Gangtok on December 5, 1950 between Maharaja Tashi Namgyal and Harishwar Dayal, the then Indian Political Officer in Sikkim.

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Political and Administrative Development of Sikkim Since 1947

Development of political Consciousness and Political Parties in Sikkim.

Sikkim, which to-day occupies a singularly unique position in the chain of the Himalayan countries, on the eve of the Indian independence was a closed book so far as political activity was concerned. The Sikkim Darbar and the British Political Officer stationed in Gangtok had ruled the kingdom with an iron hand. However, the advent of popular Government in India after the British withdrawal from the sub-continent, encouraged the aspirations of the various politically motivated people in Sikkim. Initially, a number of organisations sprouted in different parts of Sikkim, mainly on the lines of welfare bodies. The Praja Sammelan of Temitarku, the Praja Mandal of Chakhung and the Praja Sudhar Samaj of Gangtok were three such organizations.¹

The Birth of Sikkim State Congress

The leaders of these organisations and others interested in the political life of the country felt the need for a strong and unified political party in the kingdom. Consequently, to consider the question of setting up a strong political party, the representatives from different parts of Sikkim along with the representatives of the above mentioned three organisations met at Gangtok on the historic day of December 7, 1947—a day which will go down in the contemporary political history of Sikkim as a red-letter day. Leaders like Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Tashi Tsering, D.B. Gurung, Chandra Das Rai, Captain Dimik Singth Lepcha and Sonam Tschering attended the deliberations.² Their thoughtful deliberations gave birth to the Sikkim State Congress³. The general meeting was held

under the chairmanship of Tashi Tschering. The establishment of the Sikkim State Congress was an event of great importance in the political life of the country since this premiere organization played a significant role in the public life of Sikkim in the years which followed India's independence in 1947.

Demand of Political Reforms and Accession to India.

These leaders, apart from establishing Sikkim State Congress, also adopted a resolution at their meeting for political reforms in the Kingdom. A deputation called on the then Maharaja of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal and presented a Memorandum to him incorporating the three demands formulated by them at their meeting in Gangtok. The demands included in the Memorandum were :—

- (i) Abolition of landlordism ;
- (ii) Formation of an interim Government as a precursor for a democratic form of government ; and
- (iii) The accession of Sikkim to the Union of India.⁴

The activities of the State Congress, directed along peaceful and legitimate lines, exercised a considerable influence throughout Sikkim. It sought changes in the social and economic structure of the country. Several deputations waited on the authorities for abolition of slavery, protection against forced labour and demanded that the people be allowed to pay their taxes direct to the state instead of to the landlords who had often cheated them in recording the payments⁵. The movement under the state Congress went ahead from strength to strength and within a short period of couple of months landlordism was on its way to liquidation. Forced labour, locally known as "Jharlangi", which had been the bane of the people of Sikkim, became a thing of the past. The landlord's courts and their powers of registration of lands and deeds were abolished in 1948. The lessee system was dropped and the people were given the right to pay tax direct to the State⁶.

Political Agitation and Twenty-nine Day's Ministry.

During the time lag which preceded the signing of the treaty in 1950 between Sikkim and India and with an almost total lack of cohesion manifest in the internal administration of Sikkim, the Sikkim Congress, being the largest political organisation in the country gathered strength and grew restive. To contain and control such forces in this premiere political organisation of the Kingdom, an experiment to associate popular element with the administration was made by the Chogyal by appointing three State Congress leaders-representing Bhutia, Lepcha and Napali interests as "secretaries to the His Highness, the Maharaja of Sikkim"⁷. The State Congress Executive Committee, however, repudiated the acceptance of office by three congressmen as 'Secretaries' to the Darbar.

The Nepali nominee resigned from the government in obedience to the Party's call while the other two stayed back for some more time⁸.

Emergence of Communalism

The defiance did not much affect the strength of the political agitation for reforms brewing in the kingdom but it did signify the emergence of a new element in Sikkimese politics namely communalism. In selecting the three nominees of the State Congress for association with the governance of the kingdom, the Darbar had taken care to give equal representation to the the three distinct racial groups comprising Sikkim's population. It was alleged by the State Congress leadership that the nominees from the State Congress were supposed to represent not so much the State Congress as the three sections of the Sikkimese people--the Napalese, Bhotias and the Lepchas. The virus of communalism was injected into the body politic of Sikkim.

The Establishment of Sikkim National Party

The Bhutia member, Mr. Sonam Tschering, who had refused to abide by the State Congress call to resign as "Secretary to the Maharaja of Sikkim", instead helped the formation of a new political party known as Sikkim National Party in April 1948 with an avowedly communal bias. It was the feeling of certain knowledgeable circles that the Sikkim National Party was in fact sponsored by the ruler to fight the democratic agitation and to emphasize the communal and racial differences as breakwaters to democratic development.⁹ The party leadership 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".¹⁰ This party was the very antithesis of the Sikkim State Congress. This is evident from a resolution which the Sikkim National Party passed on April, 30, 1948. It said :

- (a) Historically, socially, culturally and linguistically, Sikkim has closer affinities with Bhutan and Tibet.
- (b) From the geographical and ethnic points 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 is to maintain intact by all means the indigenous character of Sikkim and to preserve its integrity.¹¹

The Party 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 a denial to Sikkim of her right to stick to her natural affinities¹².

As such the National Party opposed the State Congress's demand for the establishment of an interim government. It raised a counter slogan demanding the retention of effective powers in the hands of the Chogyal. The State Congress leadership dubbed it as an "Party of the Palace".

The Rajya Praja Sammelan

The Rajya Praja Sammelan, a third political party had its origin about the same time. It was founded by Dhan Bahadur Tewari Chhetri and Goverdhan Pradhan, an elder brother of Kashiraj Pradhan. Its first declared aim was complete union with India and affiliation and identification with the Gurkha population of North Bengal.

The Hour of Trial

Consequently, the effort of the Sikkim ruler to contain political forces by associating three congress leaders as his "secretaries" in the government failed. Instead on account of the above mentioned developments, it further sharpened the political activity in the State. The State Congress demand for the establishment of an interim popular government had gradually gathered momentum. The State Congress further proposed a "no rent" and "no tax" campaign as a part of its programme of agitation. At the annual session of the State Congress at Rangpo which was held in the first week of February 1949, momentous decisions were taken to intensify steps for the achievement of popular ministry. On February 7, 1949 Tashi Tschering and twenty other important members of the Party were summoned for defying the Government notification by preaching 'No rent' Campaign. When the Party members reached Gangtok, six important leaders were arrested and jailed.¹³ On hearing, the arrest and detention of state Congress leaders, several thousand people marched to Gangtok and demonstrated peacefully in the streets of Gangtok against the repressive policy of the Darbar. On February 12, 1949 on account of immense public support against the arrests, the Congress leaders were released unconditionally.¹⁴

It may be pointed out here that according to Chandra Das Rai, who was a prominent State Congress leader at the time, Shri Harishwar Dayal, the then Political Officer in Sikkim, had advised the Darbar to keep the warrant of arrest against Tashi Tschering in abeyance and persuaded the State Congress to suspend their movement.¹⁵

Prolonged negotiations took place between the State Congress leaders and the Sikkim Darbar. The talks failed to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the political problems facing the kingdom.

May Day 1949

On the historic day of 1 May, 1949, a crowd estimated at about five to six thousand marched to the Palace for the fulfilment of their legitimate demand for the formation of popular ministry. The atmosphere at Gangtok was surcharged with great commotion.¹⁶ The agitation rose to a crescendo with inflammatory speeches. This was the first instance in the democratic movement in the state, to have raised a ripple on the placid surface of life in this mountain-ringed state. The Political Officer of India in Gangtok was implored to intervene so as to avert more serious trouble and conflict between the Congress and the Darbar and to restore normal life in the country.¹⁷ A detachment of the Indian Army posted in Gangtok rescued the Ruler to its protection in the Indian Residency (now designated as India House). An ugly situation was averted by scrupulous handling of the situation.

Formation of Popular Ministry

Fully realising the gravity of the explosive situation, the Maharaja of Sikkim after consultations with the Indian Political Officer in Sikkim, acceded to the popular demand for the formation of an interim government and invited State Congress President Tashi Tschering to form the ministry. Accordingly the first ever popular ministry with Tashi Tschering as the Chief Minister, was sworn in on May 9, 1949 with four other ministers.¹⁸

But this settlement proved satisfactory only on the surface. The experiment of a popular ministry was short lived. The tension between the Maharaja and the interim government continued even after the latter had been formed. Difficulties arose over the functioning of the ministry. There was no specific delineation and demarcation of the powers of the ruler and the Ministry. Each side started blaming the other of encroachment. The ministry strove to curtail the Maharaja's powers to those of a constitutional monarch. In short, the ministry was at loggerheads with the Darbar. This resulted in chaos and the whole administration seemed to be heading towards a collapse.

Dr. Keskar's Visit to Gangtok

The Political Officer of the Government of India reported to New Delhi that the State was threatened with disorder which neither the Maharaja nor the ministry would be able to control. He had recommended to the Government of India that the Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Government of India, should be sent to Sikkim to appraise the situation.¹⁹

Dr. Balkrishna V. Keskar accordingly visited Gangtok towards the end of May 1949. He met with the Darbar officials and the representatives of the various political parties, business associations and organisations and others in the public life of Sikkim. In his report to the Government of India he stated that there was tension between the ministry and the Darbar and that there was likelihood of bloodshed. He, therefore, recommended that since a breakdown in the administration was likely, the Government of India should appoint a Dewan to take over the administration until the situation became normal. He had also informed the Maharaja that the Political Officer might, if necessary, be entrusted with the administration pending the new Dewan's arrival. The Deputy Minister further recommended that a small force should be sent to Gangtok to help the Political Officer in maintaining law and order, should the need for this arise.²⁰

The Government of India accepted the Deputy Minister's recommendations. A company of troops was sent to Gangtok on the 2nd June. On the 3rd June, the Political Officer reported that the situation was getting worse and that unless the Government of India took over the administration immediately, there was likelihood of disorder and chaos erupting in the State.²¹

The end of Short-lived Ministry

On the 6th June, the Maharaja of Sikkim had sent a letter to the Political Officer, informing him that the administration cannot be carried on satisfactorily without the Government of India's assistance and requested the Political Officer to take over the administration pending the appointment of a Dewan to whom the Maharaja would delegate all powers necessary for carrying on the administration until normal conditions are restored.²²

The same day the Political Officer sent for the ministers and informed them that the Government of India were assuming the responsibility for the administration of the State immediately.

Political Officer takes over the Administration

Hence on June 6, 1949 in the interest of internal stability and law and order, the short lived ministry was dissolved after being in office for twenty nine days. Thus ended, rather abruptly, the maiden ambitious experiment of an interim "popular Government" in Sikkim. It was the only one that so far this tiny kingdom has tried. Its tenure of office was of a short duration, from 9 May to 6 June, 1949. The Government of India had decided with the Maharaja's agreeing to it, to appoint a Dewan to administer the state and pending the appointment of Dewan, the charge of administration was assumed by the Political Officer.²³

The idea of an interim government as a precursor to the establishment of fuller democratic government thus became infructuous.

The Government of India, in its attempt to soothe the hurt feelings of the Sikkimese, came out with the promise of the progressive democratisation of the state. In a Press note issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, on June 7, 1949, it was made clear that the "Government of India have no desire that legitimate political activity in the State should be stopped or that the representatives of the people should not be associated with the administration. They are anxious that political development in Sikkim should follow the peaceful and progressive course that it has followed in Indian States...It is their sincere hope that the present emergency arrangements may be terminated in the near future so that political evolution in Sikkim may take an even and peaceful course."²⁴

Indian Attitude Criticized

In spite of this clarification issued soon after the dissolution of the first popular ministry in Sikkim, some of the kingdom's political leaders still firmly believed that the source of Maharaja's strength at that crucial moment in the political history of Sikkim was the Government of India. They even quoted this "1949 affair as an instance of interference by the Government of India in the internal affairs of Sikkim" and as an evidence of its "prejudice against the political parties and the democratic movement in Sikkim". The politicians blamed the Government of India for "conniving with the Palace in dealing a fatal blow to the democratic movement in Sikkim"²⁵. They correlated this decision of the Government of India to two of its subsequent actions. These were: firstly, the Government of India's decision to concede to the Maharaja's demand for the appointment of an Indian administrative officer as a Dewan. Secondly, the treaty, the Government of India signed with the Maharaja of Sikkim in December 1950, which till to-day constitutes the sheet anchor of Sikkim's status. This section of political leadership in Sikkim held that the ministry was sacrificed for the sake of this agreement.²⁶

Disappointed and frustrated the leaders of the State Congress headed by its President Tashi Tschering went to Delhi and held frank discussions with the Government of India.²⁷ The delegation was informed that the Government of India's sole wish was to ensure a stable government in the state of Sikkim and that under no condition could India tolerate chaos and disorder.²⁸ It was made clear that the Indian Government intended to cooperate more closely in bringing about the increasing association of the Sikkimese people with their government.

Dewan Appointed

A senior civil servant, Mr. J.S. Lall, sent by the Government of India, was appointed as Dewan by the Maharaja of Sikkim and he took office on 11 August 1949.²⁹ Soon after his arrival the Dewan

got busy modernising the anachronistic administrative system of the state in accordance with the democratic aspirations of the people and under his guidance extensive administrative land and tax reforms were introduced in the State so as to strengthen its internal stability.³⁰ He made substantial improvements in all spheres of governmental activities.³¹ The administrative privileges and the tax collecting duties were abolished. Begar (forced labour) was also abolished.³²

Representatives of Sikkim meet in Delhi, March 1950.

Another Conference of the representatives of political parties from Sikkim was held in March 1950 in New Delhi, which coincided with the timing of the final stages of negotiation on an Indo-Sikkim treaty. The discussion covered the entire field of future relations between Sikkim and India and necessary administrative arrangements within the State, including the association of popular representatives in the Government of the State. During this Conference decisions were taken regarding the administration of the kingdom also. The outcome of both, the political talks and the treaty negotiations were explained in the press release of 20 March, 1950 issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The Press Note stipulated :

“For the present an officer of the Government of India will continue to be the Dewan of the State. But the Government of India’s policy is one of the progressive association of the people of the State with its Government, policy with which happily His Highness the Maharaja is in full agreement. It is proposed, as a first step, that an Advisory Council, representative of all the interests should be associated with the Dewan. Steps will also be taken immediately to institute a village panchayat system on an elective basis within the State. This is an essential and effective process of education in the art of popular Government and it is the intention that these panchayats should, in due course, elect a council for the state, whose functions and area of responsibility will be progressively enlarged.

The Maharajakumar of Sikkim, who was authorised by the Maharaja to participate in the discussions on his behalf is taking back with him the terms agreed upon”.³³

The policy statement of the Government of India constituted an important step towards the development of political consciousness in the State.

Although, the Government of India assured the political leaders that its avowed aim was to see that democracy was made a living force in Sikkim and to which the Maharaja of Sikkim by concurring agreed that the introduction of democratic institutions in Sikkim was his cherished goal, still a popular government seemed

a distant goal. For immediate practical purposes, it became evident that political development and the establishment of a representative government in Sikkim had been put into cold storage.

Setting up of the Advisory Committee

In spite of this setback to the establishment of a popular Government in Sikkim, some measures were, however, introduced without delay for the association of the representatives of the people for the maintenance of good administration in Sikkim. An Advisory Committee was set by the Dewan.³⁴ It was the first step towards the fulfilment of the pronounced policy of the Government of India of the progressive association of the people of the State with its Government. It was laid down in the Press note of March 20, 1950 released by the Government of India that "it is proposed, as a first step, that an Advisory Council representative of all the interests, should be associated with the Dewan." Consequently, the Advisory Committee included the representatives of major political parties in the state. The members of this Committee included Tashi Tschering, Kashiraj Pradhan, Captain Dimik Singh, Gyaltshen Tschering and Sonam Tschering.³⁵ Besides the ten member advisory council included representatives from the Sikkim State Congress, the Sikkim National Party and other interests like trade and commerce.³⁶ But the Praja Sammelan declined to join on the grounds that this Committee did not truly represent all the regions and communities in the State. Among the first questions that were considered by the Advisory Committee were the establishment of Panchayats throughout the country and holding of elections towards the formation of the proposed legislative council of the State. An issue of prime importance which came up repeatedly for discussion in the committee pertained to the distribution of seats and the administrative jobs in the government among the principal communities of the kingdom—the Nepalis, the Lepchas and the Bhutias. The attempt at equating the Nepalis on the one hand with the Lepchas and Bhutias on the other, the "parity formula" as it was called, figured prominently in these discussions.

Village Panchayats

However, steps were taken to establish village panchayats in the state in 1950. These panchayats were to be elected but as no safeguards were provided to the indigenous population—Lepchas and Bhotias—the election to the Panchayats was boycotted by the Sikkim National Party. The result was that only a handful of Panchayats could function.³⁷ This effort, thus in its initial stages, could not make much headway in the kingdom.

State Congress Resentment

In the meanwhile the representatives of the Sikkim State Congress to express their discontent and disapproval of the steps

taken to establish 'popular government in Sikkim' boycotted the state banquet given by the Sikkim Darbar on the occasion of the signing of the Indo-Sikkim treaty on 5 December, 1950.³⁸ Their complaint was that too little was done, and there was too much philandering which was stalling the realisation of a responsible government in Sikkim.

Proclamation of 1953

The State Congress kept on its demand for the establishment of an early interim democratic government in the country. Ultimately after a prolonged period of discussion, accusation and recrimination among the political parties in the state as well as the Advisory Committee, the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation of 23rd March, 1953 was issued by the Maharaja of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal. This proclamation set out the powers of the proposed Sikkim Council as well as the composition and powers of its component, the Executive Council. Prior to this the Prime Minister of India, Jawahar Lal Nehru had told the Indian Parliament that a scheme of constitutional reforms associating the people with administration had been framed with the agreement of the main political parties. Elections for the Legislative Council envisaged by the scheme are expected to be held soon.³⁹

The State Congress, however, in a memorandum denounced the Proclamation as "contravening all principles of democracy", and saw no prospect of democratic rule for the State in it.⁴⁰

First Elections to Sikkim Council 1953

In spite of the limitations of the Proclamation of March 1953, Sikkim's evolution to a modern welfare state was initiated with its first general election in 1953 to elect people's representatives to the Sikkim Council.⁴¹ The infiltration of democratic ideas had destroyed the foundation of many a traditional establishment and had released new forces which ended the "splendid isolation" of Sikkim. J.S. Lall, Dewan of Sikkim in his Darbar Day address on February 14, 1953 voiced his feelings for this great event in the history of the political evolution in these words :

"In a few months the first elected legislature will come into being and a new chapter in the constitutional history of the state will be opened. Your Highness is well aware of the extent to which the good counsel of the Government of India has enabled us to bring these labours to fruition."⁴²

The elections for the first Sikkim Council were held from March to May 1953. About 40 per cent of the electorate of 60670 went to the polls.⁴³ The salient features of Sikkim's first ever elections in its history were as under :

1. The Council was composed of twelve elected and five nominated members. These members were to be nominated by the Maharaja at his discretion.
2. For elected members, the overall parity between Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali communities was maintained. Out of the twelve elected members, six seats each were reserved for the Bhutia, Lepcha and Sikkim Nepalese communities. (Section 3 (b) of the Proclamation). This arrangement had been agreed to by all the political parties in May 1951.⁴⁴
3. The election of the members of the Sikkim Council was based on the universal adult franchise. (Section 4).

The result of the 1953 elections was a triumph for the forces of communalism in Sikkim. The National Party captured all the six Bhutiya, Lepcha seats in the Sikkim Council and the Sikkim State Congress won all the Nepali seats.⁴⁵ A few Praja Sammelan candidates and members of the scheduled caste League had also contested, but all were defeated at the polls. Thus in the first election held in the tiny Himalayan kingdom, an equal number of candidates was returned by both the major political parties of Sikkim, each having six seats in the Council.⁴⁶ The wedge was firmly and effectively driven between the Bhutiya-Lepcha and the Nepalese communities.

Introduction of Dyarchy

Since no party enjoyed a majority in the Sikkim Council, the question of forming a government by the people's representatives did not arise. Although the Maharaja of Sikkim retained absolute powers, as announced by a Proclamation in March 1953, a diarchical system of administration was set up as a step towards the progressive association of the people with the administration of the kingdom. Consequently, the two elected leaders of the State Congress and the National Party, Kashiraj Pradhan and Sonam Tsehering respectively, were taken into the Executive Council, with the Dewan as its Chairman. The administration of Education, Public Health, Excise, Press and Publicity Transport, Bazaars, forests and Public Works were transferred to the Executive Councillors elected by the people and the Darbar retained the administration of Ecclesiastical, External affairs, State enterprises, Home and Police, Finance, Land Revenue, Rationing and Establishment. The Executive Councillors were made responsible to the Darbar for the executive and administrative functions of the government.

The State Congress voiced strong opposition against the system and composition of such a complicated set up, maintaining that it fell short of popular aspirations. The critics said that the first general elections held in Sikkim instead of ushering in a democratic government proved a farce.⁴⁷ The Sikkim Darbar had no intention

to part with its powers and prerogatives which a democratic government would necessarily entail. The Darbar assiduously applied itself to sowing the seeds of discord among the three communities by playing up the probability of the tyranny of the majority community.⁴⁸ But in spite of these limitations, there is no denying the fact that political activity was accelerated in the tiny kingdom.

Proclamation of March 16, 1958 and Second Election

November 1958

After prolonged discussions between the Darbar and the representatives of the principal political parties in the State, the Maharaja of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal made a proclamation on March 16, 1958.⁴⁹

In pursuance of this Proclamation, Elections were again held for the second time in Sikkim in November 1958. Normally second elections to the Sikkim Council should have been held in August 1956 since section 7(c) of the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation, 1953 stipulated: "The Sikkim Council, unless sooner dissolved by the Maharaja, shall continue for three years from the date appointed for its first meeting."⁵⁰ But pending decision regarding future administrative arrangements, the Darbar extended the term of the Sikkim Council by a Proclamation.⁵¹

Sikkim on the eve of Second Election

However, it may be pointed out here, that many changes had taken place in the kingdom since the first elections were conducted in March-May 1953. A seven year Development plan was in operation. A net work of roads and communications were being laid which had made more parts of the kingdom now easily accessible. Many administrative reforms had been introduced and the government administration was now more effectively extended to even the remote and distant parts of the state. There was, therefore, wider and more extensive political consciousness and a general feeling of participation in the processes of administration of the country. With these growing and important changes, political parties and organisations demonstrated slightly more mature political attitude. Emphasis was given on representative government and the removal of communal electorate, especially the abolition of the system of separate Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali constituencies. The demand for accession to India seemed to have receded into the background. It was in this setting that the Second Elections to the Sikkim Council were held.

The salient features of Sikkim's second elections were as under :

(1) Membership enlarged

The number of seats in the Sikkim Council were increased to twenty as against seventeen in 1953. Six seats were reserved for Bhutias and Lepchas, Six for the Nepalese, six for the Maharaja's nominees, one for a member of the Sangha, to be elected by an Electoral College, consisting of Lamas of the Sikkimese monasteries recognised by the Sikkim Darbar and one general seat with the whole of Sikkim serving as one single constituency. (Section 1 of the Proclamation).

(2) Complicated Communal system of voting introduced

The earlier system of election was abolished. Instead a system in which all the communities had to cast their votes together in a single election was introduced. In fact it was a very complicated system of communal voting. Section 2 (b) of the Proclamation laid down :

“The candidate securing the highest number of votes of the community which he represents will ordinarily be required to have secured also 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 candidates securing the next highest votes of their own community and who have 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 their own community secured by them 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.”⁵²

Thus the most complicated voting procedure was adopted which could block the way of the most suitable candidates being elected. The primacy of communalism in the elections of November 1958 can be indisputably proved by the following tables indicating the results of the election.⁵³

Table ‘A’

<i>Name</i>	<i>Bhutia- Lepcha votes</i>	<i>Nepali votes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Gaden Tashi	181	431	11	623
2. Gompu Bhotia	106	1232	10	1348
3. Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa	169	1062	31	1262

Table "B"

<i>Name</i>	<i>Bhutia- Lepcha votes</i>	<i>Nepali votes</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Kazi Norbu Wangdi	263	218	14	495
2. Dubo Bhotia	175	2037	24	2236
3. Nayan Tsering	145	611	13	769

In both these cases Gompu Bhotia and Dubo Bhotia defeated their rivals with an overwhelming majority, yet they were declared defeated on account of communal voting procedure and counting arrangements introduced by the Darbar in 1958. The above given Tables A and B prove without a shadow of doubt that communalism was deliberately placed as a stumbling block in the path of the candidates who enjoyed popular support. It looked absurd that according to the procedure laid down in the Proclamation of the Darbar, a candidate representing a particular community would not be declared elected even if he had polled highest number of votes, unless he could secure 15% of the votes of the other communities in that particular constituency. On account of this very complicated procedure of election, people like Gompu Bhotia and Dubo Bhotia were declared defeated although they had secured the overwhelming majority of the votes.

But despite this complicated communal voting procedure, Sikkim State Congress secured 8 of the 14 elected seats in the Sikkim Council which included One Bhotia-Lepcha seat and as well as the general seat.⁵⁴ This procedure of communal voting has hampered the growth of democratic institutions in the kingdom. The political power had not been given to the people in a major way.

3. **Swatantra Dal (new Political Party)**

On the eve of November 1958 elections a significant new development was the formation of a new political party, Swatantra Dal, a splinter group of the State Congress, under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa, who had been the President of State Congress since 1953 after the death of Tashi Tschering.⁵⁵ The Swatantra Dal could secure only one seat (Bhutia-Lepcha) in the elections. Unfortunately with elections coming up and the prospect of various government offices in sight, frictions had developed within the two major parties of Sikkim. The Sikkim National Party also ousted its President Sonam Tschering and elected Martam Topden in his place.

4. **Unseating of the Members by the Election Tribunal**

Rival parties made allegations of malpractices by some of the leaders. Swatantra Dal and some defeated candidates of National

Party filed petitions against some of the elected candidates with Darbar. An election Tribunal was appointed by the Darbar and as a result of its findings five elected members of the Sikkim Council, which included leaders like Kashiraj Pradhan, Nahakul Pradhan and Sonam Tschering, were deprived of their seats and removed from office in 1959.⁵⁶ The Darbar upheld the decision of the Tribunal and ordered a fresh election. The State Congress and the National Party were mainly affected by the verdict of the Tribunal, the former losing three seats and the latter two in the Sikkim Council.

5. Executive Council Enlarged

In February 1959, the new Executive Council was formed with enlarged membership of five persons. The two councillors were Kashiraj Pradhan and Martam Topden with the former being the senior councillor and Nahkul Pradhan, Norbu Wangdi and Chuksam Bhutia were designated deputies. The senior Executive Councillor having two deputies under him and the latter one.⁵⁷ Following the disqualifications of the candidates due to the verdict of the tribunal and the re-elections, the membership of the Executive Council changed to Martam Topden and Nahakul Pradhan as councillors with Norbu Wangdi, Chuksam Bhutia and Bhawajit Makhia as its deputies.⁵⁸

6. Formation of Advisory Committee

In February 1959, the Maharaja issued a proclamation, which while extending wider powers to the Executive Council, instituted an Advisory Committee, comprised of all the five Executive Councillors, three senior Executive Officers of the State and the Dewan as its President. The Committee was empowered to discuss all matters of administration, including those subjects held by the Dewan.⁵⁹

7. Representation for Monasteries

For the first time in the election of 1958 a seat in the Sikkim Council was reserved for the Sangha. In a note issued by the Sikkim Darbar on March 17 1958 with reference to the Proclamation dated 16th March, 1958, it was said :

“It has long been felt that, as the Monasteries and the Sangha have constituted such a vital and important rôle in the life of the community since the earliest known history of Sikkim, and have played a major part in the taking of decisions in the councils of the past, there should be a seat specifically reserved for the Sangha in the Sikkim Council. It is this reason that a seat has been provided specifically for their representation.”⁶⁰

8. Introduction of General Seat

For the first time a general seat was also allocated. The above mentioned note said :

Both the Sikkim Congress and also some leading members of the other parties have from time to time expressed the need for representation in the council of such persons as have fixed habitation in Sikkim, but who do not fall under the category of Bhutia, Lepcha or Nepali. It is in response to these representations that it has been decided to constitute one additional General seat, although demands from some quarters have been for as many of the elected seats as one-third.⁶¹

These were some of the important features of Sikkim's second Elections held in 1958.

Thus Sikkim's second elections constituted as yet another important step towards the evolution of political consciousness in the state.

Certain important developments took place in Sikkim in the post November 1958 election period which had an immense bearing on the further development of political consciousness and evolution of the kingdom.

Melli Joint Convention September 1959

An important development in the political history of Sikkim took place when, after many vicissitudes, a joint convention of all the political parties of Sikkim—the Sikkim National Party, Sikkim State Congress, Sikkim Swatantra Dal, the Sikkim Scheduled Caste League, was convened by the Sikkim Swatantra Dal at Melli, Western Sikkim on 23-24 September 1959. The pressing and immediate necessity for the written constitution of the State was demanded by all parties. It was unanimously decided that an interim government should be formed until the framing of the constitution was finalised.⁶²

Singtam Conference of Political Parties October, 1959

A second joint meeting of the representatives of the Sikkim State Congress, Sikkim National Party, Sikkim Swatantra Dal and Sikkim Schedule Caste League was held at Singtam in eastern Sikkim on October 22, 1959. It was attended by Kashi Raj Pradhan, Sonam Tschering, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Puranbahadur Khati and Chhudup Lepcha. The meeting passed several resolutions. The meeting resolved :

“Past experiences have clearly shown that the system of communal electorate is the stumbling block towards the realisation of a fully responsible and democratic government in Sikkim. The joint meeting is of the firm opinion that a full responsible and democratic

government could only be realised with the introduction of joint electorate system based on universal adult franchise as in India".⁶³

Besides, they demanded that the legislative body of the State should be composed of the Maharaja and representatives of the people as follows :

Two representatives—to be nominated by the Maharaja to represent special interests.

Twenty two representatives—to be elected by the people in a general election on the basis of joint electorate, elected by secret ballot by a universal adult franchise and with the following reservations :

Bhutia-Lepcha	—9 seats
Nepali	—9 seats
General	—4 seats

N.B.—One seat being reserved for scheduled caste out of 4 general seats.⁶⁴

It is interesting to note here that the leaders of the various political parties could not agree to any better arrangement except the much criticized "Parity formula" as was propounded by the Darbar in 1953. In the light of this recommendation made by different political parties in the State, the statement of policy issued by the Darbar in a note on March 17, 1958 seemed to be rational and reasonable and hence justified. It said :

"It is the desire of His Highness that the Government should be carried on equally by the two major groups of Bhutia-Lepchas and Nepalis respectively, without the one community imposing itself or encroaching upon the other. It is to this end that the Chogyal has endeavoured always to direct his Government ; so that, with a constitution based on equality and justice, the communities should live in harmony with each other and that such harmony may always be maintained for the good of all his people."⁶⁵

Sikkim National Congress

Another most significant event of the contemporary history of Sikkim was the emergence of Sikkim National Congress, which made its debut in the politics of the country on 20 May 1960, as a powerful force in Sikkim's political landscape. "Keeping in view the futility of the existence of small political parties", said the resolution establishing this new party, "and bearing in mind the larger interests of the people of Sikkim, the four parties, namely, the Sikkim Swatantra Dal led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa, the Sikkim National Party led by Sonam Tschering, the Sikkim Praja Samme-

lan led by D.B. Tewari and the Sikkim State Congress (Progressive Group) led by C.D. Rai decided at a joint convention held at Singtam, sponsored by Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa of Chakhung, to merge into one compact body to be known as the Sikkim National Congress.⁶⁶ The objectives of the new party, outlined in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister Nehru were :

- (i) a constitutional monarchy for Sikkim ;
- (ii) a council based on communal parity, but elected by a joint electorate ; and
- (iii) an independent judiciary with a High Court established by a charter.

Hence with the emergence of the Sikkim National Congress as a significant political unit capable of tremendous influence on the Sikkimese people, the entire political picture of Sikkim underwent great changes .

Since its inception, the Sikkim National Congress has been demanding a written constitution incorporating fundamental rights, for codified laws and for representative government. The President of the Party, Kazi Lendhup Dorji-Khangsarpa of Chakhung, is not satisfied with the Royal Proclamation of 1953—revised in 1966 and 1969 and with the Durbar's contention, that it acts as the country's constitution. The system resembles the dyarchy under the Government of India Act of 1919.

Interim Election 1960

In 1959 on account of the decision of the Election Tribunal the election of five candidates to the Council was set aside, The Chogyal had upheld the decision and ordered fresh elections. On account of these vacancies an interim election was held in 1960. Consequent to these elections the party position in the Sikkim Council on 1st June, 1960 was :

1.	Sikkim National Party (led by Martam Topden)	5 Seat (all Bhutia—Lepchas)
2.	Sikkim National Congress (led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa)	4 Seats (one Bhutia and 3 Nepalese)
3.	Sikkim State Congress (led by K.R. Pradhan)	3 Seats (all Nepalese)
4.	Sangha	1 Seat
5.	Seat Vacant	1
	Total	14 Seats (Elected Seats)
6.	Maharaja's Nominees	6 Seats
	Grand Total	20 Seats

The Sikkim National Party, having a strength of five, later roped in one more from the National Congress and claimed a majority in the Council and hence Senior Executive Councillorship also.⁶⁷

Reorganisation of Executive Council—Sikkim National Congress ignored

The Chogyal by a Proclamation appointed on June 1, 1960 Martam Topden as Senior Executive Councillor and one of his party colleagues as Deputy Executive Councillor. It is significant to note that no councillor from the Sikkim National Congress was taken into the Government, despite the fact that the Sikkim National Congress commanded second place in the Sikkim Council. This omission was greatly resented by the National Congress. There was a sharp criticism of the composition of the Executive Council and the leaders of the Sikkim National Congress even threatened to embark on a programme of Satyagraha.⁶⁸ On second thoughts, however, the party decided to send a seven men delegation to New Delhi consisting of Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Sonam Techering and C.D. Rai to express their "grievances" and present their "demands" to the Government of India.⁶⁹ There were outcries against the Darbar and the Dewan. Gradually the excitement and the fervour of the impending satyagraha had cooled down.

Namchi Constituency Bye-election December 1960

In the Namchi bye-election, on account of complicated voting procedure Nidup Bhotia of Sikkim National Party was declared elected in spite of the fact that Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa of Sikkim National Congress had secured overwhelming majority of popular votes. The number of votes polled by the candidates in the bye-election are given in table below :⁷⁰

Table "C"

<i>Name</i>	<i>Bhutia Lepcha votes</i>	<i>Nepali votes</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa (Sikkim National Congress)	398	1877	2	2277
2. Nidup Bhotia (Sikkim National Party)	600	241	10	851
3. Phurgey Lama (Sikkim State Congress)	33	374	1	408

The defeat of Kazi provided a glaring example of the iniquitous communal voting system prevailing in Sikkim. Kazi Lhendup Dorji reacting on the results said, "This is the end. We will contest no more elections in this State. The Council is completely under Maharajkumar's power and there is no possibility of fair and free elections".⁷¹ A country-wide civil disobedience movement was threatened.⁷²

Political Parties Reiterate Demand for Reforms

Early in 1962, the Sikkim Darbar again announced its intentions to hold new elections to the Sikkim Council. The Sikkim Council was dissolved on May 1, 1962.⁷³ Political activities reached new heights when the two political parties, the State Congress and the National Congress joined hands for a show down with the Government in order to compel sweeping political reforms. The State Congress even though it was weakened by a split in its ranks, did not give up its agitation for the democratization of Sikkim's administration. At the annual conference held at Singtam on March 2, 1962 under the chairmanship of Kashiraj Pradhan, it demanded more elective seats in the Council, and simultaneous reduction of nominated members from the existing one-third of the total number of seats to one-sixth. Another resolution demanded the introduction of joint electorate for all communities in the State. They demanded transfer of all administrative departments to the Executive Councillors chosen from among the elected representatives of the people.⁷⁴ Threats to boycott the elections were uttered. The National Congress passed a resolution :

"Taking into serious and thoughtful consideration the bitter lessons of the last fifteen years we received in the political life of Sikkim, this meeting of the all Sikkim National congress unanimously resolves, and is hereby resolved, that until and unless the communal voting system is abolished and a system of joint electorate on parity basis is introduced in its place, together with the materialisation of the much needed political reforms embodied in a written constitution, and also in accordance with the JOINT DECLARATION made, and signed, by both the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim State Congress at their joint meeting held at Rangpo on 9th August, 1960, the Sikkim National Congress shall fully boycott the forthcoming elections in Sikkim, and shall take resort to a Sikkim-wide non-violent Satyagraha movement. Thereupon the Sikkim National Congress, through this resolution, calls upon the people throughout Sikkim to get ready and be at hand, if need be, to whole-heartedly participate in the proposed Sikkim-wide non-violent Satyagraha movement and to make the same a real success."⁷⁵

People's Consultative Committee

While brisk preparations were being made to hold the third election in Sikkim, the Chinese in October 1962, launched a massive

attack on India and the election was postponed sine die. The Sikkim people's consultative committee, consisting of 31 members, was formed with the sole objective of advising the Government of Sikkim on defence measures necessary for the territorial integrity of Sikkim on November 26, 1962. The number of members chosen from different political parties to serve on the committee are given below in a table :

Table "D"

<i>Names of Political Parties, Independents etc</i>	<i>Number</i>
1. Sikkim National Party	14
2. Sikkim State Congress	5
3. Sikkim National Congress	2
4. Independents	5
5. Servicemen	2
6. Sikkim Scheduled Caste League	1
	29

Besides these twenty-nine members, the Maharajkumar of Sikkim and the Dewan of Sikkim were to serve as its President and Chairman respectively.

On account of negligible representation given to the National Congress, it submitted a memorandum simultaneously to the Maharaja of Sikkim and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India to revive the Sikkim Council of 1958 or to broaden people's representation in the administration or to dissolve the Executive Council so that the administration of the state could be run directly by the Dewan during the period of emergency.⁷⁶

However, the demands for early elections and political reforms were continued to be made by various parties. It was said that there is nothing, during the state of emergency to prevent the authorities from introducing political reforms to the satisfaction of the people at large. It was contended that on a account of the proximity of the border, where heavy concentrations are reported, it is all the more necessary that the state and the parties are unified and that they make united efforts whole-heartedly for the defence of the country.⁷⁷ It was said that the political parties were fully alive to the imperative need for cooperating with the Government of India in defending Sikkim from a possible threat of Chinese aggression.⁷⁸

In spite of the limitations imposed by a complicated communal voting procedure, and postponement of elections in 1962-63 during the last two decades of intense political activity in the tiny state, a drastic and extensive process of social, political and economic change had taken place in Sikkim. During the last-twenty years a brief period in the context of the development of a country, Sikkim had emerged as modern welfare state from the dungeons of feudalism. Revolutionary changes had taken place since 1947 when the seeds of political consciousness were first sown in the kingdom. A renaissance, a reformation, a commercial and economic revolution, and liberal changes had occurred in the kingdom. The country had completed two development plans with liberal Indian aid and assistance. On account of vastly improved roads and communications, the "splendid" isolation, had been broken as a result of the free movement of ideas and people from outside. It was in this background that the Chogyal's Proclamation of December 21, 1966 paved the ground for country's third election.

Although the state council and Executive Council Proclamation 1953 had expressly laid down in section 7(a) that "the Sikkim Council shall be summoned to meet twice at least in every year, and six months shall intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session,"⁷⁹ fresh elections to the council could not be held for nine years due to the state of emergency declared in Sikkim on account of Chinese aggression in 1962. The critics alleged that the Council had been dead since 1962 clearly showed that the solemn words of the Proclamation had been honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The political parties charged that the Darbar took advantage of the Sino-Indian border dispute, to scuttle people's demand for a democratic pattern of administration.

Third Election March 1967

However, Sikkim went to the polls for the third time in its history in March 1967. The peaceful manner in which the election was conducted in Sikkim was a matter of achievement and pride. It constituted another landmark in the political development of Sikkim. Following March 1967 elections politics in Sikkim had reached an interesting phase. The salient features of Sikkim's third election were as under :

1. Increase in the Elective element

In keeping with the Darbar's policy of "associating the people more and more closely with the governance of the state, there had been a steady increase in the elective element of the Council. The Council was enlarged to twenty four members and the elected seats were raised to eighteen. The number of Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese seats was raised to seven each. Three members were to be elected

by the General constituency of which one was to be a general seat, one from the scheduled castes and another from Tsongs. One member was to be elected by the electoral college of the Sanghas belonging to the monasteries recognised by the Chogyal.⁸⁰

The increase in the Bhutia-Lepcha and Sikkimese Nepali seat was welcomed by all the political parties but the reservation of seats for the scheduled castes and Tsongs was criticised by the Sikkim National Congress (which captured the maximum number of seats in the election) and the Sikkim State Congress.

2. Sectional Reservation

As stated above one seat each was reserved for the Tsongs and the Scheduled castes, the reservation of seats for Tsongs and the Scheduled castes was, however, deplored by both the state congress and National Congress. Kashiraj Pradhan, President of the State Congress said: "the proclamation has slowed down the process of democratisation. All our attempts to remove communalism from Sikkim politics have been in vain, casteism has been introduced instead... This trend if not checked, will lead Sikkim one day to communal abyss."⁸¹ The national executive of the National Congress also condemned it. It said: "it has been issued in total disregard of the popular demands and in effect, it seeks to disintegrate the Sikkimese people."⁸² It was argued by the National Congress that the election results have clearly shown that the new seats lacked support even from the communities whom they had sought to represent. The pattern of voting by the scheduled castes and the Tsongs for the general seat had shown that sixty percent of them voted for the National Congress candidates and twenty percent for the State Congress candidates, who were both opposed to the creation of these reserved seats, as against only twenty percent for the National Party which alone had supported the creation of these new seats on the basis of sectional reservation.⁸³

It may be pointed out here that the Tsongs, known also as Limbus, are claimed to be indigenous Nepali immigrants who had swarmed into Sikkim during the last two centuries in search of work and profitable settlement. It is stated that Limbuana in Nepal, which borders on both Sikkim and Tibet, used to form part of Sikkim till Prithvinarain Shah of Nepal conquered it. The descendants and spill over of the people hailing from this region now settled in West Sikkim are counted under this category. Without paying due heed to their indigenous origin, taxes had been collected as if they were immigrant Nepalese and thus their special identity had tended to get lost. By the sectional reservation of a seat for them in 1967 election, this was being sought to be restored. The estimated number of Tsongs is about ten thousand out of which about five thousand were made eligible to vote.⁸⁴ The Chogyal reiterated that the Tsongs were not Nepalese although they had so

far been "lumped" with the Nepalese. They are a distinct identity in themselves and as such have now been given a separate seat.⁸⁵

3. As in 1958, except for the general and reserved seats, for the other fourteen elective seats allotted on party basis, it was obligatory for the successful candidate to secure a minimum of 15 per cent of votes from the other community also. But unlike 1958, when some of the candidates who got a wide measure of approval from their own communities, lost the election since they had failed to get the required minimum number of votes from the other community, there was, however, not a single case in 1967 where the minimum restrictive vote may have defeated a popular candidate. This result testified to the efforts that the candidates made to secure their approval from the other community and this general concern to be acceptable to all the communities was responsible for the remarkable degree of harmony that characterised the entire election campaign.

4. The Proclamation laid down that a person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the Sikkim Council unless he was ordinarily a resident in the area from which he was a candidate or paid for the preceding financial year land revenue or local tax to the Government for the landed property or house owned in his name in the area from which he was a candidate. The executive committee of the Sikkim National Congress at its meeting held on December 28, 1966 expressed its opposition to any such restrictions and had urged the Darbar to allow any contestant to fight elections from any constituency in Sikkim. It said, the restriction on contesting from only such constituency where he had either a house or some other property is "unique to Sikkim in as much as all democratic countries allow their citizens to contest elections from any constituency in the country."⁸⁶

Replying to such criticisms, the Chogyal said that these arrangements are correct and justified because a candidate should have a live interest in the constituency which he contests and can identify himself with the people.⁸⁷

5. The honours of the election had gone to Sikkim National Congress which secured eight elected seats out of the eighteen. The popularity of the National Congress was seen from the votes polled in the General seat election. The party President Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa polled more votes than the total votes of his two rivals put together. While Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa polled 8384 votes, his opponents Phurgey Lama of State Congress and Ramjiwan Prasad of National Party could muster 3618 and 3226 votes respectively.⁸⁸ The Election results party-wise were as under :

Table "E"

<i>Name of the Party</i>	<i>Bhutia-Lepcha seats</i>	<i>Nepali seats</i>	<i>General seats</i>	<i>Total</i>
1, Sikkim National Congress	2	5	1	8
2. Sikkim National Party	5	—	—	5
3. Sikkim State Congress	—	2	—	2

The Sikkim State Congress, the oldest political party in the State fared miserably and could manage to secure only two elective seats.

The other three sectional elective seats were held by the representatives of Tsongs, the monasteries and the scheduled castes and none of them adhered to any distinct political organisation. The Council was completed with the nomination of six members by the Chogyal, three of whom were government servants, and the other three were the representatives of the public without party affiliation⁹⁰.

6. A constant feature of Sikkimese politics has been that almost on the eve of every election some or the other political party had cropped up on Sikkim's political landscape. On the eve of 1967 election, a new political organization, Sikkim Independent Front, was formed under the leadership of one Miss Ruth Karthak Lepchani. In a statement to the Press, Lepchani said : "In Sikkim there is a strong feeling of frustration amongst the educated masses that the political parties in Sikkim have done nothing to alleviate the suffering of the masses."⁹¹ However, the Front could not make any impression on the Sikkim electorate as it failed to get any seat in the council.

Thus the third General elections took Sikkim a step further in its development of political consciousness.

Sikkim's Fourth Election 1970

Sikkim, the microcosm of the Himalayan borderland, went to polls fourth time in April, 1970. The political activity was accelerated by the Proclamation of the Chogyal Palden Tondup Namgyal on December 31, 1969 when he promulgated the Representation of Sikkim Subjects Act, 1969. On the eve of the fourth election to the Sikkim Council, the state had made strides in all spheres of the life of the Sikkimese. The country had achieved economic progress due to the implementation of three five year plans. The people through the three preceding elections had understood the political processes ushered in the country since 1953. It was in this background that this small kingdom went through the experience of the fourth

election. The important features of the fourth election were as under :—

1. A record number of 114 nomination papers were filed for 18 seats. After scrutiny and withdrawals 72 candidates were left in the field.⁹²

2. For the first time in the election campaigns in Sikkim since 1953, during the course of election campaigning, demand for the revision of treaty was raised at public meetings.⁹³ Sikkim State Congress which in 1947-48 pleaded for Sikkim's integration with India, now in 1970 pleaded for revision of the 1950 treaty. Nahakul Pradhan, the then President of Sikkim State Congress told a rally that it was time the Indo-Sikkim Treaty signed twenty years ago was revised.⁹⁴

3. Both the Sikkim State Congress and National Congress had published their election manifestoes. Both the parties demanded written constitution, fundamental rights for the citizens, better and adequate educational facilities and other social and economic reforms. They pleaded for responsible government with the Chogyal as a consitutional monarch.⁹⁵

4. Martam Topden (National Party), Nahakul Pradhan (State Congress), Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa (National Congress), Ashoke Tschering (National Party), Harka Bahadur Basnet (National Party) and Kaloo Rai (State Congress) were appointed new Executive Councillors.

5. Out of the eighteen elective seats, National Party captured seven, Sikkim National Congress five (which included the General Seat also), State Congress four and Independents two.⁹⁶

6. A new political party, Sikkim Janta Party, under the Presidentship of Lal Bahadur Basnet was formed on the eve of election. But it could not capture any seat. Lal Bahadur Basnet resigned both from the Party membership and its leadership after elections.⁹⁷

This is how the march of Sikkimese towards the development of their political consciousness and evolution of its political system brought them during the last twenty three years in their urge to secure a responsible government.

Sikkim's fifth Election, January-February 1973

The 1973 elections to the Sikkim Council have proved to be a turning point in the political and consitutional development of Sikkim. In its wake, Sikkim witnessed a political upheaval which has radically transformed the political scenario of this landlocked kingdom. The salient features of these elections were as under :—

(1) Emergence of Sikkim Janta Congress

On the eve of the election, the Sikkim State Congress and the Janta Party were merged into a new political party, "the Sikkim Janta Congress". At their joint meeting held on August 15, 1972 at Gangtok, it was resolved that "Sikkim politics have become wholly stagnant and there appears to be no prospect of any change in the immediate future. With a view to improving this State of affairs and bringing about some vital changes in the body-politic, it was resolved to form a new and progressive party by combining the forces of the Sikkim State Congress and the Sikkim Janta Party. The new party was to be called "the Sikkim Janta Congress". But the party could capture only two seats in the elections.

(2) Fifty-five candidates contested for 18 elective seats of the 24 member Council.

(3) Out of 18 elected seats, the National Party captured 11 seats (7 Bhutia-Lepcha seats, 2 Nepali seats, 1 Sangha seat and a scheduled caste candidate), the Janta Congress 2 (Nepali seats) and the National Congress 5. The veteran Janta Congress leader Nahkul Pradhan was defeated by Kazi Lhendup Dorji in the General constituency.

4. The March-April 1973 crisis was to great extent the result of these elections. As the counting of votes for the 24-member Council began on January 29, the National Congress led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji and the Sikkim Janta Congress headed by Mr. K.C. Pradhan walked out, charging the Presiding Officer with "aiding and abetting the Sikkim National Party in rigging the elections." They said they were boycotting the counting in "utter desperation". The Sikkim National Congress and the Janta Congress joined together and formed a Joint Action Council (JAC). Their agitation, rocked this strategically located kingdom and engulfed it with political turmoil. The whole administration was paralysed and the Government of India had to take over the administration on April 8, 1973 on the request of the Chogyal. The political parties were demanding political and administrative reforms, introduction of universal adult franchise and the principle of one man one vote.

However this agitation has completely transformed the direction of political life in the State. An agreement between the Chogyal, leaders of political parties in the kingdom and the Government of India was signed on May 8, 1973 at Gangtok about the administrative and political set up of the state. The Chogyal has been made a constitutional ruler. The agreement calls for the establishment of a fully responsible Government in Sikkim, with a more democratic constitution, the guarantee of fundamental rights, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and greater legislative and executive powers

for the elected representatives of the people. It meant the ushering in of a representative and responsible form of Government in place of paternalistic "guided democracy". In sum, political reforms are the beginning of a new phase in Sikkim.

Problem of Political Parties in Sikkim

During the course of preceding analysis of the development of political consciousness in Sikkim, the development of political parties in the kingdom of Sikkim has also been traced. Though political parties had sprung up in this kingdom rather early, they have not been able to exert an influence on the life and politics of the state to the extent desired. To a great extent the basis of political organisation in Sikkim has been the ethnological division of the population into the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis. This fact retarded the growth of a healthy, strong and effective political organisation in the kingdom. Although the two largest parties—Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim State Congress claim (and to some extent they possess too) multiracial character of their parties but communal considerations come up in the actual working of the Sikkimese society. This has retarded the healthy growth of political institutions in the country. In spite of the fact that the political parties in Sikkim raised their voice for a responsible government in late 1947, they have not been able to achieve it till this day. This is largely on account of a lack of disciplined, scientifically organized party system. The Party structure in Sikkim suffers from undermentioned shortcomings.

1. Lack of Participation by the younger generation

There is a lack of active participation by the younger generation of the Sikkimese. The leaders of early fifties continued to dominate the political scene till 1970. The result has been that there is an absence of dynamic and bold leadership. The young educated section of the Sikkimese society finds lucrative jobs as soon as they finish their education.

2. Weak Political Cadres

Almost all the political parties suffer from weak political cadres at the village and other levels. On account of this shortcoming, a large body of people cannot get an opportunity to share in the development of party programme and activities.

3. Lack of ideological basis and Party Programmes

Normally the individual citizen often finds the party meaningful in that it provides a focus for his emotional reactions to the social and economic forces that act upon him. But none of the political parties in Sikkim, has any clear cut economic and social programme. In absence of the clear cut economic programmes and social policies,

a dynamic and progressive political life is difficult to achieve. Except on the eve of elections, political life in the kingdom becomes stale and stagnant. An effective party system requires firstly that the parties are able to bring forth programmes to which they commit themselves and secondly that the parties possess sufficient internal cohesion to carry out these programmes.

4. **Lack of Party System with sufficient party loyalty**

To make party policy effective the parties have the right and the duty to announce the terms that shall govern the participation by the rank and file in the common enterprise of capturing political power in a state. But Sikkim's politics has shown lack of loyalty and discipline in the working of political parties in the state. Almost on the eve of every election in Sikkim the factious spirit and lack of loyalty lead to the emergence of splinter groups and factions. This fragmentation is the inevitable outcome of the proliferation of parties as a result of splits and schisms. For example, the National Congress which won eight seats in 1967 broke in two when the Chogyal nominated B.B. Gurung one of the eight, to his executive council. Kazi Lhendup Dorji, best known among the party leaders in Sikkim, saw this as an attempt to undermine his position. As a result Gurung was expelled by the party but he carried a section of it with him to form a dissident rump. The National Congress had fielded 17 candidates in 1970 election and had the satisfaction of seeing five of them returned, the largest score achieved by any of the contending groups. The rump put up eight who were all defeated. But Gurung, as it happened being of Nepali ethnic stock, his departure from the party has to a great extent weakened the alliance that the National Congress had sought to forge between Bhutias and Lepchas on the one hand, and the Nepali elements in the population on the other. This probably explains the decline the party has suffered in the recent elections.⁹⁸

5. **Communal basis of Party Structure**

The basis of political organisation to a great extent is community oriented. In fact the chief obstacle to the achievement of a responsible government has been the division between Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese.⁹⁹ Sikkim National Party has under its fold mostly Bhutia-Lepcha people. In fact it was propped up against a possible sweeping off the interests of these two communities by predominantly powerful Nepalese. All through its history except for a lone seat in 1970 election, it has been able to capture only Bhutia-Lepcha seats. Now defunct Sikkim State Congress claimed to be multiracial. The first two Presidents of the Sikkim State Congress have been Tashi Tschering (1947-53) and Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa (1953-58). The latter resigned in 1958 to lead the newly created Swatantra Dal. Sikkim National Congress and the newly established Janta Congress have tried to be multiracial. It must be said to

the credit of the main political parties, the National Congress and the Janata Congress and even the predominantly Lepcha-Bhutia National Party that of late they have made a conscious endeavour to build their movements on secular foundations.

The party system, if it has to be strengthened for attaining power in a democratic government, needs selfless, devoted and honest leadership. Instead Sikkim presents chaotic scene where lust for personal power and the lure of the public offices deviate many a political leaders from their declared and avowed objectives. Of late political parties like National Congress and Janata Congress gave an unhealthy preference for populist agitation. This was amply borne out by mass uprising in the kingdom in April 1973.

However, in spite of these lacunas in the working and development of political party structure in the state, Sikkim happens to be the first state in the Himalayas where the seeds of political consciousness were developed at a very early stage. Comparatively Sikkimese society to day is greatly politicized society and the political activity in the kingdom has reached at a very interesting stage.

6. Sikkim Council

Sikkim Council symbolised the legislative branch of the Sikkimese administration. Sikkim Council was set up in 1953 by a Proclamation of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal in March 1953.¹⁰⁰ The State Council and Executive Council Proclamation was the result of serious and animated discussions, accusations and recrimination among the various political parties in Sikkim as well as the deliberations of the Advisory Committee. This Proclamation as amended from time to time had set the powers and composition of the Council.

Since 1966 it had been designated as Sikkim Council.¹⁰¹ Earlier, it was known as the State Council.

Composition of the Sikkim Council

The Sikkim Council had been successfully enlarged since 1953. Till December 1972, besides the President, the Sikkim Council consisted of twenty four members. The Council consisted of :

- (a) A President who was nominated and appointed by the Chogyal. Earlier the Dewan of Sikkim and later on the Principal Administrative Officer had been entrusted with the duty to preside over its deliberations. Afterwards the Sidlon of Sikkim presided over its meetings.
- (b) Seven Bhutia-Lepcha members representing five constituencies in Sikkim.
- (c) Seven Sikkimese Nepalese.

- (d) One General Seat representing the whole of Sikkim.
- (e) One Tsong representing the Tsong community all over Sikkim.
- (f) One Lama to be elected by all the Sanghas belonging to the monasteries recognized by the Chogyal of Sikkim.
- (g) One scheduled caste-representing the scheduled castes all over Sikkim.
- (h) Six seats were filled by nomination at the discretion of the Chogyal. (Section 3 of the Sikkim Subjects Act, 1969).¹⁰²

In 1953 when the Council was first established, it had besides the President twelve elected (six Bhutia-Lepcha and six Nepalese) and five nominated members only.

Manner of election

All the voters in a particular constituency cast their votes together in a single election. But the candidate securing the highest number of votes of the community which he represented would ordinarily be required to have secured also at least 15 per cent of the total votes of the rest of the electors to entitle him to be returned. If, however, he failed to secure 15 percent of the total votes of the rest of the electors it would not have entitled him to be returned. If, however, he failed to secure 15 percent of the votes of the rest of the electors, the candidate securing the next highest votes of his own community and who had also succeeded in securing 15 percent of the votes of the aforesaid rest would have been eligible to be returned, provided the difference between the number of the votes of his own community secured by him and the highest candidate did not exceed 15 per cent of the total votes of his own community secured by the latter. If the difference was in excess of 15 percent, the latter would have been regarded as returned, notwithstanding that he would not have had secured 15 percent of the votes of the aforesaid rest (Section 4(b) Representation of Sikkim's Subjects Act, 1969).¹⁰³

Qualifications for the membership of the Sikkim Council

Elaborate qualifications had been laid down for the membership of the Council. A person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the Sikkim Council unless he :

- (a) was a subject of Sikkim,
- (b) was not less than thirty years of age on the date fixed as the last date for filling nomination for the seat for which he was a candidate,
- (c) was ordinarily a resident in the area from which he was a candidate or paid, for the preceding financial year, land

Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa
of Chakhung, *President*, Sikkim
Congress and the first *Chief*
Minister of Sikkim.



Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa with his
wife, The Kazini Saheba, Elisa-Maria of
Chakhung.

revenue or local tax to the Government for the landed property or house owned in his name in the area from which he was a candidate,

- (d) possessed such other qualifications as may have been prescribed by the Chogyal in this behalf. (Section V)¹⁰⁴

Sessions of the Sikkim Council

The Sikkim Council normally met at least twice a year. Section 7(a) of the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation laid down : "The State Council shall be summoned to meet twice at least in every year, and six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session."¹⁰⁵

The Sikkim Council, unless dissolved sooner by the Chogyal, had a tenure of three years.

The Chogyal, however, could summon the Council at such time and place as he thought fit. He prorogued or dissolved the Council.

The Chogyal could address the Council or send messages to it in regard to a matter pending before it or otherwise. (Section 8).

Every member of the Sikkim Council before taking his seat made and subscribed before the Chogyal or any person appointed in that behalf by the Chogyal, an oath of affirmation.

Forms of Business

The business of the Council normally took three forms—Questions, Resolutions and Legislations.

The Council had limited power of legislation. The assent of Chogyal was required for any legislation passed by the Council to become a regulation.

A fortnight's notice was required for moving questions, resolutions or legislative proposals by a member.

Powers of the Sikkim Council

The Sikkim Council enjoyed only limited powers. Subject to the assent of the Chogyal, the Sikkim Council could enact laws for the peace, order and good government of Sikkim. However, without the previous sanction of the Chogyal, the Sikkim Council could not make or take into consideration any law affecting reserved subjects pertaining to Ecclesiastical, External Affairs, State Enterprises, Home and Police, Finance, Land Revenue, Rationing, Establishment Departments.

The Sikkim Council, apart from the limitations imposed on it relating to the above mentioned Departments, had no power to

discuss, to ask questions about or to deal with any manner on any of the following matters :—

- (i) the Chogyal and the members of the ruling family ;
- (ii) the external relations of the State including relations with the Government of India ;
- (iii) the appointment of Sidlon and members of the judiciary, and
- (iv) any matter pending before a court of law.¹⁰⁶

The Council, however, could deal with transferred subjects like Education, Public health, Excise, Press and Publicity, Transport, Bazars, Forests and Public Works.

The validity of any proceedings in the Council could not be called in question in any court on the ground of any alleged irregularity or procedure.¹⁰⁷

Powers Relating to Budget Estimates

The Council had very limited budgetary powers. The estimated receipts and expenditure of the State for every financial year were laid before the Council and such estimates were voted upon by the Council.

However, the Chogyal had the power to certify any demand in the budget estimates rejected by the Council which thereafter became part of the sanctioned estimates.

However, expenditure on the civil list, including expenditure on the household departments of the Chogyal, pay and allowances of the Sildon, judiciary and the officers on deputation from the Government of India and the secret and discretionary expenditure were not subjected to the vote of the Council.¹⁰⁸

The development budget, financed by the Government of India was not placed before the Council.

Position of the Sikkim Council

Sikkim Council was the expression of the urges of the Sikkimese people to have a responsible government. As such it fell short of their expectations. Under the existing arrangements the Sikkim, Council did not enjoy any semblance of popular authority. In 1953 when the late Chogyal had proclaimed the establishment of the Council, Sikkim's biggest political party in 1953, Sikkim State Congress, had denounced it as contravening all principles of democracy.¹⁰⁹ It had few "transferred subjects" which it could discuss and express opinion on. Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa said ; "It is a common knowledge that the Sikkim Council is a

puppet council and enjoys neither power, prestige nor the confidence" or respect of the people of Sikkim.¹¹⁰

Besides, the composition of the Council had been framed in such a fashion that no party could enjoy a majority, necessary for the formation of a government. Hence Sikkim Council right from its inception, had been reduced to a question asking body with no effective legislative powers to exercise whatsoever, being a house divided in itself.

Even the presiding officer of this decorative body was Sidlon who was appointed by the Chogyal. But the role of the Sikkim Council could be appreciated in the light of fact that it could be a good precursor for future full-fledged legislative assembly of this tiny but peaceful Himalayan abode. The autumn session of the Council held in 1971 marked a turning point in its history. For the first time, the members made an effort to assert themselves, leading to an important ruling by Inder Sen Chopra, Sidlon of Sikkim, who acted as President of the Council. He ruled that all policy matters in respect of "transferred" subjects must be placed before the House. The ruling arose out of a question by member as to why the proposal for a new license fee imposed by the Bazar department had not been placed before the House.¹¹¹

The Executive Councillor in charge of the Department had earlier stated that since it was a policy matter, the Government had not placed before the House.

The presiding officer's ruling, upholding this view, helped remove a general, albeit erroneous, impression that finance being a "reserved" subject, the Council could not discuss license fee or allied matters involving taxation.

Political circles attached considerable significance to the ruling, especially in the light of the attitude of the officials towards the functions of the Council. In fact, the Chief Secretary had, in a reply to a question during the recent session, stated that the main function of the ordinary elected members of the Council was to "ask questions and move resolutions, keeping in view the general welfare of the people." And this was exactly what the members had been doing since the formation of the Council in 1953.¹¹² In fact the proclamation of 1953 had stated that the Council was being set up "to associate the people more and more closely with governance of the State".

However, one of the reasons for the unenviable record was the absence of any guidance from the presiding officers to members, who were not fully acquainted with the functioning of parliamentary democracy. In fact, the Dewans, who functioned as presiding officers, often dominated the Council, reducing it to an ineffective body. In course of time, it virtually became a forum for voicing grievances. Under the 1973 Agreement it has been replaced by the Assembly.

The Assembly

It has been resolved in the Tripartite Agreement of May 1973 that the establishment of a fully responsible government in Sikkim with a more democratic constitution and greater legislative and executive power for the elected representatives of the people shall be achieved. Consequently it has been laid out in the agreement that there shall be an Assembly in Sikkim. The Assembly shall be elected every four years. Election shall be fair and free, and shall be conducted under the supervision of a representative of the Election Commission of India, who shall be appointed for the purpose by the Government of Sikkim. For April, 1974 elections the number of members to be elected has been fixed to 32.

In accordance with the May, 1973 agreement, the Assembly shall have the power to propose laws and adopt resolutions for the welfare of the people of Sikkim, on any of the matters enumerated below namely : (i) education, (ii) public health, (iii) excise, (iv) bazars, (v) press and publicity, (vi) transport, (vii) forests, (viii) public works, (ix) agriculture, (x) food supplies ; and (xi) economic and social planning, including state enterprises, (xii) home and establishment, (xiii) finance, and (xiv) land revenue.

The Assembly shall not discuss or ask questions on the following :

- (a) The Chogyal and the members of the ruling family ;
- (b) Any matter pending before the court of law ;
- (c) The appointment of the Chief Executive and members of the Judiciary ; and
- (d) Any matter which concerns the responsibilities of the Government of India under this agreement, or under any other agreement between India and Sikkim.

Hence with the accretion to the Assembly of control over land revenue, finance, planning and home affairs, the people's sense of participation in the administration will grow. Effective power within the kingdom will now vest with the people.

The system of elections shall be so organised as to make the Assembly adequately representative of the various sections of the population.

The size and the composition of the Assembly shall be such as may be prescribed from time to time care being taken to ensure that no single section of the population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin, and that the rights and interest of the Sikkimese of Bhutia, Lepcha origin and of the Sikkimese of Nepali, which includes Tsong and scheduled caste, are

fully protected. The substitution of the earlier complicated electoral system by one based on the one man-one vote principle will ensure that the elected Assembly more truly reflects the composition of the population. At the same time, both the size and the make up of the Assembly will ensure that the Nepalese are not able to ride roughshod over the Bhutia-Lepcha minority.

The Executive Council

The Executive Council, a component of Sikkim Council, also continued unchanged as regards its powers and functions since it was first established in 1953. Section 9 of the proclamation of 1953 stipulated that there shall be constituted an Executive Council for the State, the members of which shall hold office during the Chogyal's pleasure and shall be responsible to him for the executive and administrative functions of the Government. "In fact the Executive Council symbolised the policy of associating people's representatives in the administration of the kingdom.

Composition

The Executive Council consisted of :

- (i) The Sidlon by virtue of the office which he held under the Chogyal.,
- (ii) such number of elected members of the Sikkim Council as may be appointed by the Chogyal from time to time.¹¹³

The number of Executive Councillors had been increasing steadily. The number of Councillors was six in 1972.

Powers of the Executive Council

Under the arrangements existing till 1973, the Executive Councillors who were the elected members of the Sikkim Council, were responsible individually to the Sikkim Council for the administration of Education, Public health, Excise, Press and Publicity, Transport, Bazars, Forests and Public Works.

The Chogyal could veto any decision made by the Executive Council. The Executive Councillors could any bring matter considering the interests of Sikkim to the notice of the Chogyal.

Although, the Executive Council had all the powers over transferred subjects, but in actual practice its powers were greatly limited. In fact in most matters the Chogyal made the final decision.

The Sidlon of Sikkim presided over the meeting of the Executive Council, and in his absence it could be presided by such person as may be appointed in this behalf by the Chogyal.¹¹⁴

Term of Office

According to Section 23 of the State Council and Executive Council Proclamation of 1953, all the members of the Executive Council, other than the Sidlon but including the official members, shall retire from office at the commencement of the first session of each new Sikkim Council but shall be eligible for reappointment.

The Executive Councillors who in theory administered the transferred subjects, were in fact greatly circumscribed by the limitations imposed on it by the Darbar. Even Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa of Sikkim National Congress who was appointed Executive Councilor (Agriculture and Transport) was relieved of his office in June 1972.¹¹⁵ Earlier a vote of censure was passed by the Sikkim Council against Kazi Lhendup Dorji for the circulation of his Party Bulletin No. 2 which carried false propaganda against the Chogyal and the Royal family. It was alleged that the foreign tours of the Chogyal were undertaken for personal enjoyment. Kazi was censured since he happened to be the member of the Executive Council,¹¹⁶ and bulletin in question related to his political party. This case is demonstrative of the powers and actual position of the Executive Councillors. The Chogyal sacked an Executive Councillor for an action that was not his, but of the party to which he belonged. It may be argued that the growth of healthy parliamentary conventions under the aegis of a constitutional monarch demands that Executive Councillors should be encouraged to exercise those considerable powers with which they are vested but which are never, in practice used.

According to May 1973 Agreement there shall be an Executive Council consisting of elected members of the Assembly who shall be appointed to the Executive Council by the chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive shall preside over the meetings of the Executive Council.

Advisory Council appointed

A 15-member Advisory Council has been formed with five representatives each from the three political parties. Five are to be nominated by the chogyal.

The members would get on allowance of Rs. 450/- a month. Those who were also members of the Sikkim council and drew their monthly emoluments would not get this allowance.

This shows that the election held early last year had not been nullified and the Sikkim Council as elected existed till April 1974.

The members from the Sikkim National Congress are Kazi Lhendup Dorji, C.S. Roÿ, D.P. Kajalim, Rinzing Lepcha and K.B. Khatiwada.

The Sikkim National Party is represented by Kunzang Dorji Niba Tezing, Bahadur Pepcha, Harka Bahadur Basnet, Thendup Tstring.

The representatives of the Sikkim Janata Congress are K.C. Pradhan, B.B. Gurung, B.P. Dahal, R.C. Powdyal, Dugo Bhutia.

The Advisory Council shall help the Chief Executive in running day to day administration smoothly till the newly proposed Assembly is elected and the Executive Council constituted.

Administrative Organisation

Some attempts to set up administration in Sikkim on modern lines started with the first British Political Officer John Claude White in 1889. He tried to lay down a basic administrative structure and regulated the taxation system.

However, with the appointments of Dewans, who were officers solely in charge the administration of the country since 1949, the modernization of the administrative system made steady progress. The revenue system was further revised, the evils of landlordism were largely controlled, the revenue collecting and magisterial functions of landlords were altogether done away with and several departments to deal with health, education, public works etc. were established. The administrative organisation of the kingdom was put on a scientific basis. The administrative structure of Sikkim however, to-day is headed by the Chogyal.

The Chogyal

The Chogyal exercises complete authority over his administration. Since 1949 some of his executive powers had been delegated to the Dewans (at present designated as Chief Executive). But from June 1, 1972 the Chogyal took complete direct control of the administration of Sikkim.¹¹⁷ However, in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement signed on May 1973, in which the establishment of a fully responsible government in Sikkim with a more democratic constitution, the guarantee of fundamental rights, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and greater legislative and executive powers for the elected representatives of the people have been declared, the Chogyal shall now perform, the functions of his high office in accordance with the constitution of Sikkim as set out in the aforesaid agreement.

The Chief Executive

The Chief aide of the Chogyal is termed as the Chief Executive of Sikkim. The present incumbent is Shri B.S. Das. Earlier the post was designated as Principal Administrative Officer and prior to it as Dewan (1949-63).¹¹⁸ Till 1972, the incumbent was designated as

Sidlon. This was a new designation in Sikkim for the highest Executive post under the Chogyal. During the Chogyal's absence, the Executive Chief functions on his behalf, subject to his actions being later confirmed by the Chogyal. The Chief Executive is the ex-officio President of both the Assembly and the Executive Council. The powers and position of the Chief Executive have been elaborately defined in the agreement of May 8, 1973.

The Chief Executive shall have all the powers necessary for discharge of his functions and responsibilities, and shall exercise his powers in the following manner ;

- (i) With respect to matters allocated to a member of the Executive Council, he shall act in consultation with the member to whom administrative functions in this regard have been allocated.
- (ii) He shall submit all important matters to the Chogyal for his information and his approval of the action proposed to be taken, except where immediate action is required. In the latter case, he shall obtain the Chogyal's approval as soon after the action has been taken as possible.
- (iii) He shall have a special responsibility to ensure the proper implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes in Sikkim, the smooth and efficient running of its administration, the continued enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms by all sections of the population of Sikkim, and the optimum utilisation for the benefit of the people of Sikkim of the funds allocated for the economic and social development of Sikkim.
- (iv) In cases involving amity between the various sections of the population of Sikkim, or the development of democratic government and efficient administration in Sikkim, any difference of opinion between him and the Chogyal shall be referred to the political officer in Sikkim, who shall obtain the advice of the Government of India, which shall be binding.

The powers and position of the Chief Executive as laid down in May 1973 accord, clearly indicates that the Chogyal will only be constitutional head.

Chief Secretary

Administration is run by a secretariat headed by a Chief Secretary. There are several departmental secretaries incharge of finance, panchayats, land revenue, education, public works, law and order departments. They work under the direction and supervision of the Chief Secretary.

Departmental Secretaries

The Chief Secretary is also the head of the district administration. The district administration is run through four District Officers. However, revenue collection in the districts is in charge of officials who are designated as Revenue Officers.

Some of the departments do not have a Secretary. Instead they have a director or an equivalent technical authority. These are the Directors of Education, Health Services, the Chief Engineer, the Commissioner of Police and the Conservator of Forests.

The Chief Secretary as well as the secretaries and Directors come under the supervision and control of the Chief Executive and work under his directions. The Chief Executive works under the direction and orders of the Chogyal. Important reserved subjects like relations with India, ecclesiastical affairs, Home and Police etc. come directly under the purview of the Chogyal and the Chief Executive.

Development Commissioner

A coordinating authority dealing with different departments is the Development Commissioner, who draws up development programmes and assesses progress in relation to planning. He functions in close collaboration with the heads of several departments. At present the incumbent of the office is on deputation from the Government of India.

Financial Adviser

There is Financial Adviser who combines in him the functions of advice and audit in regard to expenditure on development activities. In respect of development projects it is his duty to advise the various departmental heads on the financial propriety of their actions or proposed schemes. In this case also the present incumbent is an officer on deputation from the Government of India.

Chief Accounts Officer

There is a Chief Accounts Officer who is also the Chief Auditor of the State whose responsibility is to draw attention to the misuse of the State funds or the contravention of the rules and regulations governing the propriety of expenditure. The Finance Secretary, however, maintains the accounts of the revenue and expenditure of the State submitted to him through the District Officers.

District Administration

To facilitate local administration, Sikkim is divided into four districts—northern, eastern, southern and western—with their headquarters at Mangan, Gangtok, Namchi and Geyzing respectively.

In each of these, there is a District Officer (who is also the Magistrate, a Deputy Development Officer, an Inspector of Land Revenue etc.

Panchayats

At the village level Panchayats have been established since 1966. The Panchayats are responsible for village administration and the coordination of the development programmes. The maintenance of village roads, water supply and schools are some of their principal functions.

Judiciary

The judiciary is a distinct and independent branch of the administration. A court was established in 1955 under a special charter.¹¹⁹ Besides the judge of the High Court, there are other judicial officers like chief Magistrate Gangtok, four magistrates at each of the district headquarters. Some laws have been codified. In many cases, particularly where heavy sentences for criminal offences are concerned, the final appellate authority is the Chogyal, who if he thinks necessary, may appoint a Tribunal for further examination of the case. Capital punishment was abolished in Sikkim in 1948.

Civil Service

There is yet no regular system of recruitment for higher administrative services of the State. Most of the higher government positions are recommended by the Darbar. In the appointment to government posts, the "parity formula" is kept in sight and an effort is made to balance the representation in administration also between the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepali communities. Though it helps in maintaining communal harmony, sometimes it works against the principles of efficient administration. A number of top posts are held by Indian officials on deputation. But this number is being reduced gradually as and when the number of trained officials are being made available.

Although Sikkim possesses a modern administrative structure, still in several respects it could with realism and enlightenment be considerably improved upon.

Thus politics in Sikkim has reached an interesting phase. None of the political parties appear to have any firm programme or policies. What they are interested in is the transfer of power from the Chogyal to themselves. The only consciousness which infects the politicians is the consciousness of power politics. The political parties have failed to enthuse the people and the new currents hardly flow in the political stream. The younger generation mostly seems to stand aloof and some fraction of it takes shelter, somewhat sulkily, behind slogans

erroneously accusing India of a lack of sympathy or even of 'new imperialism'. The politicians lay the entire blame on New Delhi for the prevailing state of affairs. They maintain that the people of Sikkim have all along desired to sail with India in the boat of democracy "but the brass hats in New Delhi have refused them a 'lift'. They contend that the major political parties, the Sikkim State Congress (now merged in Sikkim Janata Congress) and the Sikkim National Congress, always sought inspiration and guidance from India for progressive democratisation in Sikkim. But at every stage of their battle with the Palace for devolution of power to the masses, the people of Sikkim were betrayed by India¹²⁰. The political power has progressively eluded them owing to Indian Government's policy to make the palace "a stable focus¹²¹".

Communalism plagues Sikkim's politics

Having failed to secure concessions in favour of representative government, the leaders of the Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim State Congress have fared no better in their bid to eliminate the communalism that permeates the kingdom's election system. Communalism enters the election system in two ways. Firstly, there was what is called "Communal parity" between Bhutias and Lepchas on the one hand and the Nepalese on the other in the Sikkim State Council (since replaced by the Assembly) Seven seats were reserved for each group. Even in the Assembly also both the communities have been allotted fifteen elective seats each. Secondly, there is the 'communal electorate arrangement.

Thirdly, the Bhutias-Lepchas enjoy the right of exclusive acquisition of land and residence in northern Sikkim, pay a lower land revenue and enjoy parity in the case of representation to the Assembly recruitment to services and selection for scholar- ships¹²².

All these issues have engendered a sense of clannishness, alienation from each other and a vague sense of persecution. It is felt that the system of communal and caste representation will strain relations between these different ethnic groups in Sikkim and may prove dangerous to the peace and security of the State. There is an absence of national feeling with the people claiming to be Bhutia or Lepcha or Nepali but seldom Sikkimese. Sikkim has much to gain as a homogenous country to which all races and creeds subscribe. Otherwise, since in Sikkim there is a preponderance of Nepalese in the population of the State and it gives the Nepalese leaders a political lever which can easily become communal once it is deployed against Bhutias and Lepchas. How they will use their power, if and when it descends to them, is one of the dangerous imponderables whose consequences will impinge most directly on India. Some of the Nepali politicians do point out that the bogey of the Bhutia-Lepcha rights was being raised in order to maintain the present

undemocratic rule¹²³. But the Chogyal replying to such criticisms has said : "Democracy is a progressive concept and my people are not yet prepared for it. But we have made and are making changes in the right direction."¹²⁴

But the continuance of communal features in the body politic of Sikkim and the presence of the Chinese troops across the frontiers have thrust complications into Sikkim's political life.

However, the agreement reached in Sikkim in the wake of "revolt" in Sikkim in April 1973, is a happy compromise between continuity and change. The main provision in the agreement is that Sikkim will have a new democratic set up with a legislative assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise and the "one man, one vote principle".

Sixth Elections—15 April, 1974

There is again hectic political activity in the kingdom these days following an announcement that the sixth general election and the first under the present constitution to the newly constituted Assembly as agreed upon in May 1973, will be held in April 1974. The Sikkimese political scene is gradually changing. It is hoped that the people of Sikkim shall return a more stable and unified Assembly during the forthcoming election. The election results and its impact on Sikkimese politics have been discussed in the last chapter.

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Sikkim-India Relations (1947-1950)

Introduction

Sikkim virtually squeezed in by the table top shaped Nepal in west, Bhutan and the Chumbi Valley of Tibet in the east, was probably the most secluded and isolated political unit in the world when India became independent in August 1947. But to-day, on account of its most strategic position in the incredibly complex and volatile frontier region between India and China, it occupies a singularly unique position in the chain of Himalayan countries. The principal routes from India to Tibet are through Sikkim. Two great events have broken the metaphysical aura of the Himalayas. These events have shaken this Asia's mountain roof. The first was the death of the British Empire and the emergence of India as an independent power, new and vigorous, influencing the old order along the mountain range. The second was even more cataclysmic, the rise of the communist power in china, proud, virile and secure in all the remote marches of the Himalayas.

On 15 August 1947 India stepped on to a new road of freedom and endeavour, no longer a dependency of the British Crown but as an independent entity in the comity of nations. At midnight on August 14, 1947, when India, in Jawaharlal Nehru's words, kept her tryst with destiny and became an independent nation, an invisible and profound change came over her boundaries. Until that moment they had been the concern of Englishmen strategists and statesmen seeing the interests of the sub-continent in terms of Britain's stake there.² This 'historic and memorable event' profoundly affected the future of the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim also. The British empire was replaced by a renascent India. It was emergent India that declared through the language of J. L. Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India: "We are not hostile to any country and we do not want to meddle in other people's affairs. Every nation should be free to choose the path it considers best."³

Sikkim and the Lapse of British Paramountcy

On the transfer of power and the British declaration of the lapse of paramountcy over the Indian princely states in 1947, some adjustment was needed in the juridical basis of the relations of independent India with Sikkim which was a 'self-governing state in India'.⁴ The Britishers had considered the Himalayan states of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, as an eastward continuation of the protecting belt of buffer states.⁵ This was necessitated because the British Government on 3 June 1947 declared : "His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that the decisions announced above relate only to British India and that their policy towards Indian states contained in the cabinet mission memorandum of 16 May 1946 remains unchanged".⁶ The above mentioned Memorandum of the cabinet mission and the Viceroy dated 16 May, 1946 said :

"Before putting forward our recommendation we turn to deal with the relationship of the Indian states to British India. It is quite clear that with the attainment of independence by British India, whether inside or outside the British Commonwealth, the relationship which has hitherto existed between the Rulers of the states and the British Crown will no longer be possible. Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government".⁷

The British Government had announced that with their departure the States would become independent. However, in reality whatever the past might be, by 1947 there was no real sense in which the princes could still be considered as sovereign. Even in 1935, and certainly in 1947, the only way to keep India a viable unit and thus to preserve the greatest of all British achievements was to insist not only on the paramountcy of paramountcy but also on the fact that this was a paramountcy of the crown in India, not of the Crown in Britain, and that, therefore, it would remain with the Government of India, however, constituted.⁸ Thus technically the edifice which the British had themselves built up laboriously for more than 150 years stood abolished overnight with the achievement of independence for India. However, in practice, the paramountcy of the British Crown over the princely states was replaced by a policy of absorbing them into the main body of India by accession. In January 1946, the Chamber of Princes had also passed unanimously a resolution affirming the desire of the Indian States for the immediate attainment by India of her full stature, and undertaking to make every possible contribution towards the settlement of the Indian constitutional problem.⁹ The former Hill States between Ladakh and Nepal, acceded to India and were merged in the regular provincial administration. However, Sikkim survived this process of complete merger with the Indian Union.

Status of Sikkim during British Rule

Sikkim constituted a part of British India's "sphere of influence". The British had always classed Sikkim as a princely state like many other states of India such as Bashahr, Manipur and Patiala¹⁰ It was a fifteen gun salute state.¹¹ Under the Government of India Act, 1935, Sikkim was allotted one seat in the Council of State of the Federal Assembly.¹² However, owing to its strategic position on the Indo-Tibetan frontier, they had made it the charge of the External Affairs Department of the Government of India. The Britishers had made this arrangement applicable in case of areas like Baluchistan and North-west Frontier Province also.¹³ It may be mentioned here that the hold of the Britishers over Sikkim was so complete that the kingdom was virtually administered directly by the Government of India between 1890 and 1918¹⁴ Consequently Sikkim being more or less as an Indian State under the Government of India Act 1935 was bound by the terms of the British declaration of the lapse of paramountcy over the Indian states.

Sikkim as a Princely State of India

The fact that the position and status of Sikkim till 1947-48 seemed, to be more akin to the Indian princely states is corroborated by several instances in and outside the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly of India. Firstly, Sir B.N. Rau, in a note submitted on January 28, 1947 on the distribution of seats among the Princely states, which was prepared in accordance with the decision of the states committee of the Constituent Assembly, recommended allocation of one seat (on the basis of population) to the States of Sikkim and Cooch-Bihar clubbed together.¹⁵ The basis of representation was one member for every one million of inhabitants. B.N. Rau in his note recommended that "Sikkim is a small frontier state and its population being only 12 million, it would be impossible to give it a representation in the Constituent Assembly. Its nearest neighbour is Cooch-Bihar with a population of 64 million. Both Sikkim and Cooch Bihar have at different times been under the sway of Bhutan and according to one theory the Rajas of Sikkim and Cooch-Bihar are of Tibetan origin. It would not, therefore, appear inappropriate to group Sikkim and Cooch-Bihar together and to allot one seat to the group¹⁶

Secondly, Sikkim appeared at serial no. 98 in a statement prepared by the secretariat of the Chamber of Princes showing 140 states, the rulers of which were members of the Chamber of Princes in their own right¹⁷ This statement was prepared by the secretariat of the Chamber of princes in response to a request by the Secretary to the Constituent Assembly. The copies of this statement were circulated to the members of the states committee of the Constituent Assembly on February 5, 1947.

Thirdly, all the communications addressed by the Constituent Assembly were sent direct to Sikkim, instead of channelling these through the External Affairs Department of the Government of India. This was decided by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, the Chairman of the States Committee of the Constituent Assembly on January 29, 1947.¹⁸ It may be pointed out here that the States Committee was appointed by the Constituent Assembly on December 21, 1946 for negotiating with the States Negotiating Committee set up by the Chamber of Princes.

Fourthly, a letter was issued by the Constituent Assembly of India to all the Princely States including Sikkim on June 7, 1947, to send their representatives to the Constituent Assembly. The letter said :

“I am desired to inform you that the joint Sub-Committee of the two Negotiating Committees have considered the difficulties arising from the fact that in certain cases where representation in the Constituent Assembly has been allotted to a group of States, some states have not yet taken a decision as to whether they would join the Assembly or not. This had held up the selection of the representatives of the group as a whole to the Constituent Assembly.

It is requested that after the 20th of June, final steps may be taken forthwith for the nomination and/or election of representatives by states which by that date have made up their mind to join the Constituent Assembly.”¹⁹

All these instances give ample testimony to the fact that Sikkim before the independence of India had more or less enjoyed the status of a princely state.

It may be pointed out here that historically, during the British rule in India, a unique combination of circumstances centering around the efforts to protect India's north-eastern frontiers and to open Tibet in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, finally led the British to establish a formal “Protectorate” over Sikkim. It was later on recognized by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890.²⁰ But in spite of this Convention, ambiguity with regard to the exact legal status of Sikkim could not be removed. Although, as stated earlier, Britishers treated it more or less as a princely state, but to Sikkimese, Sikkim was never a feudatory native state in the precise meaning of that term as it was understood in the British India. But in practice neither was it independent nor even completely autonomous internally during the British period. It was probably with this background while moving a resolution in the Constituent Assembly of India on January 22, 1947 Jawaharlal Nehru said : “Sikkim is in a sense an Indian state but different from other.”²¹ Obviously, the British were under no great compulsion to clarify the position in the absence of effective challenges to their predominant position through-

out the eastern Himalaya. The British Government in India usually preferred tacit understandings with the border states on the northern rim of the Indian empire. But in spite of lack of clarity, Sikkim's position came nearer to the status of a princely state rather than a separate entity.

Independent India and Sikkim

But for an independent democratic India, a clearer and friendly pattern of relationship had to be devised in the context of the changed environment of the sub-continent consequent to the withdrawal of British power. "To continue a relationship originally established by the imperialistic means was politically not easy for newly emerged free India".²² Thus it was a new responsibility for the Indians to guard the Sikkim vestibule, after the British raj walked off the Himalayan stage in 1947.²³

Sikkim Accorded a special status

India after its independence in 1947 reflected its preference for the minimum degree of intervention in Sikkim and other Himalayan states consistent with India's political and security requirements and its historical precedents of friendly and cordial relationship. Though the British had for long treated it, in practice, as an Indian princely state, the new Government of independent India, in view of Sikkim's strategic position, intended to place it in a special position. There was general recognition on behalf of both the Government of India and the newly established constituent Assembly that Sikkim had a special position vis a vis other princely states. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly, at its meeting on January 22, 1947 adopted a resolution moved by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council and member in Charge of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, which said :

"This Assembly resolves that the Committee constituted by its resolutions of 21st December 1946 (to confer with the Negotiating Committee set up by the Chamber of Princes and with other representatives of Indian States for certain specified purposes) shall in addition have power to confer with such persons as the Committee thinks fit for the purpose of examining the special problems of Bhutan and Sikkim and to report to the Assembly the result of such examination."²⁴

An official delegation led by Maharajkumar (the present Chogyal) Palden Thondup Namgyal with Rai Bahadur T. D. Densapa, Private Secretary to the Maharaja of Sikkim as a member, came to Delhi for discussions with the new Government of India and the chamber of Princes (a body representing the several hundred princely states in India).

Sikkim Darbar, however did not show any inclination to accede to the Indian Union in the style of other princely states of India. Sikkim was not thrilled at the proposal that it might have one representative amongst the several hundred members of a Central Assembly or that in a council of State, it might share a member with another Indian state of which in the present day context it knew nothing and with which it had nothing in common. But it was clear that, the more the state improved its administration and bettered the lot of its subjects, and the more leading personalities of the state lost their shyness of the outer world and of the Government of India, the better would the state be able to adjust itself to changes when they came. Curiously it is Sikkim more than any other state in India, that, since India became independent in 1947, appears to have maintained and even to have enhanced the status which it enjoyed under treaty with the British.²⁵ Consequently, to avoid any controversy and ill-feeling with the Sikkim Darbar over the questions whether Sikkim was a princely state like others and whether the Government of India automatically inherited the paramount rights the British had enjoyed in the border states, "standstill Agreement" between the Sikkim Darbar and the Government of India was concluded and signed on February 27, 1948.²⁶ The agreement with Sikkim stipulated that "all agreements, relations and administrative arrangements as to matters of common concern existing between the Crown and the Sikkim State on August 14, 1947" were deemed to continue between the Dominion of India and the Sikkim Darbar pending the conclusion of a new agreement or treaty. These "matters of Common Concern" specifically included currency coinage, customs, postal channels and regulations, telegraph, communications, external affairs and defence measures.²⁷ The Indian authorities had first submitted "the Instrument of Accession" form which was used for signing by the rulers of the Indian princely states on their merger into the Indian Union. But when Sikkim objected to this format, India agreed to use the terminology of "Standstill Agreement", which had been suggested by the Sikkimese.²⁸ This constituted an implicit recognition by India of Sikkim's special status, as well as providing an early but clear indication that the independent India would not insist upon Sikkim's complete merger with the Indian Union unlike other states. While replying to a question in the constituent Assembly of India, B.V. Keskar, Deputy Minister of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations said: "with regard to Sikkim, in many matters it is controlled by the Government of India but in many matters it stands independently, not exactly as a state within India. It is something between a state in India and an independent state."²⁹ Prime Minister Nehru too during the course of Debate said :

"Sikkim has not acceded. The question in that shape has not arisen. All these matters are pending and under consideration. The present position is that the old relations of Sikkim and Bhutan with the Government of India continue. What exactly the future relation

will be, is a matter for consideration between Sikkim, Bhutan and the Government of India".³⁰

Intense Political Activity in Sikkim and demand for merger with India

However, before exact relationship between the two countries could be chalked out Sikkim witnessed an intense and hectic political activity during the time lag that intervened between the signing of the Standstill Agreement in February, 1948 and the conclusion of the treaty between India and Sikkim in 1950. The advent of popular government in India had encouraged and inspired the aspirations and ambitions of various political groups and parties in Sikkim. As early as December 7, 1947, leaders of different groups had assembled at Gangtok. The leaders assembled at Gangtok, besides establishing a political party known as Sikkim State Congress, adopted a resolution at the meeting and later on a deputation called on the then Maharaja Tashi Namgyal and presented to him a memorandum. The memorandum demanded besides other reforms, the complete merger and accession of the kingdom to India.³¹ Besides the State Congress, some other political leaders and parties also wanted Sikkim to be merged with the Indian Union. While replying to a question in the constituent Assembly of India, B.V. Keskar, Deputy Minister of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations declared that "one of the political parties in Sikkim viz, the Sikkim Rajya Praja Sammelan has sent a copy of a Resolution passed in January 1949, suggesting the merger of Sikkim with India and its Government as a Centrally Administered Area."³²

Sikkim National Party opposes merger with India

However, to counteract such moves the Sikkim National Party in its declarations issued on April 30, 1948 opposed the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union. The declaration said :

"Resolved that Sikkim shall not under any circumstances accede to the Dominion of India. The arguments levelled against the question of accession have been found numerous of which weighty one's are : (a) Historically, socially, culturally and linguistically, Sikkim has closer affinities with Bhutan and Tibet. (b) from the 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 is to maintain intact by all means the indigenous character of sikkim and to preserve its integrity. The party 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 because it would be a denial to Sikkim of her right to stick to her natural affinities".³³

The party, quoting Sir Charles Bell to support its claims, 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."³⁴ Hence, the programme of this party on the merger issue was the very anti-thesis of the policy of the Sikkim State Congress.

However, all through this political campaign for and against the merger of the state to the Indian Union, the Government of India kept, itself away from the squabblings of the local politics. The Government of India in fact blocked the prospects of Sikkim acceding to India.³⁵ It may be pointed out here that Sikkim State Congress which pointedly pleaded for the accession of the kingdom to India, had the backing of a preponderant majority of the masses of the State. Sikkim State Congress had even sought affiliation with the All India State People's Conference and had paid the affiliation fee also, but before the State Congress could form a unit of the Conference, the latter was merged with the Indian National Congress³⁶

Even the state congress tried to merge with the Indian National Congress also but without any success. The State Congress had chosen even the tri-colour as its party flag and the leaders used to don Khadi. In their party offices, the pictures of the Indian leaders were hung.³⁷

No satisfactory explanation can be made available to-day as to why the leadership in the initial stages had so pointedly pleaded for the accession of the kingdom with India. It is possible that events in India brought hope amongst the preponderant majority of the Sikkimese for a possible end to the exploitation and end of the tyranny of feudalism if Sikkim was merged into the Union of India. Sikkim was then a very backward state and the "winds of change" in the sub-continent could not have left the people untouched in the tiny kingdom. Under these circumstances, India could have demanded and obtained the accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union if it had been so inclined. Furthermore, this could have been accomplished with some degree of popular support in Sikkim, because the largest and the most representative party at the time, the Sikkim State Congress, had made accession to India a plank in its programme put forward before the people of Sikkim. This step could have been further strengthened by sikkim's historical status on the eve of the British withdrawal from India. But the Government of India did not act in haste and continued with the status quo respecting the then existing position and status of Sikkim.

Political turmoil and unrest in Sikkim

Besides, during this period the whole kingdom was in turmoil and was brewing with political unrest.³⁸ There was almost total lack

of cohesion in the internal administration of Sikkim. The demand for the establishment of a popular ministry and the introduction of political and social reforms had gathered momentum. To contain and control such forces an experiment to associate popular elements with the administration was made by the then Maharaja by appointing three State Congress leaders as "Secretaries to His Highness, the Maharaja of Sikkim."³⁶ But this effort of the Sikkim Darbar to soothe the discontent and the agitation proved to be of no avail. In February 1949 after the annual session of the State Congress at Rangpo, a number of its leaders were arrested.⁴⁰ The leaders, however, were released unconditionally on February 12, 1949. Thereafter, prolonged negotiations took place between the Darbar and the State Congress. The talks failed to achieve any solution to the political problems facing the country.

On the historic day of May 1, 1949 a crowd estimated to be about five to six thousand led by the State Congress had besieged the Palace for getting an assurance about reforms and the formation of a popular ministry. The atmosphere at Gangtok was surcharged with great commotion and crescendo.⁴¹ The Indian Political Officer stationed at Gangtok was implored to intervene so as to avert more serious trouble and conflict between the state congress and the Maharaja and to help restore order and normal life in the country. An ugly situation was averted by scrupulous handling of the situation. A detachment of the Indian Army posted in Gangtok intervened and rescued the ruler to its protection in the Indian Residency. Due to these developments the Maharaja of Sikkim acceded to the popular demand for the formation of an interim Government with Sikkim State Congress represented on it.⁴² Accordingly, the first ever popular ministry with Tashi Tschering as the Chief Minister was sworn in on May 9, 1949.⁴³

Even this experiment failed to contain the political unrest and tension in the kingdom. Difficulties arose over the functioning of the ministry. In absence of any specific delineation and demarcation of the powers of the Maharaja and the Ministry, each side started blaming each other. With such chaotic conditions, the whole administration seemed to be heading towards a total collapse. The Maharaja of Sikkim wrote to the Political Officer expressing his inability to carry on the administration without the assistance of the Government of India. He requested the Political Officer to take over the administration.⁴⁴ The Political Officer had already reported to the Government of India that the State was threatened with disorder which neither the Maharaja nor the ministry would be able to control.⁴⁵ Balakishna V. Keskar visited Gangtok towards the end of May 1949 and reported to the Government of India that there was tension between the ministry and the Maharajkumar and there was likelihood of bloodshed. He recommended that since a breakdown in the administration was likely, the Government of India should

appoint a Dewan to take over the administration until the situation became normal.⁴⁶ The Government of India accepted the Deputy Minister's recommendations. A company of troops was sent to Gangtok on June 2, 1949. As reported earlier, on 6th June, the Maharaja had already sent a letter requesting the Political Officer to take over the administration pending the appointment of a Dewan to whom the Maharaja would delegate all powers necessary for carrying on the administration until normal conditions were restored.⁴⁷ The same day the Political Officer sent for the ministers and informed them that the Government of India are assuming responsibility for the administration of Sikkim in the interests of law and order.⁴⁸ Thus the administration of 'twenty-nine days ministry' had ended. The first Dewan, J.S. Lall, took office in August 1949.⁴⁹

This unsettled political climate provided good ground to the Government of India to have got Sikkim merged and acceded to the Indian Union. In spite of historical precedents from the British period and unstable internal political conditions, the Government of India was prepared to grant utmost autonomy to Sikkim in exchange for recognition of her "special interests."

The concept of Relationship between India and Sikkim

The Government of India, consequently started negotiations regarding the status of Sikkim and her future relationship with India with Sikkim Darbar in 1949.⁵⁰ The Government of India, during the course of negotiations had held consultations with the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim and the representatives of the various political parties in Sikkim. In fact they were invited for discussions at new Delhi in March 1950. The discussions covered the entire field of future relations between Sikkim and India and necessary administrative arrangements within the State including the association of popular representatives in the Government of the State. Provisional agreement was reached as regards the future relationship of Sikkim with India between the representatives of the two countries.⁵¹

Sikkim to be the Protectorate of India

During the course of discussions, it was agreed that as regards the status of Sikkim, it will continue to be a Protectorate of India. The Government of India will continue to be responsible for its external relations, defence and communications. As regards internal Government, the State would continue to enjoy autonomy subject to the ultimate responsibility of the Government of India for the maintenance of good administration and law and order.⁵²

The Maharajkumar of Sikkim who was authorised by the Maharaja to participate in the discussions on his behalf took to Gang-

tok the terms agreed upon. It was said that a formal treaty would be signed between the Maharaja of Sikkim and the Government of India at an early date.⁵⁰

Thus it would appear that the new concept of relationship between India and Sikkim was decided as a result of mutual deliberations and discussions between the two countries. The provisional agreement which became the nucleus of the treaty signed between India and Sikkim on December 5, 1950 had the concurrence of the major political forces and varied shades of public opinion in the State at that time. This democratic process of mutual consultation and negotiations was resorted to by New Delhi to avoid any possibility of future strains and tensions in the concept of relationship between the two states. In fact it was a broad based agreement. Besides, to create an atmosphere of goodwill and harmony, sufficient time was allowed to lapse between the conclusion of provisional agreement in March, 1950 and the signing of the treaty between the two countries in December 1950, for the crystallisation of public opinion and mature thinking on the subject. It was imperative that a treaty which was being concluded with a comparatively smaller neighbour, should not smack of dictation under duress. India did not want to take the benefit of the unstable political climate of the kingdom or to completely integrate Sikkim with the Indian Union.

Treaty Negotiations and the impact of the emergence of China

During the period 1949-50 when India and Sikkim were negotiating a new concept of relationship between the two states, China had emerged as a unified, centralized and militant regime under the control of Communists in October, 1949. Notwithstanding the physical features of India's Northern frontier, Sikkim had assumed a great importance after coming into power of the Communists in China and their subsequent occupation of Tibet.⁵¹ This event changed the very basis of the direction of the politics of the Himalayan States. Three principal reasons can be given for the same :

(a) The frontier is now shared with a powerful and resurgent neighbour, bigger than India in size and population, and feverishly engaged in industrialization and building up a large army.

(b) The frontier is not altogether impenetrable.

(c) The habitation on both sides of the frontier of a population with cultural and social connection on either side.

All these are important considerations in any assessment of the importance of the north-eastern frontier of India. It is for this reason that probably made India to preserve a very special relationship with Sikkim.⁵⁵ Besides, Mao Tse-tung himself had proclaimed on January 1,

1950 the intention of China to "liberate" Tibet.⁵⁶ The Chinese had declared : "Tibet is an integral part of the Chinese territory and the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese people's Liberation Army must enter Tibet, liberate the Tibetan people and defend the frontiers of China."⁵⁷ Hence, the emergence of China and its aggressive designs against Tibet forced Sikkim to readjust its relationship with India. With the emergence of China as an interested participant in the inter-Himalayan politics, an isolationist policy was no longer considered feasible by the Sikkim Darbar. Simultaneously, New Delhi also moved to buttress the Himalayan State of Sikkim to bring it under Indian guardianship.⁵⁸ By the time the treaty was signed between the two countries, China had actually marched its forces into Tibet for its eventual seizure and absorption.

Separate Status of Sikkim

It may be fruitful to analyse here several important considerations that would appear to have influenced the Indian decision to give a separate status of Sikkim, despite ostensibly favourable circumstances in which the Government of India could have intervened directly in support of avowedly "pro-Indian" forces in Sikkim represented by Sikkim State Congress and other interests.

1. India being the harbinger of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism could not have pursued these expansionist policies for herself particularly in relation to her small neighbours like Sikkim.
2. Had Government of India conceded to the desires of Sikkim State Congress, there would have been probably a strong opposition from the Sikkim Darbar and the Lepcha-Bhutia Community in Sikkim. This could have led to political instability in the state. The stand of the Sikkim National Party, which seemed to represent the Bhutia-Lepcha interests, was explicit and clear on this subject of relationship with India. It stood for the maintenance of separate entity for Sikkim. India, consequently, preferred to avoid drastic changes in the status of Sikkim to avoid political instability. Unstable Sikkim could have posed a threat to India's security on account of China's presence in Tibet and her ambitions in the Himalayan region.
3. The possible support for the merger of Sikkim with India, by the Government of India could have led to adverse reaction in other Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan. Both these states would have interpreted Sikkim's association to India as a prelude to their own possible involuntary merger with India. This action would have been interpreted in Nepal as positive evidence of India's determination to assert its authority throughout the entire sub-Himalayan region. Their possible suspicion of India confirmed

and strengthened could have probably sent Kathmandu and similarly Thimpu to seek closer ties with China, a contingency that apart from harming these countries themselves, India would always prefer to avert in view of the latent Chinese threat to India's security. This can be easily corroborated by the fact that politically conscious elites in Nepal were even alarmed as to the possible future intentions of India toward their own country when the Indian Government entered into a new treaty relationship with Sikkim in December 1950⁵⁹. Intensely nationalistic Nepali political leadership hastily, though incorrectly, noted in Kathmandu that these were the same terms upon which the princely states had earlier been integrated into the Indian Union.⁶⁰

4. Unconsciously Nehru's inheritance of the British psychology of buffer zones to secure India's northern frontiers, helped Sikkim in achieving a separate special status.

Thus, the Government of India preferred a special status for Sikkim in view of its strategic location.

Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 and the Protectorate status of Sikkim.

As already mentioned, a provisional agreement was reached in March 1950 regarding the future relationship of Sikkim with India and it was agreed that Sikkim will continue to be a protectorate of India. However, to follow it up, a formal treaty between India and Sikkim was signed at the Palace monastery at Gangtok by the Indian Political Officer Harishwar Dayal and the Maharaja of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal on 5 December, 1950.⁶¹

It marked the beginning of a new chapter in Indo-Sikkim relations. It contained thirteen Articles.⁶² All previous treaties between the British Government and Sikkim which were in force as between India and Sikkim at the conclusion of this treaty were cancelled. It was decided that Sikkim shall continue to be a protectorate of India and, subject to the provisions of this treaty, shall enjoy autonomy in regard to its internal affairs. India resumed responsibility for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim and was granted the right to take such measures as it considered necessary to achieve this end or security of India, including the stationing of Indian Armed forces anywhere within Sikkim. Besides, it was stipulated that the Government of Sikkim shall not import any arms, ammunition military stores or other warlike material of any description for any purpose whatsoever without the previous consent of the Government of India. It was laid down that the Government of India shall have the exclusive right of constructing, maintaining and regulating the use of railways, aerodromes and landing grounds and air navigation facilities, posts, telegraphs, telephones and wireless installa-

tions in Sikkim ; and the Government of Sikkim shall render the Government of India every assistance in their construction, maintenance and protection. The Government of India shall have the right to construct and maintain in Sikkim roads for strategic purposes and for the purpose of improving communications with India and other adjoining countries. Another provision stipulated, that the external relations of Sikkim, whether political, economic or financial, shall be conducted and regulated solely by the Government of India ; and the Government of Sikkim shall have no dealings with any foreign power. Subjects of Sikkim travelling to foreign countries shall be treated as Indian protected persons for the purpose of passports, and shall receive from Indian representatives abroad the same protection and facilities as Indian nationals.

In the economic sphere, Indo-Sikkim ties are no less intimate. The Government of India agreed not to levy any import duty, transit duty or other impost on goods brought into, or in transit through, Sikkim and the Government of India agreed not to levy any import or other duty on goods of Sikkimese origin brought into India from Sikkim. The subjects of Sikkim and Indian nationals have been given the right of entry into, and free movement in India and Sikkim respectively. Subject to such regulations as the Government of Sikkim may prescribe in consultation with the Government of India the Indian nationals and subjects of Sikkim have been given the right to carry on trade and commerce, acquire, hold and dispose of any property in Sikkim and India respectively. The Government of India agreed to pay the Government of Sikkim, a sum of Rupees three lakhs every year so long as the terms of this treaty are duly observed by the Government of Sikkim. It was said that if any dispute arose in the interpretation of the provisions of this treaty which cannot be resolved by mutual consultation, the dispute shall be referred to the Chief Justice of India whose decision thereon shall be final. Thus the treaty marked the end of uncertainty and doubts about the status and position of Sikkim and its relations with India. According to some observers the status accorded to Sikkim vis-a-vis India by the 1950 treaty was no departure from the status of Sikkim vis-a-vis the pre-1947 British Government in India.⁶³ However, by making Sikkim its protectorate, India secured for itself rights compatible with Sikkim's internal autonomy.⁶⁴

The Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 constituted a big landmark in the history of relations between India and Sikkim. The treaty signalled a close and fraternal relationship between the two people. It was hailed both in India and Sikkim as binding Sikkim and India into an eternal and everlasting friendship and mutual cooperation". In India the treaty was hailed as a big step in strengthening the frontier defence of India. The treaty reflected clearly India's heightened concern with her frontier security. The Hindustan Times dated December 7, 1950 commented :

“This treaty will be hailed as a big step in strengthening frontier defences. Now that the Himalayas are no longer insuperable barriers as of old, it is a matter of vital import to ensure adequate safeguards along the frontiers.”³⁴

For Sikkim, the treaty confirmed the irrelevance of the idea of an “isolationist policy” which could no longer be considered feasible, on account of the deep inroads Indian nationalist and democratic ideals had made into the value systems Sikkimese elite and the reemergence of China as an expansionist and revolutionary power interested in the participation of inter-Himalayan politics. Although Sikkim has come under the protection of India, its distinct personality, traditions, customs and beliefs have in no way been jeopardised by the treaty.⁶⁰

Having aligned itself with India, the treaty ensured Sikkim's emergence into modern world through Indian aid and assistance. Virtually the entire development budget is met by India through direct grants-in aid, loans or subsidies. Since the conclusion of treaty in 1950, substantial aid has been given and the Indian tap of cooperation remains open all the time.

Hence the treaty gave shape and substance to the broad understanding and friendship that has been existing between India and Sikkim for the last many decades. Therefore, it was hailed as happy document.

In his first ever interview given to the Press correspondents then touring with the Prime Minister of India, during Nehru's visit to Sikkim in 1952, the Maharaja of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal said :

“Sikkim had confidence and trust in India and that mutual confidence between the two countries would give no cause for regret for the close relationship brought about by the 1950 Treaty”.⁶⁷

But the major political party of the kingdom, Sikkim state congress, was greatly disappointed with the Treaty since it wanted Sikkim to be merged with India. Thus the Indo-Sikkim Treaty disappointed both the pro-Tibetans, who wanted Sikkim to become independent with complete sovereign status as well as pro-Indians, who wanted Sikkim's full accession to India in the interests of her democratic development.”⁶⁸ The former were unhappy over its status as Protectorate⁶⁹ the leaders of Sikkim State Congress were indeed unhappy that India had favoured the ruler as against the democratic aspirations of the people. They contended that monarchy had saved itself due to the strength adduced to it by India and the Indian Army. In preserving the status-quo, India appeased the pro-Tibetan minority in power in Sikkim at the cost of alienating the vast majority of population. Even In 1954, the State Congress had sent a deputation to

wait on Nehru demanding their representation on "a Parliament which controls their external affairs, defence and communications," but without any success.⁷⁰

However, the critics say that "Articles 3, 4, 5, 6 and 12 of the Treaty seem to render Sikkim a sui generis dependency of India... In making Sikkim one of her dependencies, India has secured to herself the maximum of rights which are compatible with its autonomy and occupies the old strategic position gained more than sixty years ago by British India, enabling her to guard all the Himalayan passes in the region of Kalimpong and Gangtok, north east of Darjeeling".⁷¹ Neville Maxwell contends that in the case of Sikkim, India in 1949 seized the opportunity of a local uprising against the ruler to send in troops, and bring the state into closer dependence as a protectorate than it had formally been under the British.⁷² It was also contended that a "Protectorate" is more consonant with the nineteenth century concepts of international relations than the contemporary world. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty, therefore, according to critics was in no way different from the treaties concluded between the British and the Indian rulers. Thus "the treaty of 1950 has robbed Sikkim of all external sovereignty and to uphold the sanctity of the internal sovereignty, is mere window-dressing. Both external and internal sovereignty are complementary to one another; one cannot be separated from the other."⁷³ The critic further says: "therefore, to hail the Indo-Sikkim treaty as one of equality and mutual benefit is merely to clothe the true nature of the treaty, which so intimately binds Sikkim hand and foot to India, is a subsidiary treaty, designed to degrade Sikkim into a subordinate state and ultimately to galvanize her into the Indian Union in a true imperialistic manner".⁷⁴

But most of these criticisms are exaggerated and seem to have emanated after two decades of development by Indian help, guidance and assistance to the kingdom of Sikkim which has brought it into the forefront of the Himalayan belt of states. Sikkim, unlike Bhutan (which is an independent kingdom) is a protectorate of India under the terms of the 1950 treaty. But its essential status is much higher than that of a protectorate. India has scrupulously refrained from interfering in its internal affairs and all this is of course subject to India's responsibility for the maintenance of law and order in the State.⁷⁵ Sikkim is in all respects an autonomous state and it is only by this treaty that its external relations, defence and communications are in the hands of India. India and Sikkim have a community of interests and obligations in a most sensitive area of the sub-continent. Its geographical position, like Bhutan's, makes it necessary that the closest possible cooperation should continue to exist between New Delhi and Gangtok. Wise leadership and restraint on both sides has helped to ease any possible inevitable frictions.⁷⁶ The treaty of 1950, thus, safeguards the national interests of both the countries.

And the national interests of both Sikkim and India demand continuance of friendly relations between the two countries. It is a harsh reality that Sikkim cannot maintain its separate identity without Indian economic and defence assistance ; and it is also equally essential that India cannot allow Sikkim to go under the Chinese without jeopardising the security of West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The chogyal's prerogatives in the internal administration have been not only not touched but allowed to take clear and articulate expression.⁷⁷

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Sikkim-India Relations (1951-1974)

Introduction.

The Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 heralded a new era of close and fraternal relationship between the two countries and opened a new chapter of collaboration in material and cultural spheres. J.S. Lall who was lent by the Indian Government to Sikkim as Dewan of the State made substantial improvements in all spheres of governmental activities.¹ John Lall was a talented officer of unusual executive ability.² One of his earliest acts was to abolish the system of lessees, who corresponded to the zamindars of India. Though the landlords were left undisturbed on the holdings they cultivated themselves, they were deprived of tax collecting and administrative privileges. They were also forced to relinquish the long standing custom of begar.³ John Lall's drive, brilliance and executive ability helped in the reorganisation of the administrative structure of the kingdom. The peasants were given receipts for their payments and were assured that they could be evicted from the land only by due process of law. The controversial house tax was abolished. Reasonable regulations were introduced for the payment of debts.⁴ These measures helped in relieving the tension between the Maharaja and the people to a great extent. It was also during his tenure of office that steps were taken to associate the people of the State in the affairs of the kingdom by establishing Sikkim State Council. The Panchayats were established and arrangements were made for the election of the Sikkim State Council.

Nehru's Visit to Sikkim 1952.

To strengthen and cement the bond of new relationship established between the two countries by the treaty signed in 1950, Prime Minister Nehru visited Sikkim in April 1952.⁵ This event

was historic since it was the first visit paid by the Indian Prime Minister since India achieved her independence in 1947. Indira Gandhi, (the present Prime Minister of India) accompanied him. This visit not only served to underline the close and friendly interest which India had been taking in the progress of this tiny border state but demonstrated the importance that free India attached to this strategically located border state. During this visit, the Prime Minister visited the snow-bound Gangtok-Nathu La Road, the then main trade route across 15,512 feet high Himalayan pass on the Sikkim-Tibet border.⁶ Addressing a public gathering at Gangtok, Nehru asked the people of Sikkim to develop a wider conception of nationalism which would bind them together in peace and unity. He called upon the different communities living in the State, namely Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepalese, to forget their religious and caste distinctions in the larger interest of the State. Emphasizing the strategic position of Sikkim from the defence point of view, Nehru said that Sikkim should not rely so much on the Himalayas as her natural weapon. "You must build up your united strength for the permanent safety of your country."⁷

The need for Economic Development.

During the course of Nehru's visit to this secluded kingdom, Indian leadership felt that economic growth was vital as Sikkim entered the modern world. Ever since 1950, when the treaty was signed between the two countries, the small Himalayan kingdom has been gradually emerging from its age old isolation.⁸

A reasonable measure of economic growth is basic for the political viability of the kingdom. With this end in view, it was in 1952 that the two architects of modern Sikkim, the then Chogyal of Sikkim, the late Sir Tashi Namgyal and the Indian Prime Minister, late Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru met at Gangtok to lay the foundations for the planned development of the State. A number of experts of the Indian Planning Commission visited Sikkim during the years 1953-54 to help the State authorities in preparing development plans and survey its forest resources and health conditions.⁹ Through their deliberations and the assistance of Sikkim Darbar, the first seven year Development Plan for the period 1954-61 was drafted. The Government of India accepted the Plan and undertook to assist Sikkim with funds for the implementation of the plan.¹⁰

The formulation of the seven year development plan for the comprehensive economic development of the country will go down in the history of Sikkim as a momentous year. It was the first time in the history of this tiny Himalayan kingdom and its people that a concerted planning effort for the general advancement of the people was made, signifying Sikkim's aspirations for its economic progress and advancement. Besides, this economic growth was vital as Sikkim struggled to resist the pressure of Chinese communism.

On March 15, 1955, the Chogyal of Sikkim, late Sir Tashi Namgyal introduced the Sikkim development plan to his people with these words:

“It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Sikkim Development Plan to my people. The Government of India had kindly agreed, after the Prime Minister of India’s visit to Sikkim in 1952, to assist Sikkim with funds for the implementation of her Development schemes. My Government had, accordingly, prepared a plan for the development of Sikkim, involving an expenditure of 2¼ crores rupees during the seven years period 1954-61, and the Government of India have intimated their agreement to make financial grants to cover its entire expenditure.

“It is right that the people of Sikkim, in whose interest the plan has been framed, should be apprised of the projects proposed to be undertaken by the various departments. It is in this view that the features of the plan have been summarised, so that the public may be fully and closely associated with the implementation of each project. A Development Committee has also been constituted to assist the Darbar in formulating ways and means whereby the project envisaged may be specially and most effectively implemented.

“I would now earnestly call upon my people to set themselves, with purpose and determination, to the fulfilment of this great adventure. I am confident that, with the implementation of the plan, we shall have advanced far towards achieving the welfare and happiness of the people. Its effective implementation will depend, primarily, on the support and cooperation of every single person in Sikkim. This support and cooperation will, I know be forthcoming, unstintingly from all my people.”¹¹

Although the plan was originally timed to take effect from 1954, actual implementation commenced from 1955, as the first year was spent mainly in preparation and recruitment of personnel.¹² Indeed it was a great adventure and the success that has come has been due primarily to the active cooperation of the people and the dedicated work of the Government Departments that were entrusted with the task of carrying out projects and programmes under the Plan. The main points of the plan were :

(a) *The improvement of road communications.* The opening up of northern and eastern Sikkim by extending the national highway to Lachen and Lachung in the north and to Nathu La in the east ; a second traffic artery to the east from Ranipal to Pakyong, Rhenock, and finally linking with Rangpo. These thoroughfares were to be the responsibility initially of the Indian Central Public Works Department and later of the Indian Border Roads organisation to be linked by a roadway running from Singtam through Namchi and Naya Bazar and circling back to Singtam via Geyzing and Rabang La.

(b) *The provision of additional educational facilities.* More schools of both primary and secondary grades to be established throughout the country.

(c) *The reorganization and expansion of health services.* More hospitals, clinics, dispensaries to be built up in various parts of the country.

(d) *The completion of basic geological and forest surveys.* Fundamental data on Sikkim's mineral timber and other resources was essential in determining the feasibility of setting up specific industries in the country.

(e) *The fostering of cottage and small-scale industries.* This would revive Sikkim's traditional and exquisite arts and crafts, blanket weaving, wood carving, handworked articles in silver and other metals in typical designs.

(f) *The improving of Sikkim's agriculture and horticulture.* The expansion of irrigation facilities ; setting up seed farms.

(g) *The building of hydro-electric projects.* Essential for the power requirements of new industries and for modern amenities in towns and villages.

Undertaking a programme on such a vast scale naturally presented its own problems—the main being the availability of financial resources and acute shortage of trained manpower. The Government of India undertook to provide the necessary financial and technical assistance in full for the implementation of the first plan.¹³ A total sum of 32·369 million rupees was spent during the period 1954-61.¹⁴ This did not include amounts spent directly by the Government of India for the extension of the national highway to northern and eastern Sikkim, as these projects were carried out by the Indian Border Roads Organisation and charged to the Indian exchequer.

A second five-year Plan was then drafted and approved for the period covering 1961-66. It sought a further all round improvement in living standards of the people, give impetus to agricultural production, an expansion of cottage and small scale industries and a general increase in employment for young men and women of the State. In fact many of the projects of the Second plan carried forward work which had been started during the first seven-year plan period. An amount of 63·637 million rupees was spent during this period. It was fully financed by the grants given by the Government of India.¹⁵

A third five-year Plan was drawn up and implemented during 1966-1971. Within the guidelines earlier established, special emphasis was placed on the following :

- (a) A further intensification of agricultural programmes towards attaining higher outputs both of food and cash crops.
- (b) Industrialization based on locally available raw material (agricultural, mineral and timber) resources and the utilization of specialised skills.
- (c) The expansion of transport and power facilities, already considerably developed.

This did not mean that other aspects of development were to be ignored. Social Services and Education, for example were to receive the same close attention as in the past plan periods.

The third plan entailed a cost of 105.04 million rupees. The figures included a special provision of Rs. 210 lakhs for loans for industrial development, both major and small scale. Among the revenue earning schemes included in the plan were a tea garden of 1500 acres (to be established over a period of five to ten years) and further expansion of Sikkim Nationalised Transport.

The figures of outlay given in all these plans do not include the expenditure incurred on Defence, Geological Survey, Construction and maintenance of border roads, posts and telegraphs and resettlement of Tibetan refugees in Sikkim, education and scholarships awarded to Sikkimese students for higher studies in India.

In October 1968, floods and landslides ravaged the country causing unprecedented damage to roads, bridges, buildings and hydel installations. The energies of the Government of Sikkim had to be regeared to pressing problems of relief, rehabilitation and restoration of normal life. This led to a marked set back to the progress of the third five year plan. To meet the urgent problems of restoration, the Government of India set aside a further sum of 10 million rupees as aid¹⁶, in order to establish a firm base from which the processes of planned development could once again commence. Commenting in an editorial under the caption "Attitude towards Gratitude," the 'Sikkim Fortnightly' said: "Sikkimese are most grateful to the Government of India and her people for sincere sacrifice to help Sikkim develop into a prosperous country".¹⁷ The Government of India further agreed to release 3.7 million rupees on the revised third plan outlay and extra .25 million rupees for restoration of damages done during 1968 flood and landslide havoc.

The kingdom has commenced the much larger and ambitious fourth five year plan also (1971-76) and India has committed to give to her Rs. 18.5 crores in aid. Hence the idea of planned development to stimulate Sikkim's economy, which was the outcome of Indian Prime Minister Nehru's first visit to Gangtok in April 1952, has completely transformed the Sikkimese landscape.

The implementation of these plans has been wholly undertaken by the Government of Sikkim with the active aid, assistance and steadfast guidance of the Government of India. The success of the plans can be ascribed to the far sighted administrative ability of the Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal, who from the first seven year plan until the present day, has been guiding the processes of planned development with wisdom and sagacity. The role of civil servants in working devotedly for the betterment of the state and its people cannot be overlooked when appraising the results of eighteen years of planned development of Sikkim. A number of experts and technical personnel have been provided by the Government of India in fields where local talent and know how has not been available. Their selfless contribution to the social and economic betterment of the kingdom, often unsung and sometimes misunderstood, cannot remain unacknowledged.

A bird's eye view of the highlights of progress achieved in partnership with India in different sectors of Sikkim's life and economy is detailed below.

Agriculture.

Nearly ninety five percent of the people in Sikkim depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood¹⁹. In Sikkim agriculture has been influenced by the nature of the terrain and a diversity of climate caused by a wide variation in elevation and rainfall. The important cereal crops are maize and rice. Cardamom, potato, oranges, vegetables, apples and pine-apples are the major cash crops.

With the object of developing agriculture on scientific lines, one of the first tasks undertaken by the Government was the organization of a Department of Agriculture which did not exist before the commencement of the first plan. A department was set up which placed under trial improved varieties of crops and arranged for supply of quality seeds from India. The use of fertilizers to increase crop yields and adoption of plant protection measures to save the crops were taken up. Fertilizers and insecticide dusts were distributed at subsidized costs. Extension services were organized to impart information as well as supply of material for proper application of fertilizers and pesticides to the people who needed them. Demonstration centres were established at Tadung (vegetables, maize and paddy), and Lachen (vegetables, potatoes and apples), a nursery adjacent to Gangtok for sub-tropical fruits and an apple orchard at Lachung²⁰. With the object of utilizing the surplus fruit as well as to provide the growers with an additional market, the Government established a fruit preservation factory at Singtam. The factory, equipped with modern machinery for preservation and canning of all fruits and vegetables also become a revenue earning source for the State.

Training of the personnel for the agriculture department was given a high priority so that ultimately all agriculture services would be manned by local people and a nucleus of trained hands would be available as soon as possible to undertake the various schemes under the agricultural development programme. Hence several Government officials were deputed for training to various training centres in India²¹.

During the second plan period a 200 acre seed multiplication farm (paddy, maize and vegetables) was set up at Gyalsing. A 150 acre potato seed farm at Rildi in west Sikkim was also established.

Emphasis in the third five year plan was given to farmer oriented schemes²². An extensive plant protection campaign was taken against insects and pests in cardamom, paddy and maize fields and in orange orchards. Several varieties of wartresistant potato seeds were sown at the HillyRibdi potato farm and the production of quality seeds at the Gyalsing seed multiplication farms was doubled in 1969-70. It is the intention of the Durbar to make Sikkim self-sufficient in food within a reasonably short period of time.

Animal Husbandry.

Livestock occupies an important place in the economic life of Sikkim. With the launching of the first plan, a department was set up to deal with animal husbandry and a number of livestock and dairy farms were established. Other services organized were the setting up of sheep (Dentam and Lachen), poultry (Tadung and Gyalsing) and piggery farms (Gyalsing). To offset the prevailing shortage of raw wool in Sikkim, a new sheep breeding centre has been opened at Zemu in the Lachen area²⁴. The flock of sheep at Dentam has also been increased²⁵.

The department is now formulating schemes to progressively improve cattle strains and also to meet the increasing demand for meat and diary products, poultry and eggs. Rhode-island-Reds, white Leg-Horn and the white-cornish varieties of poultry were imported from the Veterinary Institute, Izatnagar (India)²⁶.

Veterinary Health Services have been made available at the four Veterinary Hospitals and four Veterinary Dispensaries.

Local candidates were sent for training to various institutions in India for training and studies.

Forests.

Out of a total surface area of 2,818 square miles, forests in Sikkim occupy 748 square miles which represents nearly 30 percent of the total area. Being rich in natural forest wealth, the object of the Darbar under the plans has been to exploit these potentialities as a means to increasing its revenue and also to take up such

measures as would ensure sustained yield in perpetuity in future. In order to meet the needs, arising out of the Government's desire to exploit forest wealth as source of income, the forest department was reorganized during the plan period. Landslides are of common occurrence and, therefore, it was found necessary to stabilise these patches permanently through afforestation so that these natural mishaps did not damage highways and bridges. Soil conservation and afforestation, planting of ornamental trees and those of economic value along all the principal roads and highways and the development of timber industry, are highlights of achievements under this head. A saw mill at Rangpo was established during the first plan²⁷.

The forest department also undertook experimental schemes regarding the propagation of fisheries in Sikkim. For this purpose a fishery officer came to Sikkim in 1956 on deputation from the Government of India. On his recommendation three tanks were constructed at Gangtok, Rinchenpong and Lachung for rearing fish Mirror carp²⁸. 500 fingerling of Mirror carp were imported from Himachal Pradesh.

In Sikkim there is a great potentiality of medicinal herbs which can be a good source of revenue for the Government. Ipecac, Rauvolfia-serpentina, Lycopodium medicinal herbs were grown and scattered.

Like other services, it has been the policy of the Darbar that forest Department should be manned by the local people. For this several candidates have been trained in the Indian Forest College, Dehra Dun²⁹. The present Chief Conservator of Forests is a Sikkimese who was trained at Dehra Dun.

INDUSTRIES

Cottage Industries.

Sikkim has been a repository of cottage industries like cotton and wool weaving, carpets making, bamboo work etc. since a very long time. Realising the importance of cottage industries as a means of stabilising the economy of the rural population, the Government of Sikkim laid adequate emphasis on their development during the plan period. Consequently the Palden Thondup Cottage Industries Institute was set up in 1957.³⁰ It has trained more than 300 boys and girls in local handicrafts like carpet making, weaving, traditional religious paintings, toy making, embroidery, cane work, carpentry etc. The Institute also produces hand-made paper from raw material available in the forests of Sikkim.

The activities of the Institute were expanded in 1964 with the addition of tailoring, ceramics and Batik sections. The Institute has been able to provide employment to about 100 persons in its own sections.

This Institute not only trains Sikkimese in arts and crafts but also produces various goods in these crafts to meet the demands of modern markets thereby adding to the revenues of the State.³¹

Small Scale Industries.

A fruit preservation factory at Singtam, a tannery at Majhitar, half a dozen grain grinding mills, a distillery, a wire-nail factory, represent the achievements in this field since the inception of Planning in 1954.³² The tannery, which is the second private sector undertaking in Sikkim, (the first being the distillery) was inaugurated by the Crown Prince Tenzing Namgyal on July 28, 1970.³³

The Indian National Council of Applied Economic Research recently undertook a techno-economic survey of the kingdom.³⁴ Besides, a well known Indian consultancy firm has completed the study in depth of the industrial potential of Sikkim. Feasibility studies of paper pulp project have been completed.

Since 1960, Sikkim Mining Corporation, a joint undertaking of the Government of India and Sikkim has done pioneering work in the field of mineral exploitation. Mineral surveys conducted by the Geological Survey of India have revealed appreciable quantities of copper, lead, zinc, graphite, limestone, coal etc.³⁵ The Sikkim Mining Corporation which is an interesting experiment in joint venture between the two governments, has earned a lot of foreign exchange.³⁶ The Government is planning to establish a commercial undertaking for the extraction of graphite also, which has been found near Chittery.³⁷ A transistor factory is going up at Tadung. HMT is preparing a feasibility report for a complementary watch industry.

Jewel Bearing Project, paper pulp industry, a watch factory are proposed to be set up with Indian help and aid during the fourth five year plan period (1971-76).³⁸ The Government of India, after many years of consultation and correspondence, have finally issued a licence for a Jewel-bearing plant³⁹

A small start was made in the second plan to establish a Tea Garden in Sikkim and a ten year project was launched with the commencement of the third five year plan. Tea Gardens have been established at Kewzing and Gemi.⁴⁰ Sikkim expects to enter the World Tea market some time in 1974.⁴¹ A unique feature of Sikkim Tea Industry is that it also serves as a rehabilitation programme for Tibetan refugees and there are 850 Tibetan refugees working in the tea gardens.⁴²

To encourage the establishment of more industries in Sikkim, a Department of Trade, Commerce and Industries was established in March 1969.

Road and Bridges

The mountainous nature of Sikkim and the precipitous terrain in most places makes road as the only economical means of communication possible. The main river Teesta and its tributaries Rangit and Rangpo, are no doubt perennial but they flow rapidly along beds in turbulent eddies and cannot, thus, provide a safe means of navigation or even of crossing. For the proper development of the country it was, therefore, important that the Government should place emphasis and priority on an adequate system of roads which would not only provide a means of easy communication but also bring nearer the fruits of planned development to the people even in the remotest areas. It was with this object that the Durbar during the formulation of plans gave highest priority to construction of roads so that the centres of growth and market areas could be adequately linked and also open up the more inaccessible inhabited areas. The Chinese aggression in 1962 further brought a new sense of urgency for completing the network of roads in Sikkim both for its defence and development.

In 1954 there was only a 50-kilometre motorable trunk road running between Gangtok and Rangpo on the West-Bengal-Sikkim border. Since then a wide net-work of roads have been constructed to provide easy access to all parts of Sikkim. The Border Roads Organisation and the C.P.W.D. have constructed and maintained 282 miles of road while the Sikkim Public Works Department have 280 miles to their credit.

The North Sikkim Highway is an impressive achievement of engineers of the Central Public Works Department and the Border Roads Organisation. This road, which cost 50 million rupees, was financed by the Government of India over and above the aid given for Sikkim's development.⁴³ It traverses locations at an altitude of 9,000 feet and facilitates the movement of forest produce and apples from north Sikkim to markets in the lower regions.⁴⁴ Bridle paths between Rishi on the West Bengal Border and Jelep La on the Tibet border, some roads in east Sikkim and Gangtok-Nathu La road, also on Sikkim-Tibet border, have been developed into first class roads. They are the vital road links for the defence of Sikkim and India. The expenditure on these roads amounting to 90 million rupees has also been financed by the Government of India in addition to the development aid.⁴⁵ A rope-way from Gangtok to Thegu, covering a distance of 50 kilometers on the road to Nathu La caters to the requirements of the armed forces guarding Sikkim, though originally it was meant to carry trade with Tibet.⁴⁶

The Sikkim Public Works Department constructed 177 kilometres of roads and 483 kilometres of village paths since the inception of planning.⁴⁷

These roads have formed the spear-head of the development plan and their construction has paved the way for other projects and schemes.⁴⁷

Paucity of trained local personnel required by the Sikkim P.W.D. was made up by getting these hands from India to work and man the various projects and schemes. Candidates from Sikkim are being trained and educated in various institution in India so that they should take up the various posts, now being manned by outside personnel.

India in consequence of its special responsibilities, maintains some essential departments like Central Public Works Department and the Indian Border Roads Organisation. They coordinate their activity and share responsibility in building and maintaining national highways, especially the roads from north Bengal to Gangtok and Gangtok to northern and eastern parts of the country.

Road Transport

It is an accepted fact that road transport has to play a vital part in the economic and industrial development of a hilly region like Sikkim where other means like river and rail transport are not possible. To carry agricultural produce like oranges, cardamom, apples and consumer goods as well as raw material for industry and to provide cheap and comfortable means of travelling to various places in the kingdom to the people, it is essential that an organised transport system should be instituted.

With these aims and objectives, the Sikkim government laid particular emphasis on the development of road transport during these plans and to make it a revenue earning project for its exchequer.⁴⁹

The Sikkim Nationalised Transport Department which was established in 1949 operates on all the important routes running to a total of 1170 kilometres. Its present fleet strength is 181 vehicles.⁵⁰ During the year 1969-70, the Sikkim Nationalised Transport introduced the motor mail service from Gangtok to Mangan and the alternate day passenger service between Namchi, Gyalzing and Gangtok.⁵¹

On December 30, 1969, the Sikkim Nationalised Transport celebrated its twentyfifth year of service. The Chogyal speaking on the occasion said that the Sikkim Nationalised Transport has been the largest revenue earning agency for the Government.⁵²

Education

The welfare of the people is closely linked up with Education which provides an essential means of tackling the problems generated

by poverty and backwardness in general and in modifying social customs which tend to hamper developmental processes. For want of funds, as well as absence of any coordinated all round developmental work before the commencement of the first plan, educational facilities in Sikkim remained inadequate despite the general urge and enthusiasm in the Sikkimese people for proper education.

In order to bring education nearer to the masses and offer them an opportunity of gaining the benefits of an organised educational system so that they may, in course of time, play their proper role and partake in the future development of the State, the Government laid special emphasis on consolidating and organizing a good educational system.

Since 1954, remarkable strides have been taken in this field. As against 2,500 children, who were going to schools when planning started, the figure now is estimated at about 16,291.⁵³ As against 88 schools at that time, to-day there are 191 primary schools, 13 middle schools, 7 junior high schools, 5 higher secondary schools, one public school, one basic training school and one monastic school. There is now a primary school within the radius of every two miles. Four Adult Education Centres have been recently started.⁵⁴ An evening degree college named Thondup College, Gangtok has since been established.⁵⁵

A textbook committee under the chairmanship of the Gyalmo of Sikkim has been formed to evolve textbooks suitable for the State.

Apart from development aid, the Government of India have, since the inception of planning, made available scholarships to Sikkimese students for studies in schools and colleges in India. 387 students had availed of this facility till the end of 1969.⁵⁶ On return to Sikkim these students have made their mark and are playing a notable part in the development programmes of Sikkim.

The Government of India have donated about one million rupees since 1958 towards the running cost of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology at Gangtok, where Mahayana Buddhist studies are carried on.⁵⁷

Medical and Health

With the object of providing speedy medical relief to the people, particularly in view of the difficulty of terrain and communication as well as to rid the masses of scourges like malaria and kala-azar, the Durbar gave particular attention to the formulation of medical and public health programme in the plans. Before the commencement of planning, there were only two hospitals in Sikkim. As against this today there are five Government hospitals, twenty four government dispensaries and four sub-dispensaries.⁵⁸ Besides,

there are chest, ophthalmic, pediatric, dental and radiology clinics at Gangtok in S.T.N.M. Hospital. A successful campaign for the eradication of malaria and kala-azar, launched in 1956, has almost rooted out deadly diseases. Preventive medical work to eliminate tuberculosis, VD and intestinal worms and smallpox have also registered remarkable success. A BCG campaign was organised in 1955-56 and 1965-66 with success.

Several Sikkimese have been trained and educated in India as doctors and nurses.

Power Projects

A considerable water potential exists in Sikkim for generation of cheap Hydro-electric power. The proper utilisation and exploitation of these sources can lead, to the improvement of the State's revenues, institution of various industries and the general improvement in the conditions of the people. Before the commencement of the first plan, Gangtok was served by a 120 KVA Hydel plant for its electric supply.⁵⁹ There were only 350 domestic connections, and the industrial load was negligible. In the first plan, a thermal plant was set up for improving the supply of electricity to Gangtok. The Rongnichu Hydel Project (2100 KW), which is the principal source of power supply to Gangtok now, was completed in 1965 at a cost of 7.1 million rupees in collaboration with the Central Water and Power Commission of India.⁶⁰

The first micro hydel project in Sikkim costing 0.514 million rupees was commissioned at Manul in November 1969 by the Chogyal. The Chogyal thanked the Government of India for the financial assistance required for the project.⁶¹ The power house provides electricity to Mangan, the district headquarters of North and surrounding villages. Another micro-hydel scheme at Rohtok for western Sikkim has also been completed and was inaugurated by the Chogyal on August 9, 1970.⁶² Yet another Rimbi Micro Hydel Project for western Sikkim was commissioned by the Chogyal on April 27, 1972.⁶³ A similar scheme for eastern Sikkim for harnessing power from the Rongli river suffered a major set back during the floods of 1968. Work, however, has been resumed again. Work on the much sought for and prestigious Lagyap Hydel Project, the feasibility of which had already been investigated by the Central Water and Power Commission of the Government of India, was commenced on April 2, 1972. The Chogyal in his short speech on the occasion said :

“This project was the first of its kind in Sikkim to be undertaken by the Government of India exclusively in line of India Aid Project in other countries. I cordially welcome this assistance which is for Sikkim's benefit. We did not have the expertise and other means to implement such a large scheme. As such it was considered befitting

to have the foundation laid by the political officer as the representative of India to cement India-Sikkim friendship and cooperation".⁶⁴

The Chogyal expressed his thanks to the Government of India for the generous aid and assistance extended for the project and gratefulness to the members of the Central Water Works and Power Commission, its Chief Engineer and other senior officers.

Besides, the Government of India is solely responsible for the maintenance of Posts and Telegraph and Telephone services within the kingdom. There is no special currency in Sikkim nor postage stamps, distinct from the Indian. The Indian rupee is a legal tender every where. There is no trade barrier between Sikkim and north Bengal.

Hence with the active, collaboration of India since 1950, Sikkim's progress has been phenomenal. It is now experiencing a great economic upsurge. Its annual revenue which was about 1.2 million rupees in 1950 is now 28.70 million rupees.⁶⁵ Economically, the people of Sikkim are more advanced than their immediate neighbours in Nepal and Bhutan.⁶⁶ The per capita income is estimated at Rupees 900 which is almost double than that of India.⁶⁷ With large scale Indian aid and assistance, Sikkim has become a modern State with a reasonably sound economic structure.⁶⁸ A State Trading Corporation has also been established in March 1972. Even the Chogyal while welcoming Indira Gandhi in Gangtok on May 5, 1968 said at a public gathering : "We have made a modest but significant stride in the development of our country with a view to achieve a self reliant economy. This advance has been possible, largely through the generous assistance and sympathy received from India."⁶⁹

In spite of Indian aid and support in the planned economic progress of the country, yet many a Sikkimese are critical of India's aid and assistance stating that this is given with ulterior motives and selfish interests. The more India spends on helping Sikkim to modernise, the more people distrust India. Yet India has no choice, it must go on helping Sikkim and make it a strong bulwark to withstand against the possible Chinese onslaught and gear it as a modern progressive State.

Summons Agreement with Sikkim

For the first time in history of the two countries the Government of India and the Himalayan Protectorate of Sikkim entered into reciprocal arrangement for serving summons and other processes by courts in Sikkim and India and also for the execution of decrees passed by the courts of Sikkim and India.

According to the first arrangement, summons and other processes issued by the High Court and all other civil and revenue

Courts of Sikkim may be served by courts in India and summons and other processes issued by civil and revenue courts in India may be served by Courts in Sikkim.

According to the second arrangement, decrees passed by the High Court and other courts of Sikkim, whose civil jurisdiction is not subject to any pecuniary limit, may be executed by district courts in India, and decrees passed by the Supreme Court, all High Courts and other courts in India, whose civil jurisdiction is subject to no pecuniary limit, may be executed in Sikkim by the Courts of the Chief Magistrate⁷⁰.

2,500 Budha Jayanti Celebrations.

2,500 Buddha Jayanti Celebrations held in New Delhi in 1956 brought India and Sikkim still closer to each other. The Sikkim Darbar took keen interest in the exhibition of the Buddhist art arranged by the Ministry of Education in November 1956 as part of 2,500-th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations. Valuable exhibits of Buddhist art and culture were brought from Sikkim for the exhibition and the Royal family took personal interest in arranging these exhibits. These exhibits received widespread appreciation in India.

At the invitation of the organizers, the Maharaja of Sikkim attended the symposium on Buddhist art and literature in New Delhi, organised by the Buddha Jayanti Celebrations Committee in cooperation with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization from November 26 to 29, 1956.

The Maharaja was the guest of the Government of India and after attending the symposium visited some of the Buddhist places of pilgrimage in India⁷¹. This visit greatly helped in bringing closer understanding between the two countries.

Nehru Visits Sikkim-1958.

Nehru accompanied by Indira Gandhi paid his second visit to Sikkim in September 1958 on his way to Bhutan. It further strengthened the bonds of friendship between the two neighbours. Since his first visit to Sikkim in 1952, Sikkim had marched ahead to progress due to the operation of the seven year Development Plan. The important Gangtok-Nathu La road which connected Gangtok with Sikkim-Tibet border was declared open by the Indian Prime Minister⁷². Nehru's renewal of his contacts with the kingdom and the members of the royal family further helped in creating an atmosphere of informality and friendliness between the two countries. Nehru's passage through Sikkim concluded with a public meeting held in the Palace gardens⁷³. The Press had converged upon Sikkim from all directions to cover Nehru's visit to the Himalayan kingdom and it in turn helped the world to know the great strides

this last Shangrila had made in political, economic and social spheres of the life of the people.

The question of Sikkim Militia.

Even before India's dispute with China had assumed serious proportions, the Government of Sikkim had expressed an interest in expanding its role in the security and defence system of Sikkim. The Maharajkumar had visited New Delhi for talks with Nehru and the officials of the Ministry of External Affairs in November 1960. During these talks the Maharajkumar formally proposed the formation of a para military force for the defence of Sikkim and as a token of Sikkim's contribution to the defence of the Himalayan kingdom against the growing Chinese menace⁷⁴. Although the Government of India is responsible for Sikkim's defence, the Maharajkumar pleaded that Sikkim should have a state militia to inspire confidence among the people inhabiting the northern frontier region of the country⁷⁵. In the frontier area of Sikkim the population entirely consists of Bhutias and Lepchas. It was emphasized by the Sikkimese Government that it is from these communities that personnel of the militia should be recruited and not from amongst the preponderant Nepalese who inhabit areas in the south and west of the kingdom⁷⁶. However, the Maharajkumar had agreed that the militia will be officered, and controlled by the Indian Army⁷⁷.

It may be pointed out here that Sikkim's participation in the security system along its own border has been minimal. The checkposts in the vicinity of the border were manned by the Sikkim Police until 1960, but on account of events in nearby Tibet and Chinese expansionists designs and consequent need of strengthening Sikkim's borders, this duty was shared with the units of the Indian Army under the direct command of the Indian Commander in the area⁷⁸. It should be noted, however, that Sikkim makes a substantial contribution of recruits to the Indian Army. Several thousand Sikkimese, mostly from the Nepali Sikkimese community have enlisted themselves in the Indian Army⁷⁹. Hence in proportion of servicemen to population, Sikkim compares favourably with any of the Indian States. The Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal holds the honorary rank of Major-General in the Indian Army⁸⁰.

But no sooner the idea for a militia was mooted out, a political furore erupted in Sikkim almost immediately, with the parties divided into two clearly defined camps. On the one side the Sikkim National Party, which is considered to be a pro-Palace party, and a number of Bhutia political leaders demanded that the militia be organized and trained by the Sikkim Guard itself under the direct command of the Sikkim Government. On the other, Sikkim State Congress and the Sikkim National Congress, both drawing

their preponderant support from the Nepali Sikkimese community, strongly opposed the idea. Nepalese who constitute the majority of the population of Sikkim, were apprehensive that militia if created, will be used by the Sikkim Durbar to put down political agitation in the state and shall be utilized to deny democratic rights to the people⁸¹. Some of the radical elements feared that it will be used principally to bolster the position of the ruling House⁸². The people of Nepali origin were puzzled that how a militia of about one thousand persons could inspire greater confidence among the people of Sikkim than the powerful Indian army stationed all along the border.

Sikkim National Congress even demanded that if at all a militia is created, it should be constituted from amongst the thousands of ex-soldiers in Sikkim⁸³.

In view of the intense domestic opposition in Sikkim, the Government of India finally decided in mid-1961 to shelve the entire question of militia in favour of an expansion of Sikkim Guard. Earlier while replying to a question in the Lok Sabha on the defence of the Himalayan kingdom, the Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru had stated that since the Government of India had taken the responsibility for the defence of Sikkim, the question of increasing Sikkim's independent defence potential did not arise⁸⁴. Speaking about the proposed Sikkim militia, Jawahar Lal Nehru at yet another occasion told the Lok Sabha, that there was an idea to create a force similar to a Home Guard. It could not obviously take the place of the Army because it would not be upto the same standard. Sikkim had no trained men and the proposed force had to be raised, officered, and controlled by the Indian Army⁸⁵. The Government of India did not relish the expression 'militia'. They preferred to describe it as 'guard'. According to the treaty of 1950 between the two countries, the defence of Sikkim was entirely the responsibility of the Government of India. It stipulated :

“The Government of India will be responsible for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim. It shall have the right to take such measures as it considers necessary for the defence of Sikkim or the security of India, whether preparatory or otherwise and whether within or outside Sikkim. In particular, the Government of India shall have the right to station troops anywhere within Sikkim⁸⁶.

The forces already deployed for the defence of Sikkim were considered adequate⁸⁷. Jawahar Lal Nehru also assured the Indian Parliament that the arrangements for the defence of Sikkim were, in view of the Government, adequate⁸⁸. This assurance was repeated a number of times in the Indian Parliament⁸⁹. Even the Maharajkumar also said time and again that “we have a bsolute

confidence in the capacity of the Indian Army to defend Sikkim against aggression."⁹⁰ He again said in March 1965 : "he was fully satisfied with India's defence preparations in his State"⁹¹.

During the course of talks between the Maharajakumar of Sikkim and the Ministry of External Affairs which were concluded in New Delhi on June 9, 1961, it was agreed that the Sikkim Palace Guard which then consisted of sixty men under a Junior Commissioned Officer, would be expanded to two companies. These would be officered, trained and equipped by the Indian Army. Indian Army officers would also assist in the recruitment of the Guards. It was also agreed that by rotation one company would be on palace duty while the other would be attached to the Indian Army in Sikkim for border security so as to give the Sikkimese a sense of participation in the defence of their own territory.⁹² While returning home the Maharajakumar said in Calcutta on June 11, 1961 :

"We wanted the people to have a psychological realisation that they are the part of the show and accordingly we suggested to the Prime Minister Nehru for some sort of association with the defence of Sikkim to which he agreed. The proposed expansion of the guards would be under the direction of officers to be lent by the Government of India."⁹³

Sikkim Guard personnel are now eligible for enrolment at the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla in India and a number of places have been reserved for them.⁹⁴ Recruitment policy for the Sikkim Guard since then has also been modified. The traditional system under which membership in the Guard was restricted to the Bhutia-Lepcha community has now been abandoned.⁹⁵ This has eliminated one important source of criticism of the Guard within Sikkim. However, the expansion of the Sikkim Guard did not lessen the interest of the Government of Sikkim in the organisation of a militia or Home Guard. In 1962, at the time of Chinese aggression on other sections of Indian Himalayan frontier and again during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965, Sikkim again proposed the formation of some form of para-military unit. The Maharajakumar said in Calcutta in July 1963 that they had approached the Indian Government informally for the training of Sikkimese in mountain warfare. They had also decided to raise the Home Guards and equip them with modern weapons.⁹⁶ But the Government of India, did not show any enthusiasm over the proposal.⁹⁷ However, Sikkim's interest in the organisation of a local para-military unit should not be interpreted as a first step towards the modification of existing defence and security arrangements with India, much less, as an indication of the State's determination to assume these responsibilities for itself. Throughout the dangerous and difficult period of Sino-Indian hostility, the Chogyal had repeatedly and clearly stressed Sikkim's faith and dependence on Indian defence. In the view of the Sikkim Government, a Home Guard or a Militia is

required primarily for internal security purposes. Internal dissidence in the State would be better handled by this new institutional arrangement than by the Indian Army, Palace Guard or the Sikkim Police.

However, the Sikkim Guards have been fully equipped and presented with colours in accordance with army traditions.⁹⁸

According to the May 1973 agreements it has been decided that the Sikkim Guards shall remain directly under the Chogyal.

Sikkim Subjects Regulation.

On July 1961, the Sikkim Subjects Regulation was promulgated by the Maharaja of Sikkim.⁹⁹ Prior to 1961 there was no regulation in force in Sikkim relating to citizenship. Infact the Sikkim Subjects Regulation promulgated in July 1961 was the first law enacted in Sikkim to define the status of the subjects of this tiny kingdom and made provision for the acquisition or the loss of such status. Like any other state, Sikkim was entitled to promulgate its own laws and regulations regarding its subjects.¹⁰⁰ Prior to its promulgation, the draft was circulated amongst all the political parties in the State.¹⁰¹ In fact discussions were held since 1956 between the Darbar and the various political leaders whose views were sought and incorporated in the draft of the Subjects Regulation.¹⁰²

The Sikkim Subjects Regulation as amended in 1962 provided that :

1. Every person who has his domicile in the territory of Sikkim immediately before the commencement of this Regulation shall be a subject of Sikkim if he was born in the territory of Sikkim and is resident therein or has been ordinarily resident in the territory of Sikkim for a period of not less than fifteen years immediately preceding such commencement and in counting the said period of fifteen years any absence from Sikkim on account of service under the Government of India shall be disregarded.¹⁰³

2. All persons, who have not voluntarily acquired the citizenship of any other country, and are not domiciled in Sikkim could be registered as subjects of Sikkim on an application if their ancestors were deemed to be Sikkim subjects prior to the year 1850.¹⁰⁴

3. Every person born after the commencement of this Regulation shall be a Sikkim subject if at the time of his birth his father is a Sikkim subject under this Regulation, whether or not the birth takes place in the territory of Sikkim.¹⁰⁵

4. There is also provision for naturalized subjects provided they fulfil the requirements laid down under section 3 of the Regulation.¹⁰⁶

The Royal Family



Left to right (standing) His Majesty the Chogyal of Sikkim, Prince Wangchuk, Crown Prince Tenzing, Princess Yangchen Dolma ;
(Sitting) : Princess Hope Leezum, Her Majesty the Gyalmo, Prince Palden.

The Regulations were discussed in the autumn session of the Sikkim State Council, where representatives and spokesmen of various political parties expressed their views.¹⁰⁷ The State Congress and National Congress members while opposing the regulation said that it would ultimately mean giving a fresh lease of life to the monster of communalism.¹⁰⁸

The Sikkim Subjects Regulation 1961 was severely criticized by various political parties in Sikkim. The Government of India was criticized for approving it¹⁰⁹ and the National Congress raised the slogans : "India practices democracy at home and imperialism abroad".¹¹⁰ The Sikkim State Congress and the Sikkim National Congress jointly protested against the new Regulation and termed it as discriminatory and harmful. When the Regulation was promulgated in July 1961, it made reference to Sikkimese, Bhutias, Lepchas and Tsongs as among categories of persons entitled to subjecthood. While making mention of all these communities, the word Nepali Community was excluded. This led to a certain amount of apprehension among Nepalese of possible discrimination against their community which constituted about 75 percent of the total population of the country. These parties pointed out that to single out Tsongs for reference in the Regulation was a deliberate attempt to divide the Nepalese community. It was urged that the term Tsong should be replaced by the expression Nepali and that the treatment accorded to Bhutias and Lepchas should also be granted to the Nepalese.¹¹¹ It was also contended that the purpose of Darbar behind the Regulation was to reduce the political effectiveness of the majority Nepali community. It was with this end in view that the fifteen year residence qualification was laid down in the regulation.¹¹² It was alleged that the regulation intended to deprive the people of Nepali origin the chance to wield the political power that they may think to be their due in view of their preponderance in the population.¹¹³

In order to allay certain misapprehensions expressed by the political parties in the State, the Government of Sikkim announced certain amendments to the subjects Regulation which was promulgated by the Maharaja of Sikkim on July 3, 1961. It was felt that the amendments will remove the impression that the Regulation was discriminatory against any section of the Sikkimese people. The Maharajkumar (the present Chogyal) of Sikkim in a Press Conference at Delhi on January 16, 1962 said :

"The recent debate on the Regulations in the Sikkim Council had indicated that there was a general apprehension regarding the non-inclusion of the word 'Nepali' in some sections of the regulation and this apprehension had given rise to a feeling of discrimination because other communities like the Sikkim Bhutia, Lepchas and Tsongs were mentioned by name in those very sections. The regulation was promulgated after protracted discussions and none of the

political leaders had pointed out at that time that it was discriminatory against any section of the people. Any how in accordance with the Government's policy of fostering unity among the different sections of the people, the Maharaja had now decided to delete reference to any community by name from the Regulation, thereby removing any trace that might even be erroneously construed as being discriminatory."¹¹⁴

Replying to the charge that the regulation intends to deprive Nepali community to exercise political power, the Sikkim Government replied that the subjects regulation is in no way related to acquiring political power by any section of the people of Sikkim.¹¹⁵

The Government of India took the stand that Sikkim subjects Regulation is a matter entirely for the Sikkim Darbar. The Government of India came into picture in the context of knowing who are the Sikkimese subjects who could claim the right of protection under the agreement between the two governments.¹¹⁶ But every time the Maharajkumar made an announcement from New Delhi, it created the impression that it was being done with the consent and approval of the Government of India. This did create little confusion in the minds of the people of Sikkim. At an early stage the Indian Government had made it clear to the political parties in Sikkim that whatever the Government of Sikkim may have done was entirely on their own initiative and responsibility.¹¹⁷

In spite of this, it was said that though the Indian government did not interfere overtly in the manoeuvring between the Maharajkumar and the politicians, but through its Political Officer in Gangtok and the Dewan, who was appointed to serve the Darbar, it was closely involved behind the scenes.¹¹⁸

Death of the Maharaja of Sikkim Sir Tashi Namgyal

Maharaja Tashi Namgyal, who was born on October 26, 1893 and succeeded Sidkeong Tulku on December 5, 1914 as the eleventh consecrated ruler of Sikkim, died on December 2, 1963 in the Woodlands Nursing Home in Calcutta after a long and glorious reign of nearly fifty years.¹¹⁹ India had lost a trusted friend in the passing away of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal. Throughout his life the late Maharaja had exerted himself to strengthen and develop ancient ties between his small kingdom and India. While Sikkim was still a British protectorate, he took resolute steps to introduce progressive ideas in his State which had lived in the shadows of the Himalayas, sheltered from the winds of change blowing across the sub-continent. After India became independent he, with our leaders, worked out a new relationship which gave fresh meaning and depth to the historical and cultural ties that bind the two countries. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty of December 1950, which governs the relationship between Sikkim and India, was signed during his

reign. Besides he shall be remembered in the history of Sikkim as its modern architect and pioneer in development activities because it was during his stewardship that the foundation for the planned development of the State was commenced with the inauguration of the first seven year plan in 1954 which helped in demolishing the belief current outside the state that Sikkim "survived into our own times as a piece of the Asian middle ages."¹²⁰

He will always be remembered as Sikkim's gracious, enlightened and benevolent ruler. Himself a devout follower of the Mahayana Nyingma tradition of Buddhism, the Chogyal never suffered bigotry or intolerance in administrative or academic fields.¹²¹ During the last years of his rule, the late Maharaja had entrusted the administration of his country to the Maharajkumar Palden Thondup.¹²²

Hence military honours befitting his position were accorded to him at Calcutta and at his funeral in Gangtok. The Government of India were represented at the cremation ceremony which took place in Gangtok on December 27, 1963, by D.R. Chavan, Deputy Defence Minister and Deputy Military Secretary to the President of India.¹²³ Flags on all the buildings of the central and State Governments were flown at half mast as a mark of respect to the Maharaja. India's Political Officer in Gangtok, Inderjeet Bahadur Singh said: "the Maharaja's death was a grave loss to both India and Sikkim at this hour".¹²⁴ A message of condolence was sent to the Maharajkumar by President Radhakrishnan. Tributes were paid to Sir Namgyal by both Houses of Indian Parliament.¹²⁵

Palden Thondup Namgyal Proclaimed new ruler of Sikkim

At a simple but dignified ceremony at Gangtok on December 5, 1963, Miwang Chogyal Chempo Palden Thondup Namgyal was proclaimed the rightful and accepted ruler of the State of Sikkim by right of accession.¹²⁶ The Government of India conveyed to the new Maharaja their felicitations and recognition of his succession as the ruler of Sikkim.¹²⁷ Born on May 22, 1923, Palden Thondup Namgyal had started taking an active interest in the administration of his country at a very early stage and had soon become the principal adviser of the late Maharaja in judicial and executive matters. As the heir-apparent, he exercised direct personal supervision over various departments of the Government of Sikkim. As the principal adviser of his father he was instrumental in effecting many administrative reforms. He was his father's adviser on External Affairs, and led the Sikkim team which negotiated the Treaty with India in 1949-50.¹²⁸ Thus he ascended the throne of Sikkim with considerable political and administrative experience.

April 4, 1965 was selected as auspicious day for Ser Thri Nga Sol (coronation) of the new ruler.¹²⁹ This was a glorious and happy

occasion in the history of this small but beauty endowed Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim. Amidst Buddhist pageantry lasting about an hour and a half, Sikkim's Chogyal, Palcien Thondup Namgyal was consecrated as the twelfth ruler of the kingdom at a solemn ceremony at a Palace Chapel.

The consecration ceremony was watched by diplomats and dignitaries from several countries. The official Indian delegation for the occasion was led by (Shrimati) Lakshmi Menon, Minister of State (External Affairs). Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Minister for information and Boardcasting was also present as the personal guest of the Chogyal.¹³⁰

Apart from the colour and pageantry that marked the coronation of the Chogyal on April 4, 1965, the occasion became noteworthy for another important reason. The speech made by the Chogyal from the throne was a statement worthy of the close relationship between India and Sikkim. The Chogyal availed himself of the auspicious occasion of his coronation to emphasize that his small country felt secure under India's protection, and that he was determined to improve the close and cordial relations which already existed between the two countries.¹³¹ The Chogyal said :

“India is a great and peace loving country and we feel secure in her protection. But we are also conscious and alive to the need of preparing our own people for any eventuality, so that they may be ready to lay down their lives in the defence of their country, should the occasion arise. India has been a good friend to Sikkim, and we have received from our great neighbour generous assistance, for which I and my people shall always remain deeply grateful. The bonds of friendship between our two countries are strong and indissoluble, and I take the opportunity to affirm, on this solemn day, that it will be our purpose and endeavour to yet further strengthen these bonds in fullest measures. We recall with profound affection the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru, a true and steadfast friend of Sikkim, and we have confidence that the Government of India will continue to hold out to us the hand of friendship.”¹³²

(Shrimati) Lakshmi Menon the leader of the Indian delegation made a short speech acknowledging the Chogyal's references to India and Jawaharlal Nehru and assured continuation of the same relationship. She said :

“On the auspicious occasion of your Ser-Thri-Nga-Sol it gives me great pleasure to convey to you the greetings and good wishes of the President, the Government and people of India for a long and happy rule. We are certain that your benevolent guidance will lead the people of Sikkim to greater prosperity and well being and promote and preserve their cultural and spiritual values.”

“India has had long and historic bonds with Sikkim, which go far beyond the terms of the Treaty which Your Highness's late

distinguished father concluded with India. Your Highness has been good enough to refer to the feelings of friendship and affection which the late Prime Minister Nehru had for your family and your country. He had always expressed a special concern for Sikkim and extended assistance in her development plans. India will endeavour to continue this policy and will give substantial assistance in her future development.”¹³³

In an editorial on ‘Sikkim’, the Hindustan Times said :

“It is to be hoped that the new reign will see closer and more fruitful collaboration between the two countries in all directions. The Maharaja has the advantages of combining intimate knowledge of his land and people, gained through many years of administrative responsibility, with an awareness of international problems and of their impact on his country. Though desirous of maintaining Sikkim’s distinctive culture and traditions, he knows that it can no longer afford to remain a placid cultural back-water. The two five year plans have opened many windows on the outside world and provided many opportunities for international cooperation. India, because of its geographical relationship and also for other historical reasons, must use all such opportunities for promoting Sikkim’s welfare.”¹³⁴

On this occasion gifts worth about 10,000 rupees were presented to the Chogyal and the Gyalmo, his American born wife Hope Cooke, whom he had married in March 1963. The Government of India also announced its decision to confer on the Chogyal the honorary rank of Major General in the Indian Army¹³⁵ in view of his friendly disposition towards India. He already held the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Indian Army which was conferred on him about 12 years ago when he was Maharajkumar.¹³⁶

Recognition as Chogyal.

In deference to the wishes of the ruler of Sikkim, the Government of India agreed to refer to him as His Highness the Chogyal of Sikkim instead of as Maharaja of Sikkim. The ruler’s consort will similarly be referred to as Her Highness the Gyalmo of Sikkim.¹³⁷ This meant that the ruler besides being the temporal head of the state became spiritual head of his people also. His claim to be a spiritual head arose from the fact that he had entered a monastery in his childhood and graduated as a Lama. He studied for the monkhood from 1931-34 under his uncle Lhatsum Rimpoche.¹³⁸

Chogyal is a compound of Tibetan words “Chos” denoting religion and Gyalpo meaning ruler or king.¹³⁹

Indo-Sikkim border to be International border

In February 1967 the Government of India agreed that the Indo-Sikkim boundary line in future would be treated as inter-

national line and all official maps henceforth will incorporate this change.¹⁴⁰

In spite of the fact that Sikkim is not a fully sovereign country but is a protectorate under the 1950 treaty, the Ministry of External Affairs conceded to this point following insistence from the Sikkim Darbar. The Darbar had been pointing out that most of the maps being brought out in India, do not distinguish between the boundaries of India and Sikkim. Consequently, New Delhi decided to accommodate Sikkim and respect its sentiments.¹⁴¹ It may be pointed out here that ever since India achieved her independence, she has treated Sikkim as an autonomous and a separate entity.

India's Deputy Prime Minister visits Sikkim

The then Deputy Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai paid a goodwill visit to Sikkim on March 26, 1968.¹⁴² Desai's visit to Sikkim could be considered as an acknowledgement of the importance India attached for generating goodwill in this Himalayan kingdom. Though there are no major problems between India and Sikkim, but of late there have been some minor irritants that have been bedevilling the otherwise cordial and fraternal relations between the two countries. These will be discussed in the other Chapter. Perhaps, the most welcome outcome of Desai's visit to Sikkim has been the sorting out of most of these irritating but trivial issues, which often seemed to cloud the friendly relations between the two countries, despite the best intentions of Indian policy makers.

While addressing a Press Conference at the Palace on March 27, 1968, Desai expressed happiness and satisfaction at the pace of economic development taking place in Sikkim and emphasised that India's assistance to Sikkim was based on feelings of friendship and goodwill.¹⁴³ The Chogyal welcoming Desai at a public gathering in Palace grounds said that "our relationship with India is one that transcends mundane arrangements and is indissoluble."¹⁴⁴

Prime Minister Gandhi Visits Sikkim

To further strengthen the cordial relationship between India and Sikkim, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Sikkim for two days on May 5-6, 1968.¹⁴⁵ The Prime Minister's visit followed immediately after the goodwill visit of Morarji Desai, demonstrated India's interest in Sikkim's progress and development. India is anxious to stabilise relations with this strategic Himalayan kingdom at the friendliest possible level. Indira Gandhi had visited Sikkim on three earlier occasions as well. In 1952 and 1958 she accompanied her father and in 1965 she attended the coronation as a family guest of the royal family. Therefore, while welcoming the Prime Minister the Chogyal said: "We are very happy and feel greatly honoured to welcome you, today, not only as the Prime

Minister of our great neighbouring country and our protecting power but more so as a very dear friend of Sikkim."¹⁴⁶

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi while thanking the Chogyal and the people of Sikkim for according her a warm welcome said that though our friendship is age old but still it is essential to meet from time to time to exchange views with each other.¹⁴⁷

To bring the bonds of friendship still closer, even President V.V. Giri was to pay his state visit to Sikkim in April 1970, which unfortunately had to be postponed due to inclement weather.¹⁴⁸

The Chogyal, the Gyalmo and the Executive Councillors have been visiting India frequently for mutual consultation and exchange of views. The Foreign Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, too has been visiting Gangtok frequently, to sort out 'little problems' between the two countries on the spot. T.N. Kaul, Indian Foreign Secretary during his visit to Gangtok on July 26, 1970 said :

"It is unfortunate that the President was not able to come here on account of bad weather. The Chogyal has renewed his invitation and the President would be glad to come here.

"We attach no importance to incorrect, exaggerated and sensational Press reports. Our relations with Sikkim are based on mutual understanding, trust, confidence and cooperation and are bound to increase in future despite some Press reports to the contrary."¹⁴⁹

India House

During Indira Gandhi's visit to Sikkim in May 1968, the Indian Residency which houses the office of the Indian Political Officer, was renamed as India House or Bharat Bhawan in Hindi.¹⁵⁰

The name Residency was considered by many as smacking of colonialism.

Even the role of Political Officer has changed since the British left India in 1947. Though the title has been carried forward from the days of British influence and control, but the functions of this office are now of a radically different nature. It is principally an office of liaison between the Government of India and Sikkim and assists the Sikkim Darbar in relation to the many efforts being made towards the economic and social development of the country. To call it the Political Office is perhaps a misnomer in view of the changed circumstances. As such this designation also needs a change, since some elements in Sikkim's politics see in it, though erroneously, to be a symbol of Indian Government's control over the State.

Agitation in Sikkim 1973

Sikkim, "a country of contrast" and "a minute dot on the school child's map" was in turmoil in the beginning of April 1973. The crisis was precipitated by the fifth general elections, which were held in January 1973. As the counting of votes for the Sikkim council began on January 28, the National Congress led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji and the Sikkim Janata Congress, headed by Mr. K. C. Pradhan, walked out charging the Presiding Officer with "aiding and abetting the Sikkim National Party in rigging the elections". They lodged a protest on February 2 and wrote letters to the chogyal and the election committee. In the meanwhile, after completion of the counting of votes, results were announced. The Sikkim National Party bagged 11 elective seats out of 18. There was a lot of commotion and heart-burning over the results. It was alleged that the Darbar had rigged the election results. Popular discontent had burst into open. The Janata Congress leader, Mr. K. C. Pradhan, was arrested on March 27 on charge of sedition. The newly elected council was inaugurated by the Chogyal on March 26. The agitation assumed sharper edge when two of the six executive councillors nominated by the Chogyal refused to take office. Demonstrations outside the Chogyal's Palace and the secretariat were intensified. Of the two executive councillors who were not present at the swearing-in ceremony held at the Palace, one belonged to the National Congress and the other to the Janata Congress.

Later, on March 31, the Joint Action Council (JAC) of the Sikkim Janta Congress and the National Congress submitted to the Chogyal a memorandum containing the resolutions passed by the front seeking changes in the electoral system and demanding essential political and administrative reforms. The memorandum, a copy of which was given to the Indian Political Officer, said that the verbal assurances given by the Chogyal were not reassuring. The people were not satisfied with the assurances. "If the demands are not met within a reasonable time and in sheer exasperation the movement takes a violent turn, the Government will be responsible for it."

By a resolution, the JAC condemned the arrest of Mr. Krishna Chandra Pradhan as "unjust and improper." The Joint Council said: "if our legitimate demands are not fulfilled, we will launch a peaceful people's movement." The demands included: democratic form of government, a written constitution incorporating fundamental rights; repoll on the basis of one man-one-vote system with "adequate safeguards" for the minorities Lepcha-Bhutias; establishment of an independent Judiciary and codification of laws; revision of Indo-Sikkim Treaty "in such a manner that a perpetual and steady friendship could be assured between India and Sikkim."

On April 4 eight persons were injured when the police fired and burst teargas shells twice, as the week-long agitation for the

electoral reforms and the release of Janata Congress President spread to towns and villages in the kingdom. The demonstration coincided with the 50th birthday of the Chogyal. Because of the gravity of the situation, all birthday functions were cancelled. The same day, Mr. Avtar Singh, Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry of India, flew to Gangtok at the request of Chogyal, to help the Sikkim authorities in restoring normalcy. But police posts in many places had been taken over by the volunteers of the joint front. The Sikkim Darbar administration had completely collapsed.

Indian Army Takes over Law and order

The Indian Army on April 6 took over the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the kingdom's capital, Gangtok at the request of the Chogyal. The swift action by the Indian Army came within hours of a written request from the Chogyal to the Indian Political Officer Mr. K.S. Bajpai, to restore law and order in the strife-torn kingdom.¹⁵¹ The Chogyal's request came after some 15,000 volunteers of the Joint Action committee, spear-heading the campaign for political and administrative reforms were reported to be marching towards the capital from the Sangkhola—Ranipul area, about 12 km. from Gangtok. Police outposts in many places had been taken over by volunteers of the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim Janata Congress. The Durbar administration had completely collapsed throughout the state. Leaders of the JAC appealed to Mrs. Indira Gandhi in a joint telegram: "We appeal again for your help in saving the innocent people of Sikkim from ruthless repression unleashed by the Durbar to perpetuate its feudal privilege against the demand for democratic rights...Maladministration, nepotism and flagrant misuse of funds India generally provides have driven our people to seek reform...We cannot trust such a dishonest Government and earnestly entreat you to act to save our lives, secure our just rights, inquire into the existing state of affairs and take action against the corrupt and anti-democratic officials. Sikkim people rely on you to intervene quickly and fully before we are massacred".¹⁵² The signatories to the telegram included Kazi Lhendup Dorji, President of the Joint Action Committee (JAC), Nahukul Pradhan, Bimbahadur Gurung, C. B. Rai, G. P. Duhal and C. B. Chetri.

Mr. Avtar Singh, Secretary in the Indian External Affairs Ministry who was sent to help the Sikkim authorities in restoring normalcy visited Ranipul and told the gathering there about the take-over by the Indian Army of the responsibility for maintaining law and order. The administration of entire Sikkim, rocked by political upheaval, was also taken over on April 8 by the Indian Political Officer at the request of the Chogyal and the Sikkimese people. Mr. B. S. Das, Commissioner of Delhi Municipal Corporation, was appointed as the Chief Administrator of Sikkim. Mr.

Surendrapal Singh, the Minister of state in the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement in the Lok Sabha : "After the general elections in Sikkim recently the tension had aggravated as there were charges of malpractices, corruption and rigging up of elections on the part of the Sikkim Darbar. As a result, a polarisation developed between the Maharaja of Sikkim on the one side and the popularly elected political leaders and the masses on the other. The Darbar took stern measures and arrested the President of the Sikkim Janata Congress, Mr. K.C. Pradhan on March 27. Then followed the excesses of the Police which resulted in a large number of casualties and a mass upsurge against the Sikkim Darbar. Thereafter there were large scale demonstrations all over Sikkim. Twenty-thousand demonstrators collected in Gangtok demanding democratic rights and demonstrating against the Chogyal's regime. Police stations of several important towns such as Rangpo, Rhenock, Melli, Namchi, Geyzing and Singtam were also taken over by popular leaders and the population under their guidance.

"As the situation in Sikkim went out of the Chogyal's control despite strong measures adopted by the Sikkim Darbar, the Chogyal first made a formal request to the Government of India for its police stations in Rango, Rhenock and Melli to be manned by the Indian Army and then to entrust the responsibility for law and order in Gangtok itself to the Indian Army. Our acceptance of these requests was widely acclaimed by the masses of Sikkim. Finally, with the complete breakdown of law and order all over Sikkim, the Chogyal wrote to us on April 8 requesting us to take over the administration of the whole of Sikkim. He also asked us for the services of a senior officer of the Government of India to be appointed as head of Sikkim's administration. Simultaneously, there were repeated demands from popular leaders and the large masses of Sikkim for the Government of India to take over the administration of the state. In response, therefore, to the request of the Chogyal and the demand of the people of Sikkim, the Government of India has taken over the administration of the state and has also deputed a senior officer to function as head of Sikkim's administration. The popular and elected leaders of all the parties in Sikkim had also asked us to ensure the stability, security and integrity of Sikkim. They have welcomed our acceptance of the responsibility of maintaining law and order and running the administration of Sikkim.

"We will now make every effort to ensure that the interests of the people of Sikkim are secured and safeguarded and that Sikkim marches on the road to political stability and economic prosperity."¹⁵³

On April 9, the leaders of JAC, announced "the suspension" of the current phase of the stir. Its leaders asked their volunteers to lift roadblocks, to ensure the swift return of normalcy to the troubled kingdom. The JAC President, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, told newsmen that the decision to call off the agitation was taken in view of the take-over of the administration by the Government of India

and its promise to meet the "legitimate political demands" of the Sikkim people.¹⁵⁴ This signified the approval of the Indian Government's action by the people of Sikkim.

Constitutional Reforms Promised by the Chogyal

On April 13, the Chogyal announced at a crowded Press conference that his talks with India's foreign Secretary, Mr. Kewal Singh, and Political officer, Mr. K. S. Bajpai, had helped establish "close and confident relations" between him and India. He also denied allegations about Indian role in recent developments in Sikkim and said: "the current movement was not directed by India nor by any of its agencies." Replying to a question relating to a New China News Agency allegation that the Indian Government had sent troops to forcibly take over the administration of Sikkim under the pretext of disturbances in the state, the Chogyal said that the Indian Army was already in Sikkim even before the present movement. We asked the Indian Army to assist us in the reestablishment of law and order, so that our police could go to other affected areas". The Chogyal announced that constitutional and administrative reforms would be brought about soon. All Party conference would be convened to hammer out the reforms.¹⁵⁵

Constitutional reforms, by satisfying political aspirations, can induce a certain degree of stability. The Chogyal undeniably needs to come to terms with the 20th century and particularly with the reality of the Nepalese majority. Consequently, a conference of the representatives of political parties, Chogyal and the Government of India, met in Gangtok in May 1973 to bring about a settlement on future set up.

Tripartite Agreement, May 1973.

An agreement providing for a democratic set-up for Sikkim, administrative reforms and closer links with India was signed in Gangtok on May 8, 1973 after four days of negotiations among all the parties, heralding a new era in the Himalayan kingdom. The agreement which reflected the full accord reached among the parties was signed at a brief ceremony at the palace by the Indian Foreign Secretary, Mr. Kewal Singh, the Chogyal of Sikkim and five representatives each of the three political parties in the State, the Sikkim National Party, the Sikkim National Congress and the Janata Congress.

The accord marked the victorious end to the 10-days-long popular movement, spearheaded by the Joint Action Council of the opposition National Congress and Janata Congress, which was suspended on April 13, 1973 following an assurance by the Government of India on the 14-point demand of the Joint Action Council. The agreement owed as much to Mr. Kewal Singh's tact, forbearance and diplomacy as to the Chogyal's appreciation of geopolitical realities. In the absence of this the upsurge might have been a

potential source of disturbance and could have endangered stability in a sensitive border region and threatened the steady economic progress which the Himalayan Kingdom had made under India's guidance during the last two decades. It may be pointed out here that Sikkim's internal revenues have increased from Rs. 30 lakhs to an impressive Rs. 750 lakhs and the Planning Commission teams from New Deihi have paid tributes to Gangtok's utilization of lavish aid. However, disturbed communal relations between different ethnic groups would have affected this growth. But the recent agreement is expected to make for greater coherence in the political scene. There is no reason why Sikkim should not continue to prosper through the joint efforts of the Chogyal and all his subjects whose increased participation in the Administration will hopefully induce a sense of greater responsibility.

The agreement that has been reached in Sikkim is most sensible and just, and few could claim that a better one could have been possible in the existing circumstances. The people of Sikkim will view it as their victory, while the Chogyal will consider it as a proof of his large-heartedness. India can claim that her delicate role in the crisis has met with success. All those who have participated in the negotiations thus can take credit for the agreement and none need feel disappointed. In April last, when the crisis erupted, many might have thought that the confrontation between the people and the Chogyal would be disastrous for the kingdom. At that time, the majority of the people were in a defiant mood and they even demanded that the Chogyal must go. But India's timely intervention made a settlement possible, and her task was made easier by the trust which both the Chogyal and the political leaders reposed in her. It was mainly due to India's initiative that they agreed for an all-party meeting in May 1973 which has produced this agreement. Prior to this the Indian action in taking over the internal administration of Sikkim was to fulfil democratic aspirations of the people there and to prevent the collapse of the present administrative machinery. Making a statement on behalf of the Government of India, Mr. Surendra Pal Singh, the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, said in Lok Sabha on April 9, 1973: "We will now make every effort to ensure that the interest of the people of Sikkim are secured and safeguarded and that Sikkim marches on the road to political stability and economic prosperity."

Thus the agreement reached in Gangtok and signed by the Government of India, the Chogyal and the leaders of the kingdom's three political parties is a happy compromise between continuity and change. Sikkim will have a democratic set-up with the Chogyal, now a constitutional head of the State, providing a link with the past. The agreement ends once and for all the contradictions in the previous set up which sought to reconcile the irreconcilable, to reconcile representative democracy with a monarchical system. Effective power within the kingdom will now vest with the

people. The agreement sets out the broad principles on which the future constitution of the state will be based. The rule of law and the fundamental rights are assured to the people. At the same time the interests of the Bhutia-Lepchas have been safe-guarded by enunciation of the principle that "no single section of the population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin, and that the rights and interests of the Sikkimese of Bhutia-Lepcha origin and of the Sikkimese of Nepali, which includes Tsong and scheduled caste origin are fully protected." How ethnic parity within the Assembly and one-man-one-vote are to be reconciled is a conundrum that the future years will answer. There could be many alternatives. But that scheme should be preferred which tends least to politicise and perpetuate existing ethnic differences. Communalism is one of the dangers to be guarded against. The purpose of the parity provision will be defeated if it encourages communalism instead of curbing it. One way to combat the danger is to have political parties based on economic and social programmes and policies, cutting across ethnic divisions. This will inevitably be a slow process and because of the responsibilities assumed by it under the new agreement, the Government of India will have to be closely associated with efforts to foster harmony among the various communities in the kingdom.

The agreement vests India with heavy responsibility at different levels and in many spheres of activity. It is understandably so because Indian intervention saved the situation in April 1973 by bringing the Chogyal and his political rivals together and in helping them hammer out an agreement as a neutral and honest umpire. Since the immediate cause of April 1973 upsurge was a widespread feeling among the National Congress and the Janata Congress that the January 1973 elections were not fair, a representative of the Indian Election Commission supervised elections to the Sikkim Assembly in April 1974. The Chief Election Commissioner of India had claimed earlier that the group differences will be reconciled in the Assembly in the forthcoming elections and the newly constituted Assembly will "make a valuable contribution to progress, integration of ethnic groups and stability."

Pending the elections, Mr. B.S. Das, who was appointed Chief Administrator in April last, has carried on the work of administration with the help of an Advisory Council composed of the nominees of the three political parties. This Chief Executive or the Administrator will be the kingpin under the new dispensation. Article 7 of the agreement stipulated that "to head the administration in Sikkim there shall be a Chief Executive, who shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the nomination of the Government of India." Theoretically this marks no great departure from the arrangements envisaged under the 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty and exchange of Letters by which the autonomy of the kingdom was "subject to the ultimate responsibility of the Government of India for the main-

tenance of good administration and law and order.” Accordingly, Indian officials were regularly nominated to administer Sikkim as Dewans. If the Government of India had not acquiesced in the whittling down of the authority of the Dewan (redesigned later as “Sidlon”), the position would not have been very different from what has now been spelt out in greater detail in the agreement. However, under the new stipulations the Chief Executive “shall have a special responsibility to ensure the proper implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes in Sikkim, the smooth and efficient running of its administration, the continued enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms by all sections of the population of Sikkim, and the optimum utilisation for the benefit of the people of Sikkim of the funds allocated for the economic and social development of Sikkim.

“In cases involving amity between the various sections of the population of Sikkim, or the development of democratic government and efficient administration in Sikkim, any difference of opinion between him and the Chogyal shall be referred to the Political Officer in Sikkim, who shall obtain the advice of the Government of India, which shall be binding”. New Delhi will not only be responsible for ensuring the implementation of the new Constitutional changes but will be closely associated with the administration of the State. This burden had to be accepted in deference to the wishes of the Joint Action Council, which spear-headed the agitation for democratic reforms in 1973. This is a heavy responsibility and will call for exceptional qualities of tact and forbearance in the men chosen to represent New Delhi in Gangtok. India House, to which Gangtok refers as ‘Burra Kothi, and Mintokgang, Mr. B.S. Das’s official residence, may be exposed to political controversy once the euphoria of the moment has passed and the palace’s reduced status has removed it from public gaze. Indeed, the overriding responsibilities vested in the Administrator could in time, when Nepalese and Bhutia-Lepchas have hopefully learnt to sub-merge their differences in a common Sikkimese identity, create misunderstanding and suspicion. The diplomatic establishment at India House has now been directly associated with the kingdom’s internal administration since the differences between the Chogyal and the Administrator are to be reported to the Political Officer, who is expected to obtain New Delhi’s opinion.

But with all these heavy odds, India should not shirk from its heavy responsibilities as it did in the past two decades. But for this lamentable lack of foresight, India would not to-day be in the invidious position of having to reassert her responsibility. The failure to appoint an Indian administrator after Shri I.S. Chopra relinquished his office in December 1972, suggests a tendency to drift and to respond to events rather than to shape them. New Delhi, hitherto, had self-consciously proclaimed its unwillingness to intervene as a virtue. Yet the fact is that its responsibility is pre-

cisely to intervene both as a right and as an obligation. There is no reason to be ashamed of this. A frank and quick assertion of its authority, in the light of the interests it recognized and accepted under the 1950 treaty and spelled out again in May 1973 Agreement, is what is wanted. In April 1973, New Delhi's intervention at the Chogyal's invitation was welcomed by all on the Sikkimese scene. The Indian presence is an inseparable part of whatever occurs in Sikkim even according to the obligations of the 1950 treaty. As Sikkim is a protectorate of India and not a sovereign State like Nepal or Bhutan, the dispatch of Indian troops to Sikkim for the maintenance of internal order should not ordinarily cause any eyebrows to be raised any where. It was also proper for the Government of India to advise the Chogyal to come to terms with the popular movement and to democratise the regime. India cannot afford to sit on the fence like a helpless spectator. The Government of India under the agreement have accepted the responsibility "to ensure the further development of constitutional government, communal harmony, good administration and rapid economic and social development in Sikkim." Article 11 of the agreement declares: "The Government of India, who are solely responsible for the defence and the territorial integrity of Sikkim, and who are solely responsible for the conduct and regulation of the external relations of Sikkim, whether political, economic or financial, reaffirm their determination to discharge these and their other responsibilities for the benefit of the people of Sikkim, for their communal harmony, good administration and economic and social development. It is hereby reaffirmed that they shall have the necessary powers for carrying out these responsibilities."

It is significant that India's special relations with Sikkim have stood the test of time. The efforts of some foreign powers to spoil their relations have failed. It has bound Sikkim even more closely to this country than before. India has accepted the role of an umpire in deference to the wishes of all shades of opinion in Sikkim. Hence the agreement represents a triumph for Indian Statesmanship.

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Sikkim, India and China

Emergence of Communist China and its impact on Sikkim

China's emergence since 1949 as a politically unified and militarily expansive and increasingly powerful nation must be ranked amongst the momentous international developments of the twentieth century. Its reemergence in 1949 has made a deep impact on the life and events of this ancient continent. Immediately after the new regime was firmly in saddle in Peking, the frontiers of Himalayan countries like Sikkim with China, which had been the frontiers of peace and cultural intercourse, were converted into a scene of tension and conflict. Consequently, the Himalayan borderland which had hitherto always held an irresistible fascination for men of adventure, exploration and missionary zeal due to its fantastic geographical, ethnic and cultural diversity, after 1949 came into sharp focus and assumed strategic significance. Earlier, nobody in India ever thought that well known frontiers along the high Himalayas would ever be challenged.¹ But instead, the emergence of China have made once peaceful and remote Himalayas into one of the world's most dangerously smouldering areas with strategic roads now reaching upto high passes, where for centuries Yaks were almost the only form of transport. The traditional isolation of Sikkim has been broken. A major transformation is stirring in the remote highlands of Sikkim as the Government and people are attempting to change their middle age feudalism to herald the kingdom into the world of the twentieth century. Of late it has been thrust into the world prominence.

Completely landlocked and cut off from the rest of the world by mighty mountains and dense forests, this small kingdom had remained a sealed book for a long time, whose rulers actively discouraged foreign visitors and alien ways. Until 1951, no more than a few hundred westerners had seen the interior of this kingdom and probably only few could locate it on a world map² While everybody to-day knows of Sikkim and her smallest capital in the

world at Gangtok, but it is said that only few years back the postal authorities were in a state of perpetual confusion over letters intended for Gangtok being addressed to Bangkok.³ But the seizure of Tibet by China in 1950-51, the revolt in Tibet and the flight of Dalai Lama to freedom in India in 1958-59, the Chinese claims on the Himalayan territories and its invasion of India in October 1962, have all helped in attracting the attention of the millions to this potentially critical world region. Sikkim is situated directly in the path of the invading Chinese. From Sikkim's easily traversed passes, which give access to the Tibetan Chumbi Valley, the comparatively low (15,200 feet) and gently graded approaches of the Nathu La lead directly to the core region of Tibet around Lhasa. Hence China posed a grim menace to the very existence and integrity of Sikkim.⁴ Besides it was brought into the forefront of ideologically induced tension between freedom and communism. As a protectorate of India, Sikkim is on India's front line in the border dispute with China. The Chinese invasion of the Indian territory in October 1962, brought into sharp focus the question of the future of Sikkim. In that hostile manoeuvre, China demonstrated her apparent intention of gaining mastery over the approaches to north-eastern India and establishing herself as the dominant political power in Asia.

In this Himalayan region the most dangerous spot politically is the Chumbi Valley, a dagger like slice of Tibetan territory between Sikkim and Bhutan. The maintenance of peace and order along the Himalayan borders of India and the states of Bhutan and Sikkim was bound up with the existence of Chumbi valley in Tibet and even Tibet as a whole as an independent country and as a buffer between India and China.⁵ After the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950-51, especially the militarization of Tibet and the Chumbi valley in 1959, this natural line of defence no longer exists. The concentration of Chinese forces which synchronized with much of road building activity, has inevitably changed the situation and position of both Sikkim and India. Hence, Chinese communists, as heirs to the Chinese empire, have affected the life and activity of Sikkim to a great extent. Uneasiness over China's long range intentions in this area remain dominant in the minds of the people of Sikkim.⁶ Similarly India's concern about Sikkim and other Himalayan states of Nepal and Bhutan also emerge from China's aggressive policy in the Himalayas, which may at some point, raise the issue of the continuance of any one of them or all three, as separate political entities.

Early contacts of China and Sikkim.

Sikkim and Bhutan were described as southern gateways to the celestial empire.⁸ Consequently, China has occasionally asserted vaguely defined claims to the Himalayan States of Sikkim and Bhutan on their alleged tributary relationship with the Ch'ing

dynasty. But a careful study of the history of the relationship between these Himalayan kingdoms and China bears no substantial evidence to support Chinese claims in this respect. There is no record of direct Chinese treaty relations with either Sikkim or Bhutan. Chinese assertions of past authority over these two states are based on a supposed inheritance of rather vaguely defined Tibetan "suzerain" rights.⁹ Even assuming some basis to the Chinese claims, there are strong doubts regarding their applicability. Sikkim and Bhutan have been linked with the Dalai Lama through a tributary relationship since the last many centuries as an indirect consequence of the long struggle between the rival Buddhist sects which centered in Tibet, but had repercussions throughout the entire Himalayan region. Both the Sikkimese and Bhutanese ruling elite were adherents of the Tibetan Buddhist sects that opposed the political and religious authority of the Dalai Lama.¹⁰ One of the results of the Dalai Lama's ultimate victory in Tibet was the inauguration of tributary relations between the Lhasa pontiff and the Sikkimese and the Bhutanese authorities. What this signified however, was Sikkim's and Bhutan's recognition of the Dalai Lama's spiritual authority and of the preeminent position of the Lama's sect over all other Tibetan Buddhist's sects.¹¹ While certainly not devoid of political significance its pre-eminence did not, signify Sikkim's and Bhutan's political subordination to Lhasa, a fact which is apply borne out by the history of the relationship among the three countries.

Even the institution of paying tribute was often not so much a means of recognizing suzerainty or overlordship rather it was a pretext for the tribute bearing mission for doing business, being feasted and otherwise profiting greatly from the excursion.¹²

There is, thus, no substantial evidence upon which China can base a legal or historical claim to any of the Himalayan border states, either through direct treaty relations or through an inheritance of Tibetan "treaty rights." Besides both in territory and population it comprises elements not typical of Tibet as a whole.¹³ However, Sikkim had trade relations with the Tibetans. The old trade route from Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim to Phari in Tibet, was via the Nathu La. The other trade routes were via the Jelep La in the north-east and Lachen in the north. It may be mentioned here that among the important items imported from Tibet were wool and salt. The articles of export to Tibet were cardamom, rice and spices. Trade was generally by barter.¹⁴

Hence the Chinese claim to be the suzerain of Sikkim is a vague claim lackadaisically advanced from to time has no valid basis. Some misconceptions on this subject are current in the west, and articles and books discussing this area, sometimes presume the historical validity of China's claims. This is an unnecessary and unjustified concession to the Chinese irredentist demands. It is virtually impossible to establish any exclusive historical rights of

China in Sikkim. The ambitions of China to incorporate parts or all of Sikkim in to her empire are motivated by political, strategic and perhaps these vague historical claims and considerations.

However, it is a fact that the Chinese recognized the British protectorate over Sikkim in 1890. By signing a convention relating to Sikkim and Tibet on March 7, 1890, they admitted :

“The British Government whose protectorate over the Sikkim State is hereby recognized, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that state, and except through and with the permission of the British Government neither the Ruler of the State nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal, with any other country.”¹⁵

This remained the underlying principle of the relationship between India and Sikkim vis-a-vis China till the Chinese seizure of Tibet in 1950.

Consequences of the seizure of Tibet.

After the communists came to power in China in 1949 and established a strong and unified government in Peking, a new vigour in Chinese policy towards Tibet was visible.¹⁶ The Tibet, ‘the forbidden land’, ‘a lofty country’, and ‘the roof of the world’, nestling on the lap of the mighty Himalayas was a country with an area of about 469,294 square miles and a population of roughly four millions,¹⁷ when the Chinese “liberated” it in 1950. These four million religious minded Tibetans posed no danger to the seven hundred and fifty million Chinese. There could hardly be any chance of a war between China and Tibet. Tibet was in no position to wage a war and obviously Tibet was no threat to China. But in spite of this, the intention of the Chinese communists to “liberate” Tibet was proclaimed by Mao Tse-tung himself on January 1, 1950.¹⁸ China in its reply on October 30, 1950 to the memorandum and note of the Government of India on the question of Tibet affirmed :

“Tibet is an integral part of Chinese territory and the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic problem of China. The Chinese people’s Liberation Army must enter Tibet, liberate the Tibetan people, and defend the frontiers of China. This is the resolved policy of the Central People’s Government.”¹⁹

Consequently the Chinese troops had finally entered Tibet on October 7, 1950.²⁰ India’s long northern frontier spreading to some 2000 miles, has taken an altogether novel significance with the integration of Tibet with China.²¹

Security and Existence of Sikkim threatened.

But ever since the Chinese swarmed south into Tibet in 1950, they have posed an alarming threat to Sikkim. For through this tiny kingdom which rises from a tropically luxuriant south to the snowclad wilderness in the north passes the shortest route from Chinese occupied Tibet to the plains of India. The logic behind the "liberation" of Tibet is also the logic behind the quest for dominance over the frontier states of Sikkim and Bhutan. China sees the Himalayan states as irredentist regions to be regained as soon as possible.²² Until the transformation of Tibet, into a military platform, she had been the neighbour of China on maps only. Snowy peaks and empty regions kept them apart. But today the two countries have live frontiers.²³ Liberation of Tibet was only the first step in China's *drang nach suden*. Soon after she 'liberation of Tibet', they gave clear indication of their intention to follow it up by the "liberation" of Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. They were described as "the four teeth with which the Chinese will grind their way to the southern seas."²⁴ According to Chinese communist propaganda, Tibet is China's palm; Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and the North East Frontier Agency of Assam (the present Arunachal Pradesh) are the five fingers. Now that the palm has been restored to China, the fingers should go with it.²⁵ George Patterson a British Journalist, who has travelled and published widely on the Himalayan area, has been one of the more vigorous of this view of the intentions of Chinese diplomacy in the region. In the same vein Ginsburg in his study on "Communist China and Tibet" has pointed out :

"China had always claimed rights in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim on grounds of traditional ethnic, cultural and religious affinity between the populations of these lands and China's Tibetan region, and the chief aim of Peking's current manipulations in this region seemed to be to detach these territories from India and integrate them into the Chinese orbit by any means short of war, if possible. Though the aim was there from the beginning of communist invasion of Tibet, its realisation had to be postponed for lack of effective means. For this it was necessary to bring Chinese Communication system right upto the Himalayan passes and traverse the region by trunk lines and also completely subjugate Tibet and effectively obliterate all traces of Tibetan autonomy. This has since been achieved. The result has been that several areas which are within India's jurisdiction or under India's protection are now more accessible to the Chinese forces stationed in Tibet... Moreover, the Chinese possess an overwhelming military preponderance in Tibet. When to this military preponderance, the population superiority is added, the threat of Chinese domination over the Indian frontier regions assumes even a bigger reality. Mao has openly stated that he wants ten million people to be settled in Tibet with in a foreseeable future. Should this plan be fulfilled, a

population many times greater than the one that traditionally occupied the plateau will be facing the relatively empty and inviting areas across the Indo-Tibetan frontier.²⁶

The relative geographical position of India and China is such that any army in position in Tibet has immense superiority and tactical advantages over an army struggling in the rain-soaked, deeply cut and continually ascending terrain south of the Himalayan range.²⁷ Mullik believes that actually, India's outposts, not exactly in military sense but in the sense of military influence, should be in Chamdo, Nagchuka and Gormo and not at Nathu La, Jelep La or Thang La. It is Mongolian independence which has made a large stretch of the Russian frontier immune from any Chinese threats and it will be Tibetan independence which alone could make Himalayan kingdoms and India's northern frontiers immune from a threat from China.²⁸ Although Ginsberg's and Mullik's hypothesis may not seem very plausible in the present stage of Indian defence and security structure, the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim, stands exposed to an unprincipled and deceptive China in her neighbourhood in Tibet. It was but natural that this tiny Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim should have become nervous at the rape of Tibet.²⁹ One important consequence of the seizure of Tibet by China has been that our north-eastern frontiers which have long been dead frontiers, have suddenly become alive, pregnant with immense dangers. The entire Himalayan complex of territory has suddenly become a perplexing question mark. Tibet under an unfriendly China, is just like a foot kept on India's head with crippling effects. Even a casual acquaintance with the geography, history, social, economic and cultural life of the sub-Himalayan belt would suffice to indicate the magnitude of the stake India had in Tibet's freedom. The Himalayan ranges are no longer impenetrable. In the past they served as a line of defence mainly because for centuries there did not exist a centralised and strong military state in Tibet. Tibet was sparsely populated by a small and peaceful Buddhist Community. That made it possible for rulers in India in the past to virtually ignore the defence of the Indo-Tibetan borders. However, since 1950, Tibet has been fully incorporated into a militant, unified and expansionist China, and as such it no longer exists as a buffer protecting India. Instead it now constitutes a forward staging area for Chinese penetration into south Asia. The weight of all China is behind it. This became evident because the Himalayan States have been confronted with Chinese claims of frontier rectification.³⁰ China has 1,25,000 to 1,40,000 troops garrisoned in Tibet.³¹ Ginsburg has well said that even in terms of geopolitics, it can be held that "he who holds Tibet dominates the Himalayan piedmont, he who dominates the Himalayan piedmont, threatens the Indian sub-continent; and he who threatens the Indian sub-continent may well have all of South-East Asia within his reach and, with it, all of Asia."³² For nearly a century, the British maintained the security of India from the North by supporting the neutrality of an autonomous

Tibetan State. If the British had acknowledged a tenuous form of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, it was entirely for the purpose of thwarting a bigger danger from Czarist Russia than what a weak China could pose to the Indian frontiers at that time. With a neutral but friendly Tibet on independent treaty relations with the British India and the Indian outposts thrust deep into the Tibetan plateau, the northern frontiers of India remained dead frontiers, completely insulated from any danger from foreign aggression. With the British in a predominantly strong position in Tibet, the other Himalayan States like Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal continued to remain firmly within the British sphere of influence. Not only the British power in Tibet protected the independent existence of these territories but they in turn provided an effective barrier against the predatory Chinese and kept them away from the heartland of British India. This balance of power has now been upset consequent to the seizure of Tibet by the Chinese. The struggle no longer looms in Tibet but has been pushed forward to the Himalayas that is to India's door steps and at many places within Indian territory. Tibet may or may not be the "roof of India."³³ A strong militant and expansionist power, entrenched in Tibet, is just like a dagger thrust on the Indian heart. The Chinese had used Tibet to strike at India's heart in their aggression in October, 1962. Tibetan plateau which had virtually served as a no man's land between India and China and the great Himalayas as rampart to guard India's approaches, have all been upset by the Chinese occupation of Lhasa in 1950-51. Acharya Kriplani said in 1954 thus : "China has demolished.....a buffer State. In international politics when a buffer state is abolished by a powerful nation, that nation is considered to have aggressive designs on its neighbours."³⁴ This observation has been amply proved by the Chinese invasion of India on October 20, 1962. With Tibet under Chinese occupation the Government of India has been inevitably filled with a new sense of concern about the long Himalayan frontier. From the north-eastern tip of Kashmir to Namcha Barwa on the north-eastern frontier border with Tibet extends over a distance of more than 2,000 miles.³⁵ Since then the Government have directed their attention to the strengthening and safeguarding of each of these frontier areas.

Tibet occupied a strategic position in the States of Himalayan belt. Normally to defend the independence of Tibet with all the resources at her disposal should, therefore, have been an article of faith for the Government of India.³⁶ However, 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. But the Government of India never challenged the fictitious medieval concept of Chinese sovereignty or suzerainty in Tibet. Before it became a question of military strength, it was one of clarity of objectives and of timely vigour to attain them.³⁷ 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'. But by refraining from recognising Tibet as a sovereign independent State between 1947 and 1949, at a time when neither the Chinese communists nor the Nationalists could have effectively intervened, India lost the opportunity of bringing Tibet into the forum of independent nations and simultaneously of ensuring the existence of buffer State between herself and China.³⁸

The Indian Government could do nothing of the kind because it had no anticipation and appreciation of the nature and magnitude of the problem of Himalayan borders until it had lost Tibet to the Chinese. It could not foresee that whatever the character of the Chinese Government, India would have to face the question of settling her northern borders.³⁹ From England, India had not only inherited specific treaties governing its relationship with Tibet, but it had inherited a fundamental geographical situation which neither the independence of India nor the communist revolution in China had changed. In the traditional British view, the Himalayan range was of strategic value as a defence barrier only, if the Tibetan plateau behind it was kept away from hostile hands. The security of the sub-continent required Tibet as a neutral buffer zone.⁴⁰ In repudiating Britain's policies, India also repudiated the requirements of national security.⁴¹ But India instead, emerging from its subordination to centuries old foreign rule, was naturally horrified at the sight of such a powerful country as China, swallowing the handful of Tibetans instead of leaving them in peace and helping them to progress.

Another consequence of Tibet's seizure has been its adverse effect on Sino-Indian relation. "The key to Sino-Indian relations lies hidden in the soil of Tibet. It is on the rocks of the roof of the world, that our friendship with China will flourish or founder."⁴² These words uttered by Prof. P.C. Chakravarti in course of an Extension Lecture at Jadavpur University many years before the sad drama in Tibet was enacted in March 1959, became truer replica of Sino-Indian relations in years to come. Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 carried with it the seeds of future conflict with India. The rebellion in Tibet was, in effect, the end of the road of Sino-Indian friendship. They have now a common frontier of some 2,500 miles, a frontier which has given rise to one of the most animated controversies of our time. The age-old friendship of China and India has been snapped as Tibet disappeared as a buffer country. The Chinese viewed India with deep suspicion on account of her friendly sympathy towards Tibet and her special relations with Sikkim and Bhutan. To counteract India and its influence, China's armies are firmly entrenched on the long frontiers of India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. The validity of the entire Sino-Indian border has been thrown into doubt. The Indian acceptance of the Chinese challenge to honour the awesome responsi-

bility to man and defend these long frontiers have slowed down the pace of economic development of the country. The actions of China in Tibet in 1959 hit India like an icy blast from the high Himalayas. China's shift from avowed friendship to implacable hostility came with a startling suddenness and the deterioration in India—China relations was as rapid as the earlier growth of friendship. This hostile attitude of China was against the Indian attitude of conciliation. No body on earth has tried harder to make friends with Chinese than Jawaharlal has.⁴³ The Chinese charge that Indians had enticed and coerced Dalai Lama and other Tibetans to come to India brought a sharp rejoinder in a note handed over to the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on October 1, 1965. It said : "The Chinese Government ought to be aware that the rebellions do not take place under enticement or coercion. Where there is oppression, there is rebellion. It is futile to blame India for the troubles in Tibet."⁴⁴

Tibet Decimated

Besides, the occupation of Tibet led to a systematic and ruthless suppression of Tibetans. It has been one of the tragic ironies of history that China in spite of her claimed long association with Tibet, has never succeeded in winning either the allegiance of the Tibetans or working out a durable understanding with them. The root of the trouble has always been Tibetan resentment against Hans imperialism. Tibet is a nation in every sense of the word, and China's refusal to accept this patent fact has been the basic cause of the clashes and strifes which have marked Sino-Tibetan relations for well nigh two centuries.⁴⁵ Again in our times, consequent to the seizure of Tibet by ruthless and militant communist regime in China, Tibet's autonomy, way of life, religion and political institutions have been decimated. The Tibetan race faces virtual extinction through the dual process of massacre and absorption. While Tibetans are being moved to other parts of China, Hans are being settled in lakhs in Tibet.⁴⁶ Through persecution and oppression, Tibet has been reduced to abject slavery. In their hundreds and thousands Tibetans fled for refuge to Sikkim, Bhutan and across the north-east frontier into India. Bereft of everything they possessed, driven to sell their earrings and amulets, corals and turquoises for a few days sustenance, the refugees sank into abject poverty.⁴⁷ The Dalai Lama's flight from Tibet and his reception by Indian officials gave the Chinese the opportunity to raze Tibet to ground. They took this opportunity to destroy the last vestiges of the Tibetan Government whose roots went deep into the past and whose authority they had tried to erode through the preparatory committee. Tibetan religion was destroyed systematically. The monasteries were desecrated, defiled and looted. Old abbots, lamas and monks were killed, dishonoured, humiliated and even forced to break their vows.⁴⁹

The tragic incidents in Tibet rudely wrenched back India's foreign policy to reality. The concept of Panchsheela met with a serious setback in the context of Sino-Indian relations. The revolt in Tibet in 1959 and the border troubles between China and India made the Panchsheel a dead issue. While India took the five principles or the Panchsheel seriously as a code of international morality, to China they were but a temporary device of diplomacy. The flight of Dalai Lama was the flight of Panchsheela from the ambit of Sino-Indian relationship. "Despite all the lip service paid to them from Peking, those who sit in the seats of power in the Tien An Men, the political centre of Chinese communism, have flagrantly violated the five principles and rendered them ineffective. The greatest political manifesto to come from the non-European world of our time has been treated by one of the contracting parties as nothing but a temporary demonstration."⁵⁰ For China Panchsheel was providential. In those balmy days she got down to the business of ruthlessly subjugating Tibet and establishing major bases there from which to threaten, and perhaps at a future date secure Sikkim and other Himalayan states.⁵¹ Hence the doctrine of Panchsheela as the "eternal basis" for relations between India and China evaporated in the heights of Tibet.⁵²

The subjugation of Tibet by the Chinese affected even the cultural intercourse among the nations of the Himalayan belt. Sikkim, nestling in the north-eastern slopes of the Himalayas, was once the meeting ground for the different streams of Asian culture. It was through this place that some of the learned scholars of old passed, carrying the message of Lord Buddha from India into Tibet, Central Asia and China. It was through Sikkim that saints and scholars from Tibet, travelled to the great centres of religion and learning in India like Sarnath, Nalanda and Varanasi. Since the seizure of Tibet, the Chinese have turned the famous passes on Sikkim-Tibet border, through which these scholars travelled, into military posts and ancient sacred Buddhist monasteries into regional army centres. It is, perhaps a sad irony that this small and tiny kingdom of Sikkim, which was once an economic and cultural bridge linking India and Tibet, should now have become a base of the opposing armies of the two countries-India and China-on account of the presence of an militant and expansionist China in Tibet.

India's present difficulties and troubles on its Himalayan border are the inevitable consequence of India's acquiescence in the Chinese aggression on Tibet in 1950. Unless, therefore, there is a resolution of the problem of Tibet, the problem of China will certainly continue to bedevil not only Sino-Indian relations but the very integrity of India as well. But an important effect of the seizure of Tibet by China was the hardened Indian commitment to the defence of Bhutan and Sikkim.⁵³

China's attitude towards the Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim.

Since assuming power over mainland China and with the seizure of Tibet in 1950, the Chinese communists have been waging what appears to be a sustained politico-military conflict to dominate Asia and achieve world stature.⁵⁴ In the Chinese quest for world power, Chou En-lai made it clear that "China's views must be heard in any settlement of any major international issue."⁵⁵ They are seeking to eliminate all major restraints to their expansion by eliminating all possible threats to their supremacy. The Chinese drive appears to be promoted by a complicated combination of ideology, Chinese arrogance and xenophobia and nationalistic imperialism.⁵⁶ Communism is the spur and the authorisation for its effort to expand, but not the sole motivation.

China's attitude towards the Himalayan kingdoms was visible within a year after the Chinese people's Republic was established. As a first step in a campaign to recapture the old Chinese empire, the Chinese had begun their long bloody effort to subdue Tibet in 1950. The seizure and subjugation of Tibet indicated that the Chinese Government was implacably determined to revive the Chinese empire with the utmost possible speed. The Himalayas which were referred to "as the guardians and sentinals of India" whose "white capped peaks welcome friends and are a warning to those of hostile intent"⁵⁷ no longer seemed true. To recreate China's primacy in Asia, the first essential was to extend Peking's hegemony over all those regions and people, which once belonged to the Chinese empire or remotely recognized her overlordship. Consequently, in 1954 China published for the first time a map which delineated its expansionist ambitions clearly and unequivocally. The map was contained in a book entitled, *A Brief History of Modern China*, published for Chinese students. The map showed the territories allegedly taken from China by the "imperialist power" between 1840 and 1919 and identified them as portions of China to be reclaimed. Apart from several other Asian countries, it included all of north-east India and Assam, Ladakh, the border states of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim.⁵⁸ Far from being more propaganda or idle boasting, it constituted a serious reflection of Peking's ambitions. Sikkim and other Himalayan kingdoms provided to the Chinese a good ground for the achievement of their objectives by incorporating whole or part of them, into the Chinese empire.⁵⁹

Speculation on China's ultimate objectives in Sikkim and elsewhere in the Himalayan area have been rampant since 1959, both in India and the west. On the basis of the Chinese propaganda, the theme most frequently propounded is that Tibet is China's palm. Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and the North East frontier Agency of Assam are the "five fingers". Now that the palm has been restored to China, the fingers should go with it.

George Patterson, a British Journalist, who has travelled and published widely on the Himalayan area, has been one of the more vigorous of this view.⁶⁰ Besides, at a mass meeting in Lhasa in July 1959, China's General Chang Kua-hua said :

“Bhutanese, Sikkimese and Ladakhis form a united family in Tibet. They have always been subject to Tibet and to the great motherland of China. They must once again be united and taught the communist doctrine.”⁶¹

Chinese propaganda followed the line that Bhutan and Sikkim were part of Chinese territory in the past and were bound to return to the (Chinese) motherland; that China would give them unconditional economic aid, that India had inherited and was preserving a vestige of British imperialism by treating Sikkim as a protectorate and exercising responsibility for the foreign affairs of Bhutan.⁶²

While it is probable that China's policy in the Himalayan area is directed towards eventual domination of the region, the ‘five finger’ theme has never been discussed in China's public statements.

Before they could have a nibble at the “fingers” the Chinese have been more evasive, however, on the question of whether the Government of India has succeeded the British as the “Paramount” authority in Sikkim as recognized in Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1880. On account of the strategic location of Sikkim, China's objective has been to question the very basis of the treaty relations between India and Sikkim under which the foreign relations, defence and communications of the latter are the responsibility of India.⁶³ Chinese diplomacy in the Himalayan States has been directed to press its advantage against India.⁶⁴ The Indian Government has on several occasions, sought to discuss matters concerning Sikkim and Bhutan with the Chinese in an effort to have Peking officially recognize India's treaty rights in these states. China has carefully avoided this, either explicitly or implicitly. However, Chou En-lai during his visit to New Delhi in April 1960 said at a press conference : “China fully recognizes India's *special relationship* with Sikkim and Bhutan.”⁶⁵ In the official Chinese version of the press conference, however, the word “proper” was substituted for “special”⁶⁶ and the Indian Government's correction of this text based upon tape recordings of Chou's statement was ignored by Peking.

Subsequently, the Chinese have always been careful to use the term “proper” in referring to India's relations with the border states. Apparently this is considered sufficiently ambiguous to avoid either a formal recognition or rejection of India's protectorate in Sikkim and its right to advise Bhutan on foreign relations.

The Chinese have even refused to discuss with India, the questions concerning Sikkim and Bhutan.⁶⁷ In the series of border talks between the officials of the two Governments in 1960-61 held at Peking, Delhi and Rangoon, the Chinese delegation consistently refused to discuss the issues pertaining to the boundaries with Sikkim and Bhutan. This serious and significant disagreement took place between the representatives of India and China, in determining the sectors of the boundary that should be discussed by the two delegations. It is here that the Chinese insisted that its boundaries with Sikkim and Bhutan "do not fall within the scope of the Sino-Indian boundary question."⁶⁸ Where this has not been feasible for practical reasons, particularly in the context of overt Sino-Indian clashes on the Sikkim-Tibet border, the Chinese have restricted themselves to protesting over the use of Sikkimese soil for India's "aggression" against Tibet.

Motivation behind Chinese Policy towards Sikkim.

The Chinese policy towards Sikkim and other Himalayan kingdoms is motivated by several urges.

Firstly, the Chinese have a historic sense of cultural superiority, the perpetual belief that the "middle kingdom" is the centre of the universe. They are driven by an implacable quest for irredentism. The Chinese urge to revolutionary empire is fortified by the feeling, drilled into all Chinese since the beginning of the Republic, that all territory ever included in the vast Manchu Empire belongs rightfully to China.⁶⁹ The Himalayan States like Sikkim also came under the grandiose schemes of China.

Secondly, while the 1959 Tibet revolt precipitated Peking's decision to press more strongly its boundary claims against India, China's determination to reach a settlement on its own terms and thus to fulfil its minimum security requirements has been a constant factor underlying its Tibet and Himalayan policy. It has clearly discernible intentions to project its influence beyond the Himalayan watershed. To protect the Tibetan highlands China believes, it must gain enough control of the border states like Sikkim, to eliminate all Indian political influence and create Chinese controlled buffer zones. Just as Imperial Britain believed that it needed Tibet as a buffer zone for India, China believes it needs the Himalayan border states as buffer for Tibet.⁷⁰ To facilitate control, Peking pressed to early completion a road network linking Lhasa and China. From Lhasa roads have been built southward to Yatung near the Sikkim frontier.

Thirdly, the Chinese conquest of Tibet was only the first step in China's *drang nach Suden*. The Chinese have never looked with pleasure the Indian presence in Sikkim and Bhutan. Consequently, soon after liberation of Tibet, they gave clear indication of their intention to follow it up by the "liberation" of Ladakh, Sikkim and Bhutan. These were described as "the four teeth with

which the Chinese will grind their way to the southern seas”⁷¹ A communist dominated Sikkim would put China on the southern slopes of the Himalayas, contiguous with the rich Gangetic plain.

Fourthly, the refusal to recognize India’s “special rights” in Sikkim makes it easier for China to encourage internal developments in Sikkim that could eventually lead to a modification of its present relationship with India. The Chinese have tried to establish direct relations with Sikkim whenever an opportunity is offered to them. The Chinese attempted to communicate openly and directly with Sikkim without New Delhi’s intercession, first when they sent a telegram to the Chogyal of Sikkim, expressing regrets on the death of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal in December, 1963 and later on when Mr. Liu Shao-Chi, Chairman of the People’s Republic of China on April 4, 1965, sent a congratulatory message to Maharaja Palden Thondup Namgyal, on his consecration as the twelfth ruler of Sikkim.⁷² The Government of India, however, lodged a strong protest with the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on April 9, 1965. It said that the Chinese Government was well aware that the external relations of Sikkim were the responsibility of the Government of India and any communication either formal or informal from the Government of China to the Government of Sikkim or the Chogyal should be channelled through the Indian Government.⁷³ Besides, to create dissatisfaction and frustration in their communications to the Government of India and in their general policy statements, the Chinese have repeatedly underlined the dangers besetting Sikkim because of the deployment of Indian troops throughout the State.⁷⁴

Fifthly, ever since the Chinese made God—fearing Tibet as part of the Chinese *lebensraum*, Peking has pinned its eyes on Sikkim on the grounds of economic and population pressures also. Sikkim has been viewed by Peking as an area into which Chinese population can expand. Sikkim and other Himalayan kingdoms being sparsely populated can provide a natural outlet to the Chinese millions.

Hence an important plank of China’s Himalayan policy has been to work against the Indian ties with Sikkim and other Himalayan kingdoms. Their interest is that relentless political propaganda against India within China, in every international forum and organization, on the periphery of India, will not only break India but also weaken and paralyse her influence in areas like Sikkim, which are so vital to Chinese ambitions and urges.

The Idea of Himalayan Federation

Another policy position sometimes attributed to China is the advocacy of a Himalayan Federation to be composed of Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan etc., presumably to be created with Peking’s blessings and guidance.⁷⁵ Debates in the Indian Parliament betrayed India’s

fears that China's ambitions in Sikkim and Bhutan were to incorporate these states in a "Himalayan federation". Several members of Parliament drew the attention of Prime Minister Nehru to the reported speeches by Chinese representatives in Tibet to this effect⁷⁶. Although China has never openly announced its support to an idea of a federation, yet through propaganda it did want to wean away these states from the influence of India.⁷⁷

It may be pointed out here that apart from the propogated Chinese scheme of a federation of the Himalayan States, there had been some thinking at one juncture amongst the politically articulate section of leadership of these states themselves that the Himalayan kingdoms of Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal should combine together as a federation so as to be able to put up stronger resistance to any possible threat to their independence.⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that at one stage apart from efforts by others the Maharajkumar of Sikkim (the present Chogyal) and his cousin Jigmie Dorji (the then Prime Minister of Bhutan) had also taken the opportunity of a visit to Kathmandu to have consultations with Nepalese leaders, when the idea of a federation was broadly, though only informally, considered.⁷⁹ The concept of a Pan-Himalayan federation embracing Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim has articulate advocates in Nepal, who see such a federation as a means of creating a "greater Nepal". The existence of Nepalese immigrants in Bhutan and Sikkim gives some reality to the scheme.⁸⁰

It is significant that from whatever source it may originate, China favours the Pan-Himalayan concept. Peking sees Nepal as a cat's paw with which to create such a federation and by so doing weaken Sikkim's and Bhutan's treaty ties with India. It will facilitate the spread of Chinese influence by subversion and political penetration and encourage anti-Indian parochial tendencies throughout the frontier area.

From the short term point of view, there seemed much to commend the idea of a federation amongst three Himalayan states. It seems very logical that the three countries combined would be more difficult for any neighbour to swallow at a single swoop than one at a time. However, from the long term there were dangerous implications with the various reservations and apprehensions implicit in the idea. The proposal for federation was eventually dropped. The non-Nepalese people of Sikkim and Bhutan do not relish being dominated by the Nepalese. The people of Nepalese origin had already flooded Sikkim and overwhelmed the land with their language and their culture. The same processes were beginning to manifest themselves in Bhutan. The southern districts of Bhutan are inhabited mainly by the Nepalese immigrants. With the prolific increase in their population, the pressures have been building up for their settlement to further

north. With Nepal as a senior partner in the proposed federation, there might be embarrassment in taking measures that would appear discriminatory against Nepalese settlers. And in the absence of restrictory measures, the Nepalese cultural stream would in time supervene over the entire Himalayan region.

Besides, the rulers of the three kingdoms will be loathe to surrender any of their personal power. Despite the high office held by some alleged advocates of the federation in Nepal, Kathmandu has always officially disassociated itself from any such proposal. No support has been forthcoming from Nepali governmental circle for pro-federation sentiment, either in Nepal or in the other Himalayan states.⁸¹

Hence the idea of a Himalayan federation, which might have been the propaganda weapon either of Chinese or the creation of some influential sections of the leadership of Himalayan states could not make much leeway. Their ethnic differences and dynastic rivalries are far too acute.⁸² The mutual suspicion and jealousies amongst the leadership of these states, the possibility of the loss of their separate identity and the threat of Nepali domination, completely swept the whole scheme away from practical implementation. Instead the other and much more absorbing problems of Chinese Threat in the wake of Sino-Indian border dispute and the necessity of economic and social transformation of Sikkim have attracted Sikkim's attention in the last one decade.

Sikkim and the Sino-Indian Border Dispute.

The Sino-Indian border dispute had a significant impact upon India's relations with Sikkim and the other Himalayan kingdoms. The question that most preoccupied the attention of Sikkim in 1962 was the all pervading shadow of the Sino-Indian border dispute which in October of that year, had erupted into an armed conflict between the two in the remote Himalayas. It was a strange irony of history that at a time, when a thaw had started gradually melting the ice of cold war between the two super-powers, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., India and China, the two biggest nations of Asia with an age-long history of good neighbourness, conscious of a centuryold common suffering under western imperialism and common tasks of gigantic reconstruction facing them for years to come, got themselves involved in a quagmire of conflict over the question of their boundaries in the high Himalayas. The whole region was set ablaze into action due to this conflict.

The Chinese invasion had brought into sharp focus the question of the future of Sikkim. In the hostile maneuver of 1962, China demonstrated her apparent intention of gaining mastery over the approaches to north-eastern India and to establish herself as the dominant political power of Asia. In fact China's national interest colided with India's in Sikkim and Bhutan where she adopted

hostile postures.⁸⁴ Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 the most dangerous spot has been the Chumbi valley, "a dagger like slice" of Tibetan territory between Sikkim and Bhutan. In an all out possible war against India, the Chinese could strive to strike southward from the Chumbi valley. In that exigency, an advance of less than eighty miles could sever a vital Indian land corridor, chopping off Sikkim, Bhutan, part of Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh from land access to the rest of India.⁸⁵ Consequently in the background of Sino-Indian border dispute Sikkim due to its strategic and crucial position, can exert an influence on the course of events far beyond its comparative strength would seem to warrant.

But in spite of the strategic importance of Sikkim, the kingdom emerged as a focus of controversy, between India and China quite late. It did not play a prominent part in the earlier stages of the Sino-Indian border dispute.⁸⁶ This delay was probably due to the fact that the Sikkim-Tibet border is the only section of the Himalayan frontier that had been delimited by treaty and demarcated on the ground during the British rule. The boundary between Sikkim and Tibet was defined by the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890 which stipulated :

"1. The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be 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.....

It is admitted that the British Government, whose protectorate over the Sikkim state is hereby recognised, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that state, and except through and with the permission of the British Government neither the ruler of the State nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal, with any country."⁸⁷

It was jointly demarcated on the ground in 1895.⁸⁸ The actual demarcation of the Sikkim-Tibet boundary was delayed by the Chinese Government's procrastination in deputing officials to a joint team. This was due, according to a Tibetan source,⁸⁹ to the non-cooperation of the Tibetan authorities, who were angered by the action of the Chinese in concluding a treaty that affected Tibet, without the prior concurrence of the Dalai Lama's Government. Tibet however, confirmed this boundary alignment in the Lhasa convention of 1904. All Chinese maps published since 1890 depicted the alignment as was defined in 1890 and demarcated on the ground subsequently.

Consequently on several occasions since 1950, China reaffirmed its acceptance of the 1890 convention including the Sikkim-Tibet boundary as demarcated. This is evident by a Chinese foreign

Ministry note to the Government of India, dated December 26, 1959, which said: "The boundary between China and Sikkim has long been formally delimited and there is neither any discrepancy between the maps nor any dispute in practice."⁹⁰ Hence, in spite of massive military build up by the Chinese along the Sikkim-Tibet border, except for a few stray incidents of intrusions, China did not seriously violate the territorial limits of Sikkim in the earlier phase of Sino-Indian border skirmishes and confrontation. However, before 1962, the Chinese soldiers on at least one occasion seriously attempted to alter the boundary of Sikkim to their advantage. When the Indian Prime Minister Nehru had visited the Sikkim-Tibet border on September 1958 on his way to Bhutan, to mark the occasion a commemorative monument was erected a few hundred yards inside the Sikkim territory. The Chinese soldiers, taking advantage of the situation tried to claim the right to go as far as the commemorative tablet, claiming that it actually marked the border between Sikkim and Tibet.⁹¹ But they could not succeed in their venture.

Since 1960, the Chinese have been more evasive, however, on the question whether the Government of India has succeeded the British as the "paramount" authority in Sikkim as recognized in the convention of 1890. Though never explicit on the subject, Chinese actions, prior to 1960, implied a recognition of the Indian Protectorate in Sikkim.

This synchronised well with the earlier phase of Sino-Indian goodwill and friendship. The Chinese position, however, changed after the happenings in Tibet in March 1959. Since 1959 her main objective has been to question the validity of treaty relations between India and Sikkim under which the foreign relations, defence and communications of the latter are the responsibility of India. The renewed Chinese interest in Sikkim after the tragic happenings in Tibet in 1959 is on account of several reasons. Firstly, in strategic terms, Sikkim provides the shortest route between Tibet and the Gangetic plain. The passes on this section of the border are low in the context of Himalayas and often not impassably snow-bound during the winter months. Once the border passes have been crossed, the Teesta river valley provides a comparatively easy access route to the plains and the one in which there is now a well developed communication network.

Secondly, Sikkim is on Lenin's classic route of communist conquest—"the road to Paris lies through Peking and Calcutta." Chinese can have a position of advantage and strength with Sikkim under their influence or possible control. Through subversion, the Chinese can possibly boost communist revolutionary base in Bengal and tribal-based political upheavals in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, by a limited military campaign or even a threat of it in the region. However, since the Chinese aggression in 1962 and to

offset the chances of a possible threat to this vital and strategic Indian territory the Indian defences have been strengthened in this region and as such chances of Chinese military campaign have been reduced to a considerable extent. Sikkim stands tough in the front-line of the defence of this area.

Lastly, like Curzon, Peking sees in Sikkim and other Himalayan kingdoms the role of a buffer state in the context of a geopolitical realism. It could provide a belt of land for defence or a frontier in depth as Curzon described it, which could not be crossed without sounding the alarm of invasion. China today views Himalayan States as its outer line of defence.⁹² To consolidate their hold on Tibet, the Chinese were looking towards the Himalayan kingdoms including Sikkim⁹³ These strategic considerations prompted the Chinese Government to put the Indian relationship with Sikkim to doubt and conflict. With this end in view, Chou En-lai, in his letter to Nehru on September 8, 1959 said :

“In your Excellency’s letter (March 22, 1959), you also referred to the boundary between China and Sikkim. Like the boundary between China and Bhutan, this question does not fall within the scope of our present discussion. I would like, however, to take this opportunity to make clear once again that China is willing to live together in friendship with Sikkim and Bhutan, without committing aggression against each other, and has always respected the proper relations between them and India.”⁹⁴

Similarly, as discussed earlier, in the series of border talks between the officials of the two Governments in 1960-61 held at Peking, Delhi and Rangoon, the Chinese delegation consistently refused to discuss the issues pertaining to the boundaries with Sikkim and Bhutan since they “do not fall within the scope of the Sino-Indian Boundary question”.

The Indian side, however, left no doubt for the Chinese that the boundaries of Sikkim and Bhutan with Tibet were the legitimate responsibility of the Government of India and hence came within the purview of these talks. The Indian Government reminded China that in the case of Sikkim, the Chinese Government had categorically recognized the continuing validity of the convention of 1890 which had expressly acknowledged India’s responsibility for the external relations of Sikkim.⁹⁵ Nehru felt it necessary to reiterate that Sikkim and Bhutan did very much come within the scope of discussions of the Boundary question. He reminded China that India had undertaken certain responsibilities for the defence of Sikkim and Bhutan. “If something happened on their borders it is the same thing as an interference with the borders of India”.⁹⁶ Similarly, the Maharajkumar of Sikkim (the present Chogyal) said in Calcutta on February 24, 1961 that the Chinese refusal to accept the special position of India in Sikkim as “pure and simple bluff”.

The Chinese talk of the "separate status of Sikkim" was designed to confuse the people of Sikkim and disturb their friendly relations with India. He said that "we are happy with our present relations with India and quite sure that India would honour the 1950 Treaty and repulse the Chinese overtures."⁹⁷

The implications of the Chinese stand, questioning the very basis of India's treaty rights and special position in the strategically located kingdom of Sikkim were ominous. The full significance of nearly eight years of "cartographic aggression" and four years of "sporadic violation" of Indian borders, became clear and served as an adequate warning for the future years to come. In fact Chinese since 1962 have been contemplating limited claims on the Sikkimese territory involving the boundary lines in the Nathu La area and several pasture lands in the northern area. The people of Sikkim could now see the designs of the Chinese Dragon rather clearly.

The massive Chinese invasion of India on October 20, 1962, the threatened attack on India across the Sikkim-Tibet border in 1965, and the artillery fire skirmishes on Nathu La in 1967 were above all, dramatic demonstrations of China's willingness to use aggression as an instrument of foreign policy in an area which sighed for peace and tranquility. Sikkim was completely exposed to the onrush of blatant Chinese aggression. The floodgates of totalitarianism and expansionism were flung wide open. Sikkim rallied completely behind India against the unabashed Chinese aggression on the territorial integrity of India with whom it had already linked its destiny. In the midst of military build up of the Chinese in the Chumbi valley in Tibet, the Maharajkumar of Sikkim (the present Chogyal) issued a statement on November 1, 1962 reiterating that Sikkim stood solidly behind India. If the Chinese attacked Sikkim, "they will not find it an easy adventure. We will show them that we can defend ourselves. Our main concern now is to extend full cooperation to Indian soldiers guarding our frontiers"⁹⁸ In view of the emergency created by the grave Chinese menace, the general elections to the Sikkim council were postponed in consultation with the representatives of all the political parties in Sikkim.⁹⁹ A state of emergency was proclaimed in the State. Steps were taken to organize civil defence, and various committees were set up for the purpose.¹⁰⁰ A consultative committee of 32 members, with diverse political opinions in the State represented on it, was set up with the Maharajkumar as its Chairman.¹⁰¹ To demonstrate Sikkim's faith in India, the Maharajkumar, who was then the virtual ruler of the state said :

"Sikkim stands firmly by the side of India in prosperity and adversity and this has been amply demonstrated by the unstinted support we have given to the Government of India in this hour of crisis."¹⁰²

Nehru to reassure Sikkim and the Indians, told the Executive Committee of the Congress Parliamentary Party that "the Government was prepared for the eventuality of Sikkim being attacked."¹⁰³ He also declared in the Rajya Sabha on February 25, 1963 :

"We have treaty relations with Sikkim under which the defence of Sikkim is the responsibility of the Government of India. We recognize fully that responsibility and we shall endeavour to discharge it fully. We have made arrangements to that end."¹⁰⁴

Boundary Alignment on the Nathu La.

China has been apparently uneasy with the boundary line in the vicinity of the Nathu La on the Sikkim-Chumbi valley border. The Chinese discovered in 1962, and even more forcefully in 1965 and 1967, that the boundary alignment in this area as demarcated in 1894-95, "places the Indian Army guarding Sikkim astride the ridge that controls access to the pass from the north. Thus, the Chinese forces stationed in the Chumbi valley can make their way upto the border area only under continuous observation of the Indian defence positions on the ridge. This gives considerable strategic advantage to the Indians. while the Chinese dissatisfaction with the boundary alignment has been made abundantly clear in a series of notes exchanged between India and China since 1963, their assertion of territorial claims in the pass areas has again been vague and subject to various interpretations. The issue first arose in the aftermath of Chinese aggression on India in 1962 and then erupted in a more violent manner during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war and again in 1967.

In a note dated January 10, 1963 to the Government of India the Chinese charged that the Indian troops had crossed the Nathu La on 28 September, 1962, intruded 300 meters into Chinese territory and constructed 39 (11 big and 28 small) pill boxes.¹⁰⁵ In its reply, dated January 16, 1963 in a note handed over to the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, the Government of India rejected the charges as 'completely groundless'. The note said :

"The Government of India are constrained to observe that the baseless charges contained in the Chinese note are reminiscent of similar groundless allegations made by the Chinese Government just before their massive attacks on the Indian border which commenced on 20th October, 1962. The Government of India hope that these unfounded charges concerning the border of China and Sikkim are not a prelude to a new aggression."¹⁰⁶

China kept on accusing India of border violations in the region. Subsequent Chinese communications on this issue, however, added a new feature which could be interpreted as a demand for the re-demarcation of the boundary in the strategically placed Pass

area.¹⁰⁷ In a note of "serious protest" on March 24 1963, the Chinese again demanded :

"The Indian side stop all its aggressive activities on the China-Sikkim border, completely dismantle the defence works, big or small, which have been illegally set up on Chinese territory and order the intruding Indian troops to withdraw immediately from Chinese territory."

It further charged India of "deliberately trying to maintain tension, upset tranquility on the China-Sikkim border and sowing discord in the relations between China and Sikkim which has always lived together in friendship".¹⁰⁸ Elaborating on this allegation in a later note dated June 4, 1963, the Chinese asserted that the boundary runs through the Nathu La and demanded that all military structures on the "Chinese side of the slope" be dismantled.¹⁰⁹ A month and a half later, on July 31 1963, China again raked up the issue by charging India in a fresh note that "military structure built by India at Nathu La clearly lie beyond the watershed and extend to the slope on the Chinese side of the Pass."

However, India rejected these "preposterous and baseless allegations" which could have only one motive," to fabricate a fictitious justification for the continuing aggressive concentration of Chinese forces on the Indian borders." In fact what the Chinese seemed to be objecting was not the "fictitious border violations" across Nathu La, but the protective defence works which India had necessarily to undertake on her own side of the border against China's avowed objective of taking over Indian territory by force.¹¹⁰

China's repeated attempts to create tension on the Sikkim-Tibet border, apart from getting a favourable ground near Nathu La, could hence be characterized as a mischievous design to contest the special treaty relationship between Sikkim and India. The leaders of political parties in Sikkim also denounced the Chinese charges of "Indian intrusion in the Nathu La region" as "undue interference in the cordial relations between India and Sikkim."¹¹¹ It may be pointed out here, that such tactics have occupied an important place in the propaganda weaponry of communist China.

Nathu La, which had been the subject of controversy since 1952 between India and China, is an extremely strategic Pass. Since the Tibet border starts from the other side of the top of the pass, which is a slope facing the Chumbi valley, where the Chinese have concentrated considerable forces, Indian troops are in a very commanding position, sitting atop a 14,600 feet high ridge overlooking the Chumbi valley. The commanding height on this 500 yards wide pass favours India. The Indians can oversee China's

military fortifications in the Chumbi valley of Tibet for considerable distance. As against this, the Chinese can only know the front line Indian defences, but they cannot possibly be expected to locate targets in the rear. With the result the Indian Army artillery retaliation can defeat all offensive Chinese designs upto a considerable long distance. It is clear that the Chinese are perturbed and unhappy over this position and want to have a firm control over the top of Nathu La, for the achievement of their ulterior motives in this region.

Secondly, the Chinese strategy has been that by repeating allegations against India of 'border violations' in the pass area, they will be able to give the impression to the people of Sikkim that India is bent upon bringing war to Sikkim. Such efforts will register a clear and firm warning to the people of Sikkim not to place too much confidence in Indian protection.

Hence, militarily Nathu La is unique. It is perhaps the only international frontier in the world at a tremendous height where the troops of two hostile neighbours confront and coexist at a very short distance. This serves as an observation post of the two countries. Nathu La hence is an acutely sensitive spot in the scheme of both Indian and Chinese defences.¹¹² The Indians have reinforced their positions since 1962, well aware that a Chinese invasion through Sikkim, could enable China to reach the Gangetic Plains. Nathu La opens the direct route to the Siliguri corridor which links up with the troubled areas of Assam, NEFA, Manipur, Mizo-hills and Nagaland, besides Bhutan and Sikkim.¹¹³

Indo-Pakistan war 1965 and Sikkim.

The Chinese being uncontented with the present position, the Nathu La border alignment was again revived in an even more vigorous fashion during the Indo-Pakistan war of August-September 1965. It was an ominous move since the time Communist China and Sikkim became coterminus following the Chinese seizure of Tibet, this was the first time that Peking had unequivocally threatened Sikkim and sent her troops in considerable strength right upto the border. This was the first time that exchange of fire had taken place between Chinese and Indian troops over the strategic passes leading to the Chumbi valley.¹¹⁴ In mid-August, when the situation in the Kashmir valley had reached critical proportions and an expansion of the conflict to other areas of India-West Pakistan border seemed imminent, the Chinese again in their proverbial copybook style sent a note to New Delhi alleging Indian troops incursions across the Nathu La and referred again to the Indian military structures in "Chinese territory". In a second note of September 8, 1965, Peking accused India afresh of intruding into China's territory and "building aggressive military structures" there. The note said:

“Facts have proved once again that India has not the slightest respect for its neighbours but makes incursions, harassment and encroaches upon them whenever there is a chance. China cannot, but pay serious attention to the Indian Government’s expansionist actions against its neighbours and strengthen China’s defences and heighten her alertness along her borders.”¹¹⁵

By mid-September, it had become apparent that the war on the Kashmir-Punjab frontier was not going well for Pakistan. China, apparently decided that a more dramatic gesture in support of the Pakistanis was needed as a booster. At 1 a. m. Peking time on September 17 1965, the Chinese foreign ministry summoned the Indian charged’ affairs, Jagat S. Mehta and delivered to him an ultimatum which read :

“The Chinese Government now demands that India dismantle all its military works for aggression on the Chinese side of the China-Sikkim boundary or on the boundary itself within three days of the delivery of the present note, and immediately stop all its intrusions along the Sino-Indian boundary and the China-Sikkim boundary, return the kidnapped Chinese border inhabitants and the seized livestock and pledge to refrain from any more harassing raids across the boundary. Otherwise, the Indian Government must bear full responsibility for all the grave consequences arising therefrom.”¹¹⁶

The border’s inhabitants were numbered as four and the livestock as 59 yaks and 800 sheep. The Indian Government in its reply dated September 17 however, rejected all the allegations levelled against India. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri read out the relevant portions of the Indian Government’s reply to Peking in the Parliament and said :

“We are informing China that its contention is incorrect. Nevertheless, as an earnest of India’s desire for peace and to give no ground to the Chinese to make it a pretext for aggression, we are informing them that we have no objection to a joint inspection of those points on the Sikkim-Tibet border where Indian personnel are alleged to have set up military structures in Tibetan territory.”¹¹⁷

Lal Bahadur Shastri giving a background to the latest exchange of notes between the two Governments said that India had constructed some defence structures on the Sikkim-Tibetan boundary in September 1962. These were not in occupation since the cessation of hostilities in November 1962. Since the Chinese alleged that these structures were on their side of the boundary, India had gone to the extent of suggesting that an independent observer be sent to the border for inspection. This suggestion was rejected by the Chinese Government which insisted on joint inspection. India has now accepted the proposal.¹¹⁸ However, Shastri told the Parliament : “the House may rest assured that we are fully vigilant and that, if we are attacked, we shall fight for our freedom with grim deter-

mination."¹¹⁰ The Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal said in Calcutta on September 17 1965, that the people of Sikkim would "resist to the last man" any aggression by China "into our territory". He strongly repudiated the Chinese allegation that India had build military fortifications on the Tibetan side of the Sikkim-Tibet border.¹²⁰ Sikkimese were undaunted by the Chinese threat.¹²¹ The people of Sikkim were not in any way perturbed by the Chinese troops activity along the Sikkim-Tibet border and the morale of the people in north Sikkim was exceptionally high.¹²²

On September 19, that is one day before it was due to expire, the Chinese extended their ultimatum for another three days until the midnight of September 22, 1965. By this time the India-Pakistan war was under discussion of the Security Council of the United Nations. The Chinese ultimatum was apparently intended to encourage Pakistan to resist the United Nations, Russian and the American pressures on the ceasefire proposal.

The Chinese, in the meanwhile, had rejected the Indian proposal for the joint inspection of the installations. The extension of the ultimatum was no more than a device to gain time to watch what comes out of the discussions in the Security Council.

On September 21, Indian and Chinese forces exchanged fire across the Nathu La on the Sikkim-Tibet border. On 20 September, the Security Council adopted a resolution calling for a ceasefire in the Indo-Pakistan war. India and later Pakistan accepted the resolution. Ceasefire went into effect on 23 September. China allowed the time limit, 22 September, of their ultimatum to expire without taking any further action. Without waiting for the return of the "captured yaks and goats", the Chinese pulled back to their side of the border. The New China News Agency attributed this to the Indian compliance with the Chinese demands. India however denied this version of the story. The "destruction of military structures" would have had to be accomplished between 19 September, the date of the last Chinese note demanding their dismantling, and 22 September. By this time, however, Chinese forces had moved up from the Chumbi valley and were entrenched on the border in some strength. It would have been impossible for the Indian troops to have moved across the border without clashing head on with the Chinese.

In New Delhi 801 sheep were paraded in front of the Chinese embassy. "Shepherds" representing the various Indian political parties led the sheep bearing placards which said "Eat us and spare the world", 'Are you going to plunge the world into a horrible war, for the sake of few sheep?'

A series of incursions by the Chinese across the Tibet-Sikkim border continued at short intervals in the months of October and November, usually coincidental with developments in the India-

Pakistan dispute. A cluster of minor incidents on the Sikkim-Tibet border, for instance, accompanied the Soviet Union's offer to mediate in the dispute and Pakistan's acceptance of the offer on 11 November 1965.

Motives of the Chinese Move

The exact motives behind the Chinese performance were obscure. Mr. Shastri told Parliament that "what China is looking for is not redress of grievances, real or imaginery, but some excuse to start its aggressive activities again, this time acting in collusion with its ally, Pakistan."¹²⁴ Others have theorised that Peking was attempting to stiffen Pakistani resolve to continue the conflict with India. China felt obliged to make some non-committal gesture at the last minute to compensate for the fact that despite her apparent pledges of support for Pakistan, she had been conspicuously inactive during the military hostilities. Hence the "ultimatum" in September, at the height of the Indo-Pakistan conflict, was a gesture meant to keep up Pakistan morale.¹²⁵ But apart from propaganda, the Chinese had done nothing to aid Pakistan significantly except perhaps, to pin down otherwise useful Indian forces along the Sino-Indian frontier.¹²⁶ But Professor William E. Griffith of Massachusetts Institute of Technology opined: "It is doubtful that Peking ever intended to use serious military force against India, the more so because Pakistan was too fearful of U.S. Intervention against Peking (and therefore in support of New Delhi) to accept major Chinese assistance."¹²⁷ The Chinese were told clearly at Warsaw, where the ambassadors of the two countries were meeting that the Americans would come into a Sino-Indian war for an extensive U.S. retaliation.¹²⁸ Hence the lack of Chinese military action indicated that Peking was probably effectively deterred by Washington from attacking India. This explains the rationale behind Peking's opening of Sikkim border which was useful for political pressure, but unsuitable for limited military assault since it was one of the best defended posts manned by the Indian forces. Notably, the Chinese further minimised their involvement by waiting until the closing days of the conflict to intrude.

Thus, the Chinese at the end of 1965 strengthened their own posture against India amid their greater failure and to wield decisive influence on the subcontinent. They had been conspicuously unable to help Pakistan or to prevent either the UN Ceasefire or the ultimate Tashkent peace.¹²⁹ The full consequence of China's blunder became apparent on January 10 1966, when the Moscow-sponsored peace conference in Tashkent ended as a victory for Soviet diplomacy.

Nathu La flare up-1967

The Sikkim-Tibet border near Nathu La was yet another scene of Several incidents in September 1967. On September 11,

1967 the Chinese troops mounted another fierce attack with field artillery and heavy mortar on Indian troop positions on Nathu La. Commenting editorially on the clash on Sikkim's border, *The times* (September 12, 1967) said that "it is more serious than the usual run of scuffles and skirmishes along the Himalayas".¹³¹

The provocation in this instance was the construction of a barbed wire fence virtually on the Nathu La boundary by the Indian troops to stop Chinese infiltration. The Chinese attempted to obstruct this work and an artillery duel ensued in which a number of men were killed on both sides.

The Government of India in a strong protest note, given to the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on September 11, 1967 said :

"Since the first week of August, strong detachments of Chinese troops have repeatedly intruded into Sikkim territory across the international border between Sikkim and Tibet and have carried out a series of increasingly serious provocations culminating in an armed attack. The Chinese Government is well aware that the Sikkim-Tibet border is a well defined international border and has been recognized as such by China. By launching an armed attack, the Chinese Government is seeking to build up tension at a point which has never been in dispute. In order to reduce tension and prevent the situation assuming a very serious aspect, the Government of India suggests both sides ceasefire immediately and two sector commanders of the respective forces meet at Nathu La."¹³²

In a new note, India had proposed to China, an unconditional ceasefire on the Sikkim-Tibet border with effect from 5 33 a.m. (I.S.T.) September 13, 1967 to prevent escalation of the latest clashes across Nathu La into a wider Sino-Indian conflict.¹³³ China made counter-allegations against India for the incidents at the border and threatened to use their Air force if the Indians did not stop firing by September 14, 1967.¹³⁴ New China News Agency described Indian proposal of ceasefire as "gross deception". It further said that they want to use the incident to spread rumours about China's threats to Sikkim, undermine the friendly relations between the people of the two countries, strengthen Indian control over Sikkim and keep it permanently as an Indian protectorate.¹³⁵

However Sikkim could not be roped in by the Chinese. It again stood solidly behind India to defend its borders. The Chogyal of Sikkim visited the forward areas and the civil defence measures were put into full gear in the Kingdom.¹³⁶ However, the shelling was stopped. But after some lull, the Chinese kept on intrusions and provocations intermittently on the border on one or the other pretext. On October 30, 1967 India protested to China against its activities on the Sikkim frontier, and conveyed to it the former's resolve to "repel any aggression against frontiers (of Sikkim), the guarding of which is its responsibility."¹³⁷

However, yet another Chinese effort to force the withdrawal of the Indian military positions from the commanding heights overlooking the Chumbi valley, where the Chinese have concentrated considerable forces, failed.

It is possible that the 1967 Skirmishes along the Nathu La might have been staged to remind nations like Sikkim, on the China's periphery that the Chinese Dragon still retains its teeth and will not hesitate to use them, if crossed. The idea could be to refurbish for the benefit of these countries the image of China as a strong and mighty power. But it could not make much impact on Sikkim, since the people and the Government there knew very well the true ulterior objectives of China. The example of Tibet is too horrible for them to forget.

However, China remains a puzzle and its neighbours like Sikkim can relax their guard only at their peril. Because the border skirmishes of September 1967 seem to be representative of a persistent pressure by China in Sikkim. This incident gives an added emphasis for the need for continuous vigilance.¹³⁸

Sikkimese Enclaves in Tibet

One other potential source of controversy between China and Sikkim has been over the several small enclaves in Tibet which had long been the private estates of the Sikkim royal family. They are located in the Szar, Dopta, Telling and Chumbi area. The total area of these four estates is about one hundred square miles. Even the Chumbi Valley had in historical times formed part of Sikkim.

Until the last decade of the nineteenth century, it had been customary for the Sikkim royal family to reside on their estates in the Chumbi valley during the summer months. However, the British stopped this practice when they took over control of the Sikkim administration in 1890.¹³⁹

The degree of authority exercised by the Sikkim Darbar over the family estates in Tibet would seem to have been limited, but there is no doubt that they enjoyed a special, position under the Tibetan administrative system. The inhabitants were exempted from custom duties and the customary Tibetan taxes on wool, salt and several other items, and they paid land revenue directly to the Sikkim royal family. They could travel between the estates and Sikkim without the permit from the Tibetan authorities. The Tibetan legal system was not in force on the estates, nor could the Tibetan authorities conscript the inhabitants as they could Tibetan subjects. A Sikkimese official, called Kutchhab, supervised these estates for the royal family from his post at Phari in the Chumbi valley.

China did not interfere with the existing administrative process on the Sikkimese estates until several years after their seizure of

Tibet in 1950. It was only in 1959, coincidental with the Tibetan uprising in Tibet, that reports of Chinese intervention in the enclaves reached the outside world. In an informal note dated 25 April 1960, India asked China to "allow facilities of movement to Sikkim" for the inhabitants of these estates."¹³⁷ The Chinese authorities apparently paid no attention to this request, and have continued to exercise the right to control all travel movements between Sikkim and Tibet.

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Sikkim—A Test Case for Indian Diplomacy

Geopolitical Problems

The 'thimble sized'¹ Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim occupies a significant position in view of its geopolitical implications. Its strategic location gives it an importance out of all proportion to its size. It stands at the cross roads of the world. Wedged in as it is between four different countries, Nepal on the West, Bhutan on the east, Chinese occupied Tibet on the north and India on the south, this land of orchids and eternal snows, today occupies a singularly unique position in the chain of the Himalayan kingdoms. Sikkim exists not only on the physical rim of the world but also on one of the most remote fronts of the cold war, the gun mounted border between the Indian and the Chinese armies.²

Although historically, Sikkim has figured prominently as a trade link between the Indian sub-continent and the heartland of Asia, the recent border clashes between China and India and the Chinese aggression on India in 1962 have further dramatized the strategic location of Sikkim and have again reminded India that without friendly Sikkim, the northern defence system would be greatly weakened and a credible Indian effort in the eastern Himalayan area would be even more difficult to sustain.³ Sikkim is on the front line in India's border dispute with Peking.⁴ Strategically it is extremely important for it lies on Lenin's classic route of communist conquest—'the road to Paris lies through Peking and Calcutta'. As such the strategic importance of Sikkim as a mountain highway to Calcutta is a fact of geography. Militarily, the state is vulnerable and could prove to be a gateway to a possible Chinese expansion and aggression to the plains of India. Sikkim's easily traversed passes like Nathu La and Jelep La open the direct route to the Siliguri corridor which links up with the areas of Assam, Manipur, Mizohills and Nagaland. The kingdom is just adjacent to the beautiful Chumbi valley, which was once the seat

of Sikkim's rulers and part of the kingdom but was taken over by Tibet in the eighteenth century.⁵ This Tibetan Chumbi valley Juts like a dagger into the Indian heartland at the lower reaches of the Himalayas.⁶ Hence Sikkim is situated directly in the path of the invading Chinese because it provides the easiest natural route between India and Tibet.⁷ To China, the high plateau of Tibet is like the palm of the hand ; with Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and the Arunachal Pradesh (former North East Frontier Agency) as the five fingers. China has the palm under its control ; now it wants to have the strategic five fingers without which the palm is not of much use. Hence as an Indian protectorate, Sikkim has been playing an important role in securing the Indian sub-continent and its way of life against communist aggression and safeguarding its own separate existence and integrity. Geopolitically, this Himalayan kingdom extends like an all too vulnerable sausage into the Chumbi Valley of the Chinese held Tibet. This makes Sikkim absolutely indispensable to India's defence and security.

It is, perhaps, a sad irony that this small kingdom which was once an economic and cultural bridge linking India and Tibet should now have become a base of opposing armies of the two countries. Nestling in the north-eastern slopes of the Himalayas, Sikkim was once the meeting ground for the different streams of Asian culture. It was through this place that some of the learned scholars of good old days passed, carrying the message of Lord Buddha from India into Tibet, Central Asia and China. Likewise it was through Sikkim that saints and scholars from Tibet travelled to the great centres of religion and learning in India like Sarnath, Nalanda and Varanasi. Since their occupation of Tibet, the Chinese have turned the famous passes through which these scholars travelled, into military posts and ancient sacred Buddhist monasteries, into regional army centres.⁸ Consequently tiny and microscopic Sikkim as compared with China's 750 million people and India's 550 million is perched precariously on an explosive frontier between these two big and now hostile neighbours.⁹ It was on the Sikkim border that the Chinese made warlike noises during Indo-Pakistan war in 1965. It was at the Nathu La in Sikkim that the biggest armed clash between India and China since the Chinese invasion of India in 1962, took place in September, 1967. Nathu La on Sikkim Tibet border is among the few spots where Indian and Chinese troops still stand virtually eye-ball to eye-ball.

However, this Chinese menace has exploded Sikkim's isolation into which it had wrapped itself for the last many decades. A major transformation is stirring in the remote highlands of this tiny state whose ruler Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal is attempting to change the middle age feudalism and herald it into the world of the twentieth century. Change, reform and development with speed can be the only answer to preserve the integrity and independence of Sikkim against the swirling currents of communism and expansionism from the north. India during last twenty five years has been con-

tributing its mite to preserve and sustain the independence and integrity of this Himalayan state.

In view of Sikkim's key and strategic position and the highly sensitive nature of its people, the Government of India will do well to treat the Chogyal and the people of Sikkim with the utmost consideration and attempt to eliminate all causes of irritation arising between the two countries. It is no secret that China has been repeatedly trying to alienate Sikkim from India to gain influence in this sensitive key region. The Chinese do not demand any territory from Sikkim, at any rate not yet, but their agents in Gangtok and elsewhere have propagated the presence of Indian troops on Sikkimese soil as a menace and an affront to the proud people of Sikkim. Since India has a special responsibility in respect of the external relations, communications, the safety of its territorial integrity and defence, it is very unlikely that it will surrender its role in a strategic area where weaker defences would be an open invitation to the adventure hungry and clever Chinese. Sikkim has become an important link in India's recently strengthened defences against China. The feverish Chinese road building activities on the Tibet side of the border have to be watched with constant vigilance. There can be no relaxation of the defence posture on the Sikkim front and all developmental activities in the State have to be correlated with it. Stability in Sikkim is essential. It is in the interest of both India and Sikkim to have the best of relations in the face of the very serious and growing Chinese menacing posture in the north. Sikkim does provide a fertile ground for anti-Indian propaganda. Consequently India has to be extremely vigilant.¹⁰ Obviously, a peaceful, stable and a non-communist Sikkim is a bulwork against Chinese expansion through this sector. More recently it has been playing a significant role in securing India against China.¹¹ Similarly, whatever the trials and tribulations, the immediate future may hold for the people of Sikkim, their long term interest, indeed their very survival against the onrushing tide of militant Chinese communism, is inextricably intertwined with that of India.¹² It is necessary, therefore to have close cooperation and coordination between India and Sikkim to make the defence measures undertaken, effective.

Community of interests between India and Sikkim

The strength and future of Sikkim lies on the one hand, in a real meaningful partnership of many elements, among them the dynamic progressive ruler, the Chogyal, the administrators, the politicians, all of whom undoubtedly have the interest of the country and the people at heart, and on the other, a friendly, sympathetic understanding between India and Sikkim since the interests of the two countries are just one. Sikkim's frontier with Tibet is being disturbed by gratuitous acts of numerous provocations by the Chinese and the defence of that frontier is India's responsibility, a responsibility which India is determined to discharge fully and without

reservations. India and Sikkim thus have a community of interests and obligations in a most sensitive area of their concern. No one will deny that smaller countries are always suspicious of the motives of their bigger neighbours. But this cannot be held against India. Despite the fact that the Indo-Sikkim treaty of 1950 affords India an enviable position, the Government of India has been most courteous in its dealings with Sikkim. India wants to see Sikkim happy and prosperous and is committed to assist the Sikkimese government and people in their development plans. Substantial aid has been given in the past and the tap of cooperation remains open all the time.¹³ Ever since India became independent, her relations with Sikkim have been close and cordial. Both India and Sikkim share with each other a rich cultural and spiritual heritage¹⁴ Sikkim in the eyes of the Government of India is a proof to the world that a small country can exist as a separate entity and its traditions, customs and beliefs can be safeguarded by an overwhelmingly powerful but friendly neighbour. Non-interference in Sikkim's internal affairs has been reiterated again and again by people in authority in India.¹⁵ Even though prior to the Indian independence, the status of Sikkim was not much different from that of other princely states in India, the ruler of Sikkim being a member of the Chamber of Princes and just after independence the preponderant Sikkim State Congress, the premier political party in the kingdom, then advocated complete merger of the state with India, the Government of India did not insist on Sikkim's joining the Indian union. Instead the Indian Prime Minister Nehru treated tiny Sikkim with the characteristic generosity in recognising its cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. It was reiterated then that that "if we bring a small country like Sikkim within our fold by using force, it would be like killing a fly with a bullet."¹⁶

India's Diplomacy on Test in Sikkim

However, of late India's relations with Sikkim for a variety of reasons have not been smooth in the recent past. An icy wind of change blows through this landlocked Himalayan kingdom. The pressures already operating on Indo-Sikkimese relations can only increase further and New Delhi's tact and diplomacy will be tested to the full in maintaining in Gangtok, a regime that not only fulfils the legitimate aspirations of the Sikkimese people, but is also well disposed to its southern neighbour. Friendship, however, cannot be taken for granted. Extreme care and patience are necessary to keep the friendly spirit alive and the warmth unceasing. Preoccupation with our own affairs has sometimes distracted public attention from events and developments in the neighbouring state of Sikkim. The necessity for paying close attention to our northern frontier persists and in this perspective Sikkim acquires an special importance. The need for mutual friendship and close cooperation is recognized by all concerned. Too much should not be taken for granted. Indian

diplomacy should be directed at removing any fear of Indian domination that might lurk in the minds of the Sikkimese, who may feel sensitive to the fact that their southern neighbour is a big country.

Sikkim in all respects is an independent State and it is only by treaty arrangements with the Government of India that its external relations are under Indian guidance and its defence is in Indian hands. It would not at all be surprising if with material and cultural advancement which, once the process start, has to-day become incredibly rapid. Economic development perhaps is not an end in itself. It gradually gives rise to many other needs, once a certain amount of progress is achieved. Of late, Sikkim has started giving thought to its political position. Sikkim, too, is touched by the modern dynamics of progress. Roads and communications have placed it in closer rapport with whatever happens outside its borders. Even more the world of ideas from which Sikkim had remained insulated through the centuries, is beginning to make its heady impact. It has begun to see that the cloistered existence which it had led through the accident of geography is no longer either practicable or desirable. All these new developments have created some minor, though avoidable, irritants between the two countries. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during her visit to Sikkim in May 1968 referred to "our little problems," because no relationship and certainly no close relationship, can be without its problems."

Sikkim Clamours for review of 1950 Treaty

Sikkim, which is the smallest of the three Himalayan kingdoms is of late agog with reports that the Chogyal is gradually working his way towards the review and revision of the India-Sikkim treaty of 1950 under which its defence, external relations and communications are India's responsibility. The Chogyal as far back as February 8, 1966, stated at his press Conference in Gangtok that "the Sikkim Government wants some changes in the treaty between India and Sikkim signed in 1950. We have mentioned this matter to the External Affairs Ministry in Delhi verbally".¹⁷ The Chogyal, however, did not spell out any details of the changes desired. He again told the visiting Indian Press correspondents on May 19, 1967 that the Indo-Sikkim treaty of 1950 had to be "reviewed" in the context of the changed situation in the last seventeen years since the signing of the treaty.¹⁸ Asked how soon he would want the review, the Chogyal said: "we wait the convenience of the Government of India. They have got more important things on their hands than we have."¹⁹ The Chogyal again did not commit himself on the exact nature of the changes that he wanted. When asked about it, he said: "they will come out of the mutual discussions. How can we dictate? Everything will be in mutual interest."²⁰

On June 16, 1967, even Sikkim's three Executive Councillors Netuk Tschering, B. B. Gurung, Nahkul Pradhan in a joint statement emphasized "the absolute necessity for a thorough change" in the Indo-Sikkimese treaty of 1950. The statement said :

"Since Sikkim signed the treaty with India, it was within her sovereign rights to demand its revision as one of the signatories..... Every country has the inherent right to exist and maintain its separate identity and to review and revise its treaty obligations in the wake of the changing circumstances".²¹

For the first time in the election campaign in March-April 1970 in Sikkim, the demand for review and revision of the 1950 treaty with India was the main election plank of the Sikkim National Party, Sikkim State Congress and Janta Party. Nahkul Pradhan of the State Congress had told an election rally at the weekly market that it was time, the Indo-Sikkimese treaty signed twenty years ago, was revised.²² But the State Congress in its election manifesto declared that 'the party seeks Sikkim's economic, social, cultural progress under the protection of India'.²³ Sikkim Janta Party was extremely outspoken about the need for revision of the treaty to remove Sikkim from the protectorate status. However, it failed to get any seat in the election to the Council.²⁴

The Sikkim National Congress under the leadership of the veteran Kazi Lhendup Dorji-Khangsarpa, is the only political party which has opposed the demand for the revision or review of the treaty. A sizeable section of Sikkimese society deplors the demand for review and revision of the treaty on account of the limitations of Sikkim to become an sovereign self reliant state. Kazi made clear his stand on this issue long back on February 13, 1966 at Gangtok when he said :

"The issue of the revision of the Indo-Sikkim treaty of 1950 is ill-timed. It is neither essential nor is it of immediate or vital importance to the people of Sikkim. The people here do not stand to get any benefit from a revision of this treaty".²⁵

"In spite of the attitude of the Sikkim National Congress, almost every body in Sikkim, the Chogyal, his councillors and a number of politically conscious people, desire review and revision of the 1950 treaty. A local fortnightly commented in its editorial :

"Whatever it be, let this be known that the Sikkimese baby of 1950 is a strapping youth of twenty two years now and as is the present day trend to-day, we shall not be satisfied with anything less than the revision of the present treaty and a complete independent status to be tied up in eternal bonds of friendship through mutual agreements and defence treaty".²⁶

Reasons for the demand for the Review of the Treaty

It will be fruitful to examine and analyse the reasons behind this demand.

1. Resentment Against Protectorate Status.

The word 'protectorate' is anathema to Sikkim. It smacks of imperial relationship. A protectorate, after all, is more consonant with the nineteenth century concept of international relations than with the world of the 1970. The industrial revolution compelled the British to seek markets and raw materials, which had necessitated the East India Company to make inroads into the Himalayan kingdoms and establish a protectorate in Sikkim. The Sikkimese contend that free India, too, perpetuated this legacy and continue to tie down Sikkim and the Sikkimese to her apron strings as bounded by the 1950 treaty.²⁷ Sikkim is smarting under the indignity of being a protectorate. The status quo for Sikkim has remained the status quo far too long. The two countries are tied together in a hopelessly outdated strait-jacket. It is said that while India advocates freedom of protectorates in the United Nations and other world forums, why it is chary of giving similar freedom to Sikkim. Even protectorates are out of place in the backward areas of Africa. This outdated ancient instrument of relationship must be replaced.

2. Sikkim's Aspirations in International Field.

Recent developments in Bhutan which culminated in her membership of the United Nations in September 1971, have intensified Sikkimese sentiments and accentuated its ambitions for a similar status in the comity of nations. The presence of two sovereign kingdoms, Nepal and Bhutan on the West and the east have created some psychological difficulties for Sikkim. Consequently, some political factions in Sikkim are determined to gain international recognition for Sikkim's separate and distinct political identity.²⁸ Frequent references to Sikkimese culture, history and political traditions reflect this interest as well as a sense of irritation that India and the outside world do not give more concrete forms of recognition to Sikkim's international status. This played a role in such ostensibly a political event as the Chogyal's coronation in 1965, the establishment of a Sikkim Council within the Asia society in New York in 1966, selection of the Buddhist delegation to the Soviet Union in 1967 and the deputation of a representative to the World Craft Council meeting at Lima in 1968.

The search for a distinct political identity has already led some Sikkimese to suggest that the state opt out of the Indian security system, revising the treaty to make this possible. As an alternative they propose that Sikkim adopt a foreign policy modelled after that of Nepal based on non-alignment in the Sino-Indian dispute and equal friendship with both of the giant neighbouring states.²⁹

But neither the Durbar nor the political parties have as yet publicly associated themselves with this position. Indeed, the Chogyal implicitly repudiated any such intention when he stated in 1967: "We have chosen to throw our lot with India. We share the ideology that you follow. This does not, however, mean merger with India."³⁰ This indicates that the terms of the treaty may be reviewed but the fact of association is not as yet a subject for any serious discussion. People in authority in the State know fully well that apart from generous financial assistance, the economy of the kingdom is dependent to a considerable extent on the purchasing power of the Indian army units stationed there and on the employment potential offered by the border roads organisation. Hence, so far this Sikkimese demand for her separate identity, has not taken the form of a public demand for diplomatic relations with other governments or even of the right to communicate with them directly rather than through the Government of India. Even the study forum members maintain that they are realistic enough to see the irrationality of Sikkim, with a population of about two lakhs and an annual revenue of 2.87 crore of rupees³¹ trying to establish diplomatic missions at the United Nations headquarters, Washington or Moscow. They, however, would like New Delhi to adopt some special device for the Sikkimese to gain an outlet to the world.³² This Sikkimese urge for a separate identity and some form of outlet to the outside world has expressed itself in undermentioned ways.

Membership of the Colombo plan and other Non-Political International bodies

In spite of Sikkim's strategic location no harm would be done if Sikkim found its way, with Indian help, to non-political and technical international organisations and forums. This will help Sikkim reap a modest benefit. A delegation of Sikkimese leaders asked the Indian Prime Minister recently that India should sponsor Sikkim for the membership of the Colombo Plan.³³ The Sikkimese may benefit from the exchange of views and experience available in an international organisation like the Colombo Plan. In spite of the fact that Bhutan, ever since it became a member of Colombo Plan, has not gained much in terms of aid from the Colombo Plan and that India still supplies the bulk of it, it may be a matter of prestige for Sikkim to join an international organisation which includes a large number of Asian countries. An official spokesman of the Sikkim Government has said recently that Sikkim has sought India's permission to become a member of the International Postal Union.³⁴

Foreign Visitors and Tourists

Of late there has been dissatisfaction on the question of the procedure under which foreign visitors (other than Indians) are admitted to the kingdom, which is still a prerogative of the Ministry of

External Affairs, Government of India. The Sikkimese consider it inequitable and arbitrary that nearby Darjeeling and Kalimpong or the more strategic and politically sensitive Kashmir Valley are easily accessible to the tourists but Sikkim is not.³⁵ Sikkim is eager to have the country opened to tourists. It has immense potentialities for the tourist trade. Sikkim is endowed with gleaming mountains, thundering falls, vivid scenery and superb alpine lands, surpassing even Switzerland as manifested by the north and west Sikkim trekking spots.³⁶ The economic benefits of tourism are an obvious attraction, to the Sikkimese. The members of study forum, therefore, have pleaded for the relaxation of the inner line permits issued to the foreigners by New Delhi.³⁷ The so called 'Inner Line' was the creation of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 during the British rule in India.³⁸ The Chogyal also while talking about tourism said : "Sikkim was very keen, but as it was a sensitive area, the Government of India at present did not seem to be too keen."³⁹

Scholarships for Sikkimese students

India has also been criticized for not being more responsive to Sikkimese interest in sending students abroad for higher studies.⁴⁰ While there does not appear to be any outright ban on Sikkimese students studying outside India and several are currently enrolled in American, Canadian and British universities, but there is no foreign fellowship programme for Sikkimese as such and foreign exchange is made available only from India. Although the Government of India has been generous in allotting seats at the Indian universities for various courses, but there is a craze in Sikkim that they should be sent to western countries for higher studies. Consequently there is a feeling in Sikkim that their students are being denied the right to participate in the world community.⁴¹ The situation, to them, can only be remedied by a revision of the treaty. Scholarships given to Sikkimese for studies in India and abroad can be seen from the Table given below.⁴²

TABLE A

The number of scholarships for School studies and Degree and Diploma courses granted to Sikkimese students since 1953.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Degree/Diploma Course</i>	<i>School Studies</i>
1953-54	1	—
1954-55	1	—
1955-56	2	—
1956-57	7	—
1957-58	7	10
1958-59	6	10

1959-60	8	10	
1960-61	7	10	
1961-62	8	10	
1961-62	2*	2*	Additional
1962-63	8	10	
1963-64	15	20	
1964-65	22	25	
1965-66	No scholarship given this year		
1966-67	23	6	The number was deliberately kept low as the session had already started
1967-68	15	10	
1968-69	23	10	
1969-70	18	10	
1970-71	22	10	
	195	153	
Total			

Separate Foreign Exchange Account and direct Export facilities

Sikkim has demanded from India, facilities for direct export of its products through an Indian port and a separate foreign exchange account with the Reserve Bank of India.⁴³

At present exports from Sikkim are made under the Indian Customs Act and as such their goods are exported as Indian goods with the foreign exchange earnings going to Indian account. But India has been meeting all foreign exchange requirements of Sikkim.⁴⁴ However, the then Indian Deputy Prime Minister, Desai assured Sikkim that efforts were being made to find foreign markets for Sikkim's products like cardamom etc.⁴⁵

The Proposed establishment of the Sikkim Council

The Asia Society, which is a well known and well endowed private American institution for the promotion of academic and cultural relations with Asian countries planned to set up a 'Sikkim Council' in the United States in October, 1966. It has already established Councils for India, Japan and several other Asian countries.

In view of India's responsibilities for Sikkim's defence, foreign relations and communications under the 1950 treaty and the tiny Himalayan's state's strategic location on the Tibet border, the Indian diplomats felt that the creation of Sikkim Council might provoke unnecessary controversy over Sikkim's international status at a time when it was an area of tension between India and China. Besides the Indian Government did not welcome independent foreign contacts with Sikkim. This was made known to the United States Government and the Asian Society.⁴⁶ In response to the Indian objections, the Asian Society subsequently abandoned its plans to form a Sikkim Council.⁴⁷ This episode left behind some heart-burning among the Sikkimese and an urge to have their separate identity.

Sikkim Delegation to World Crafts Council, Lima (Peru)

Sikkim displays extreme keenness to get representation on forums and Conferences abroad. Another incident that created bitterness between Gangtok and New Delhi was the incident of Sanu Bhai Sakyā, an eminent metal craver, who though ultimately was permitted to the World Crafts Council at Lima, could not make the scheduled trip from Calcutta on August 17, 1968 on account of delay in procedural formalities not being completed in time.⁴⁸ Although two postgraduate Sikkimese students studying in the United States represented Sikkim with an excellent and comprehensive set of Sikkimese handicrafts at Lima Council, but the whole incident left Sikkimese sore and gave further strength to those who are the supporters of the demand for an independent Sikkim.

However, Sikkim was made a full fledged member of the World Craft Council on August 28, 1968 at a meeting of the World Craft Council General Assembly.⁴⁹

Wedding Focus on the status of Sikkim

The Chogyal of Sikkim was invited by the Government of Nepal to attend Crown Prince Birendra's (the present ruler) wedding at Kathmandu which was to be celebrated on February 27, 1970.⁵⁰ But the Chogyal after having first accepted the invitation, subsequently cancelled his proposed visit to Nepal because he was to be accorded the status of head of the Government instead of head of the State.⁵¹ The Treaty of 1950 between India and Sikkim stipulated that "the external relations of Sikkim, whether political, economic or financial, shall be conducted and regulated solely by the Government of India and the Government of Sikkim shall have no dealings with any foreign power".⁵²

It is understood that the Nepal Government told the Sikkimese authorities that they had decided to accord head of the Government

status to the Chogyal on the advice of the Government of India.⁵³ The politically conscious Sikkimese were greatly upset over this incident. Instead the Chogyal sent an official delegation consisting of Executive Councillors and high officials, which according to Sikkimese spokesman was given the status of 'ministers'.⁵⁴ It may be pointed out that Sikkim has no such institution as that of Ministers.

3. Emergence of Sikkim Youth Study Forum

The present clamour for the revision and review of the 1950 treaty has its origin in the setting up in 1964 of a Sikkim Youth Study Forum. Its origin is symptomatic of the Indo-Sikkimese crisis. It was born out of a confrontation and conflict between Sikkim and New Delhi over Sikkim's Second Five Year Plan. It is said that a Planning Commission team had formulated certain proposals for the Second plan in consultation with Sikkimese officials. But these were rejected by the Indian External Affairs Ministry on the ground that it was not satisfied with the team's assessment of the achievements and failures of Sikkim's development plans.⁵⁵ The alleged unfriendly attitude of the south block was taken to mean that India was giving aid to Sikkim "without grace". The Study Forum, consisting of young officials and the intelligentsia thought that Sikkim should have the right to articulate its views on the economic development and other aspects of life.⁵⁶

The Study Forum which comprises entirely of young and educated government servants in Sikkim, has emerged as Sikkim's third political force. The forum has gradually extended its activities to cover political issues, including Sikkim's relations with India. They freely and loudly speak about what they call "the over bearing attitude of India towards Sikkim".⁵⁷

The forum, which in a way represents Sikkim's intelligentsia and has unquestionably some brilliant members, did cause some misgivings on account of their being the Chogyal's employees and in politics, not only in New Delhi but also among Sikkim's professional politicians who saw in them an insipient threat.

4. Sikkimisation of Services

What could be called the Sikkimisation of services from Indian to Sikkimese is being agitated for by the younger Sikkimese element in the administration holding junior positions. Even the position of the Dewan, which since 1963 came to be designated as the Principal Administrative Officer and since May 1969 as the Sidlon of Sikkim,⁵⁸ has been the focus of critical attention of some of the Sikkimese in and outside administration. Besides a number of technical and top administrative posts are being manned by the Indians on deputation. The demand to remove the Indians serving in the administration is bound to grow in strength with

increasing number of graduates returning from the Indian and foreign universities. But this would not entail any revision of the 1950 treaty since no Indian Officer in the Sikkim Service holds his appointment on the basis of the treaty.

The dissatisfaction in this sphere is on account of great disparity between the emoluments drawn by the Indians and their local counterparts. For instance, the Director of Agriculture, an Indian, draws twice as much as the Chief Secretary. Similarly, the Chief Medical Officer, the Director of Education and the Financial Adviser, all Indians, draw much more than the Sikkimese holding similar posts.⁵⁹

It may be pointed out here that since India is meeting the entire cost of development, it would have been better if these experts from India would have been loaned to Sikkim administration as advisers and their salaries directly disbursed by the Government of India. That would have taken away a major source of criticism that high salaries of Indians were burden on the meagre resources of the administration.

While there is general agreement on the necessity to Sikkimize the administration, there are many obstacles, both technical and political to its accomplishment. In the first place, the Indian officers in Sikkim are not there as a result of pressure exerted by New Delhi but because of the dearth of qualified Sikkimese for these posts. While this situation has improved considerably during the past decade because of the expansion of educational facilities and opportunities, it is still imperative to recruit a number of personnel in technical and educational fields from outside the State. Thus Sikkimization will have to be a relatively slow and gradual process if the quality and efficiency of the administration are not to be seriously impaired. Plans cannot wait for men to man them. The Government of India had to send a relatively large contingent of experts to help the Sikkimese until they are capable of taking over.⁶⁰ However, the Indian authorities are not opposed to a gradual reduction in the number of Indian officers in the Sikkim service. Indeed, India has provided the necessary opportunities for education and specialized training in administrative and technical subjects for a large number of Sikkimese, presumably with the understanding that they would be absorbed eventually into the Sikkim administration replacing the Indians. Even with respect to the most sensitive political administrative appointment, Sidlon of Sikkim, which was held by an Indian, I.S. Chopra, is not on account of pressure from New Delhi, as is sometimes alleged in Sikkim, but rather the inability of the Darbar and the Political parties to agree upon a mutually acceptable candidate. However, Chogyal took over himself the direct control of Administration from June 1, 1972 and the Sidlon relinquished the executive functions of his office with effect from May 31, 1972.⁶¹ However, on account of the happenings in 1973 and the May 1973

Tripartite Agreement, it has been decided that to head the administration in Sikkim "there shall be a Chief Executive, who shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the nomination of the Government of India". He shall have a special responsibility to ensure the proper implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes in Sikkim, the smooth and efficient running of its administration, the continued enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms by all sections of the population of Sikkim, and the optimum utilization for the benefit of the people of Sikkim of the funds allocated for the economic and social development of Sikkim. The present incumbent is Shri B.S. Das. The Chogyal, according to the new agreement, has been made a constitutional monarch.

5. Economic Reasons

The economic effects of Sikkim's subordinate position in the Indian defence and trade system has also given impetus to the demand for a review and revision of the 1950 treaty. A more critical issue was Sikkim's dissatisfaction with the system under which India collected and retained excise duties on goods imported into Sikkim from India. The 1950 treaty laid down that the Government of Sikkim agrees not to levy any import duty, transit duty, or other import on goods brought into, or in transit through Sikkim; and the Government of India agrees not to levy any impost or other duty on goods of Sikkimese origin brought into India from Sikkim.⁶² Hence Sikkim's three Executive Councillors in a statement said :

"To-day 12 crore rupees financial aid given to Sikkim by the Indian Government has certainly increased considerably the revenue of Sikkim but this aid which has generated an increase in the revenue, has been more than offset by Indian excise duty levied on all goods imported to Sikkim from India which amounts to nearly a crore of rupees per annum and has not been transferred to Sikkim so far."

A lot of hue and cry was raised over the issue in Gangtok. However, the Government of India agreed to refund the Central Excise Duty levied on articles coming into Sikkim from India.⁶³ The amount of refund of late has been raised to Rupees One crore twenty lakhs per annum.⁶⁴

Several Sikkimese leaders have also suggested that India should either substantially increase the amount of aid given for development purposes or else allow Sikkim to supplement its existing sources of support. A section of Sikkimese people would seem to favour direct economic relations with countries other than India. But under the treaty of 1950 the external relations of Sikkim, whether political, economic or financial, shall be conducted and regulated solely by the Government of India; and the Government of Sikkim shall have no dealings with any foreign power.⁶⁵ Hence in view of these treaty

stipulations anything like official foreign aid programmes or direct trade relations with foreign countries would still seem out of question. Even the Indian Finance Minister Morarji Desai, made it abundantly clear during his goodwill visit to Sikkim in March 1968 that the Government of India is not disposed to approve foreign collaboration in the development of industries in Sikkim.⁶⁶ Recently the External Affairs Ministry asked Sikkim to establish a watch factory in collaboration with Hindustan Machine Tools rather than Swiss collaboration for which the Chogyal had received the necessary promise.⁶⁷ Perhaps India is apprehensive about the possible consequences of opening of Sikkim to World power politics and competing bloc machinations.

But amidst all these talks of the need to review the treaty it may be mentioned that Sikkim occupies one of the most strategic and exposed position in the incredibly complex and volatile frontier region between India and China. India has a vital stake in Sikkim with the Chinese well entrenched in the Chumbi Valley on Sikkim-Tibet border. Therefore, while the Chogyal and his people want a review of the 1950 treaty, but he has said on several occasions that whatever be the pattern of Sikkim's association with India in the future it will not affect the mutual imperatives of defence and security. The 1950 treaty stipulates.

“The Government of India will be responsible for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim. It shall have the right to take such measures as it considers necessary for the defence of Sikkim or the security of India, whether preparatory or otherwise, or whether within or outside Sikkim. In particular, the Government of India shall have the right to station troops anywhere within Sikkim.”⁶⁸

Sikkim is well aware of the perils of independence without the defensive shield of India. Sikkimese fully recognize China as a threat to their country. The Chinese motives and intentions were made clear to the Sikkimese in the behaviour they meted out to the Tibetans. Hence Sikkim's need for Indian protection against a possible aggressive Chinese posture is clear to them. The Chinese military preparations and their road building activities on the Tibet side of the border have to be watched with constant vigilance. There can be no relaxation of the defence posture in Sikkim and all development activities have to be correlated with it. Hence any policy involving major changes in the present set up would create unsettled conditions from which only the Chinese can benefit. The suggestion that India should look after Sikkim's defence only without controlling the latter's foreign affairs and communications is impracticable and full of dangerous potentialities. The moment Sikkim takes charge of its external affairs, it is likely to become a hot bed of international intrigues and manoeuvres. Sikkim will not be able to stop for long the foreign powers to establish their diplomatic missions for long in this strategically situated kingdom. It will not be possible for her to discriminate bet-

ween one power and another. Besides, how can India look after the defence of Sikkim without control over its external affairs and communications does not appear to be a rational proposition.⁶⁹ Communications are nerves of defence strategy and planning. Besides, the maintenance of Communications and roads in a difficult mountainous terrain entails a very heavy expenditure and Sikkim with a annual revenue of 2·87 crore rupees has thus neither the resources nor the technical know how for such a task. Besides, a small country with a population of about two lakhs people cannot afford to maintain military preparedness on such a large scale. India spends about five times the normal budget of Sikkim on its defence arrangements and maintenance of roads and communications in Sikkim. If history is any guide, there have never been enough men and arms to defend her borders against invaders from north, south, east or west. This midget State naturally never had resources enough to stand alone as a sovereign political entity. The Tibetans came from the north to conquer the Lepchas. The British entered from the south, fashioning her present shape and size. The Nepalese and the Bhutanese led invasions from the west and the east. In an old state Chronicle of Sikkim there is a lament that the kingdom has been shorn by "powerful hordes of elephants from the south, active hordes of monkeys from the west, Cunning hordes of foxes from the north."⁷⁰

Whatever its own economic difficulties, India has never drawn back from giving all possible economic aid to Sikkim and has shown full appreciation of Sikkimese national aspirations. The Indian Government have financed all the development plans since 1954. The promptness with which India, made a grant of a crore of rupees to Sikkim immediately to meet the natural disaster of October 1968, was a mark of India's continuing interest in the development of its northern neighbour. Besides during their 1968 goodwill visit to this landlocked Himalayan kingdom, the then Deputy Prime Minister Morarji Desai and the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi gave assurance of continued aid and assistance. Therefore, the Chogyal said, "we have gone very far much faster than our neighbours."⁷¹

Demand for the review of the treaty an emotional urge

But the demand for the review of the 1950 treaty is an emotional urge and any amount of money or grant of concessions will be of no avail unless this question of Sikkim's status is attended to immediately with frankness. No relationship and certainly no close relationship can be without its problems. Sikkim is bestirring itself to a new life and new aspirations. Indo-Sikkim relations alone cannot remain frozen while so much else is in flux. But they are capable of quick and reasonable solution because basically, Indo-Sikkim relations rest on mutual goodwill and understanding.

Unfortunately, though there has been clamour in Sikkim for some time past about the review and the revision of the Indo-Sikkim

treaty of 1950, neither the Chogyal nor other governmental and party leaders in Sikkim have explicitly and consistently defined the lines and objectives on which the review of the treaty is desired. Suggestions from non-official sources have varied from the listing of a few minor grievances to the demand for a total and complete independence and membership in the United Nations and other international organisations.

New Delhi has all along been a little more apologetic than was perhaps called for. It seems, it is afraid of putting the facts squarely. But such a policy is fraught with grave consequences since it leads to the deepening of suspicion. India has been accused of having sinister designs on Sikkim. Unless there are direct talks across the table and the whole issue is straightened out thread bare, vested interests will flourish by instigating the simple and God fearing Sikkimese. For example, the Pakistani press over played Sikkim's desire to change the Indo-Sikkim treaty of 1950. The 'Dawn' commented editorially :

"The demand for change stems from the compulsions of the unbearable, oppressive situation created by India in the State. In 1950, India arrogated to herself the right to 'protect' Sikkim and look after her foreign relations under an unequal treaty, she forced on a small neighbour.....culturally, ethnically and in all other important respects, the hillmen of Sikkim are a projection of Tibetan society and they have the least affinity with the plainsmen from India.....Delhi would thus be ill-advised to ignore the intensity of popular feeling behind the new demand for change."⁷²

Similarly, a weekly publication in Nepali from Biratnagar commented :

"According to news received here, it is learnt that the king of Sikkim was obliged to stay back from attending the marriage ceremony of his Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Nepal on account of protocol obstacles put forward by the Government of India.....It may be remembered that Sikkim is an independent country with monarchical government. When she was undeveloped, India managed to appropriate control over her defence and external affairs. This has brought rude shocks to the independence and the pride of Sikkim on many occasions, a fact being widely discussed throughout the world now".⁷³

Consequently New Delhi has to be extremely vigilant. Recent experience underlines the danger of taking our friends for granted. Their friendship has to be constantly won by voluntary adjustments to accord with the changing times. A perpetually anti-Indian base may mean a breeding ground for interests alien to both India and Sikkim. The two sides should review the relationship and arrive at mutually arrived decisions, without ignoring the realities, in a spirit of mutual accomodation and goodwill, devoid of bitterness and ill-will. It is

fruitful to recall that Indira Gandhi said in her public meeting at Gangtok on may 5, 1968 : "Our relationship is historical but even then it is essential that we should meet from time to time to exchange views.....Our aim is the welfare of both.....we want that our relations should be based on understanding, cooperation and mutual help."⁷⁴

Indian leaders should visit the state frequently for more intimate and first hand appreciation of the problems. By such visits many a small differences and irritants could be sorted out, which though they may appear insignificant to New Delhi, carry vital psychological importance to a small neighbour like Sikkim. True, the differences have been comparatively minor and in many cases, avoidable irritants, engendered at times by an exaggerated sense of sovereignty on the part of Sikkim and at times due to unimaginative and bureaucratic handling of issues by Government of India agencies, particularly the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi and the Political Officer in Gangtok. For instance, a number of years ago, Sikkim asked for an HMT Watch making unit, a request to which the Government of India paid no heed. It was only when the Chogyal received a promise of Swiss collaboration for such a project that the Ministry of External Affairs got up and suggested that it be done by HMT and the Watch manufacturing unit is now on the cards.⁷⁵ Another small avoidable protocol incident took place at the time of Exhibition of flowers, photographs and Driftwood and a Dog Show organized by the Information Service of India, at India, House Grounds on September 26, 1970 in Gangtok. The Gyalmo of Sikkim was the Chief Guest. About 100 people including the Executive Councillors and high officials of the Sikkim Darbar were invited. One of Executive Councillors was feeling so much irritated and upset that apart from the fact that no one was there to receive him, he could not get a chair to be seated comfortably. Almost every one from the India House was busy looking after the Gyalmo.⁷⁶ Besides, Sikkimese feel upset about the procedure and number of scholarships awarded to Sikkimese in Indian universities. Sometimes scholarships are awarded so late that admissions are closed in the institutions of learning in India to which the selected Sikkimese students are deputed, resulting in lot of harassment and frustration.⁷⁷ Almost every one in Sikkim seemed to be upset over scholarships issue. Such occasional acts of tactlessness and even discourtesy by the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi and the Political Officer in Gangtok sharply remind Gangtok of its dependent status. In the cool and calm, but politically surcharged atmosphere of the smallest but sophisticated capital Gangtok, such issues are discussed threadbare. Sometimes the indignation mounts out of all proportion to the incident itself.

Consequently, Indian diplomacy should be directed at removing any fear of Indian domination that might lurk in the minds of the

Sikkimese who may be sensitive to the fact that their southern neighbour is a big country. In all exchanges and dealings with Sikkim, India should be extremely cautious and courteous. It is imperative that relations with the strategic Himalayan kingdom should be stabilised at the friendliest possible level at a time when the entire power equation in south and east Asia is changing with the admission of communist China in the United Nations in October 1971. The need here is for sympathy and caution. If the Chogyal of Sikkim wishes to follow his royal neighbour Bhutan in issuing passports, postage stamps, raising an army and seeking membership of the United Nations and other world bodies, he has to look to his home and Sikkim's internal problems. India has a responsibility not only to the palace but to the people of Sikkim also. Sikkim's peculiar demographic composition makes internal stability between Nepalese and Bhutia-Lepchas as desirable as it is difficult to attain. People of Nepalese origin still complain of discrimination in the selection of jobs and scholarships in favour of numerically small Bhutia-Lepcha community.⁷⁸ But on India's part any insistence on treaty rights and the argument that there is a difference in the status of the two Himalayan kingdoms of Bhutan and Sikkim, has only legalistic validity. Practical politics demands the evolution of a *modus vivendi* that satisfies Sikkim without jeopardizing India's security. There have also been disturbing reports of contacts between the Chogyal and foreign Power. If the weakening of Sikkim's ties with India was indeed the ulterior motive of Sikkim's ruling elites the popular forces have acted just in time to avert a situation that would have paved, the way for foreign interference in a sensitive region on India's border.

All this is not to imply that relations between India and Sikkim are devoid of bright spots. Sikkim's advance has been possible largely because of the friendly assistance received from India. However, it is a truism that such a progress would have been possible without able local leadership which Sikkim has provided in good measure. Perhaps the rate of growth would have been faster still, if defence had not claimed a big share of investment. If the aggressor cannot be held at bay, there is not much to get from the processes of development. If economic development is to bear fruit and render help and assistance to the people, the country must be saved from the possible greedy clutches of an expansionist neighbour. Since Sikkim has become an important link in India's recently strengthened defences against China, it is in the interest of both India and Sikkim to have the best of relations in the face of the very serious and growing Chinese menace in the north. Though defence of Sikkim under the 1950 treaty is the exclusive responsibility of India, it is necessary to have close cooperation and coordination between India and Sikkim to make defence measures effective. It was probably in this gesture that the Chogyal during his 15 days visit to India in 1967 said: "Sikkim is firmly wedded to India. You may be sure that our bonds of brotherhood will grow stronger and stronger as time

goes on.”⁷⁰ The Indian views were reciprocated by the Indian Political Officer in Gangtok, G. S. Bajpai on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of India’s independence at Gangtok in August 1972:

“Those living in Sikkim had witnessed during the past twenty years strengthening of special and unique relationship between India and Sikkim, based on identity of interest and views.

“In striving for the development and well` being of India, we will not be forgetful of our commitments to the welfare of Sikkim’..⁸⁰

SIKKIM’S NEW ERA

But the Sikkim’s landscape has changed considerably since April 1973. All the important political parties in Sikkim have reiterated in the Tripartite agreement on the need of strengthening the Indo-Sikkim cooperation and inter-relationships. They have reaffirmed that the Government of India are solely responsible for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim and for the conduct and regulation of the external relations of Sikkim whether political economic or financial. The Government of India re-affirmed their determination to discharge these and their other responsibilities for the benefit of the people of Sikkim, for their communal harmony, good administration and economic and social development. Obviously, the issue of Sikkim’s relations with India cannot be indefinitely isolated from the framework of a lasting internal settlement. India has good reason, therefore, to move warily and work for a system that will widen the democratic base of government inside Sikkim and improve Sikkim’s relations with India as well. The May 1973 agreement shows in some measure the immense faith reposed by the people of Sikkim in the Government of India. In almost all internal matters greater Indian involvement was sought by the leaders. India will be closely associated in achieving constitutional reforms, administrative efficiency, economic progress and communal harmony.

The treaty of 1950 is an agreement between a sovereign country (India) and the former’s protectorate Sikkim. The document of May 1973 is an agreement between the sovereign Government of India, the chogyal of Sikkim representing the established government of Sikkim (a protectorate) and the Political parties of Sikkim. The 1950 Treaty relates primarily to the status and relationship of India and Sikkim. The May 1973 agreement deals primarily with the social, political, constitutional and administrative problems of the kingdom. The aforesaid agreement devolves upon the three parties the responsibility of not only maintaining good administration but to ensure the further development of constitutional government in the kingdom. Hence the 1973 agreement is an extension of the treaty of 1950. It has brought to a fruitful completion the work begun in

1950. If the treaty of 1950 was signed by two parties, the Government of India and the chogyal, the 1973 Agreement carries the agreement of three parties, the Government of India, the Chogyal and the leaders of the Political Parties of Sikkim.

However, the Government of India shall have to act with tact and wisdom to keep Sikkim as a satiated friend and neighbour. Similarly harmonious relations with India are necessary for tiny land locked kingdom of Sikkim also. The Chogyal has rightly dubbed as "simply nonsense" the allegation that he had looked towards the west for inspiration and assistance. He stated emphatically. "Our trust and hope is with India. It will be madness to expect that any power could bypass India and come to tiny Sikkim."⁸¹ There is nothing like Sikkim problem. The minor irritants in the 1950 Treaty can easily be removed by fair, fruitful and honest discussions.

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April 1974 Elections and its Impact on Sikkim

1974 shall always be remembered as a momentous year in the political and constitutional history of Sikkim. For the first time Sikkimese people went to poll to elect 32 member Assembly on the principle of "one man one vote". The Sikkim congress party said in its election manifesto :

"Last April (1973) the people of Sikkim awoke to freedom. For years they had waited patiently for their Government to adjust to the spirit of the times and the deep felt desires of the common man, but their need for a democratic regime and a people oriented administration was ignored. Even the limited democracy they had been allowed proved a fraud when the elections of last January-February (1973) were found to have been nothing more than an instrument of the vested interests to control the people. The people were then forced to rise and show that their Fundamental Rights could no longer be denied. Their heroic struggle resulted in the Agreement of May 8th (1973) between the leaders of political parties, the Government of India and the chogyal which finally gave Sikkim the framework of a democratic constitution".

Drastic changes promised by Sikkim Congress

The whole kingdom was agitated to usher in to power their first ever representative government. The elections to the Assembly were conducted and completed under the supervision of the Election Commission of India in three stages. After 1973 upheavals the Sikkim Janta Congress and the Sikkim National Congress had merged into one single unified Sikkim Congress. It promised drastic changes in Sikkim. It said in its election manifesto :

"The Sikkim congress is contesting the present Elections with the following programme for the amelioration of our Sikkimese masses :

Political

The Sikkim Congress will ensure the establishment of full-fledged Democracy, the Rule of Law, and a democracy-oriented administration in Sikkim whereby Sikkimese peoples shall enjoy their basic human rights.

Social

The Sikkim Congress shall ensure social justice and social security to every Sikkimese whereby every Sikkimese can exist with dignity as a useful member of our Sikkimese society.

Planning and Development

The Sikkim Congress gives an assurance that it will usher in essential economic equality by removing the existing grievous country-wide disparity in Sikkim between the "haves" and the "have nots" so that no Sikkimese will be bereft of his birthright of food, shelter and employment.

(a) The Sikkim Congress, with a view to raising the standard of living of our Sikkimese masses, shall endeavour to give priority to the development of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, Health, Education, Mining, Industries, Hydro-Electric Power, Communications, etc. in Sikkim.

(b) The Sikkim Congress will draw up schemes for the immediate and comprehensive solving of the unemployment problem obtaining in Sikkim, and particularly among the educated unemployed.

(c) The Govt. of India has generously undertaken the planned-development of Sikkim from 1954 onwards, and crores of rupees have already been provided to the State. The Sikkim Congress will ensure that all future assistance afforded to us will be purposefully utilised, and we shall consider whether the Govt of India should be approached for increased assistance for the further economic and social amelioration of our country.

(d) In particular, the Sikkim Congress shall see to the comprehensive development of the villages of Sikkim, in all their aspects, by making appropriate and correct use of the aid-money.

Welfare

(a) The Sikkim Congress will establish an all-purposes Degree College in Gangtok to enable our students to pursue their higher studies in their own homeland, and that too, at lesser expense and with increased facilities such as hostel accommodation, etc.

(b) The Sikkim Congress shall treat as priorities the establishment of more hospitals, mobile clinics, dispensaries, maternity homes,

and all such other amenities as may be required for the proper treatment of the ailing and the aged.

(c) As far as is feasible, the Sikkim Congress shall arrange for supply of drinking-water and irrigation to be implemented in all the villages of Sikkim.

(d) The Sikkim Congress shall assiduously work for the welfare of our Sikkimese ex-soldiers and their family members, and shall see to their easy rehabilitation in Sikkim.

(e) The Sikkim Congress shall afford every incentive to the business community in Sikkim for the smooth running of their business.

(f) The Sikkim Congress shall safeguard the legitimate interests of Government servants particularly the lower-income group.

De-Centralisation of the Administration

The decentralisation of the administration is a *sine qua non* for the achievement of a true and successful democracy without which the aspirations of the Sikkimese people for democracy can never be satisfactorily fulfilled. As such, the Sikkim Congress stresses the need for the establishment of the institutions of Local Self-Government in Sikkim. Towards the achievement of this, the Sikkim Congress has the following programme :

(a) The establishment of a Municipality in Gangtok.

(b) To introduce a true and comprehensive Panchayati System suitable to the genius of our country and our people.

Safeguard of Minorities and the Backward Class

(a) The Sikkim Congress shall introduce a special programme for the safeguard of the interests of the minority communities and the backward class in Sikkim.

(b) The Sikkim Congress will ensure the development of the Jongu area in North Sikkim and that, too, in consonance with the aspirations of the Lepcha aborigines so that they can be brought into the mainstream of Sikkimese life.

(c) The Sikkim Congress will safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of those people of non-Nepali and non-Bhutia, non-Lepcha origin who have already been integrated into Sikkimese society.

Land Reforms

The Sikkim Congress will work to ensure :

(a) The immediate abolition of the Private Estate.

(b) Carefully work-out schemes for immediate land reforms in Sikkim. No land must be left untilled and no tiller left without land.

The Sikkim Congress will seek to strengthen the bonds that already exist with the Government and the people of India and to draw them even closer. The Sikkim Congress is aware that the democratic development of Sikkim has benefitted from the interest shown by the Government and people of India. Although for historical reasons our progress towards democracy has been slower, we also aspire to achieve the same democratic rights and institutions that the people of India have enjoyed for quarter of a century.

It is to be borne in mind in this Election that the Sikkim Congress aims at securing an absolute majority in the Sikkim Assembly with the support of the electorate. As long as a Party cannot obtain the essential strength in the Assembly, it will scarcely be possible to implement its political and other programmes. It is, therefore, all the more imperative that our people, in their own welfare, should co-operate with the Sikkim Congress to enable it to gain an absolute majority in the Sikkim Assembly, for the Sikkim Congress is the only organisation which sincerely works for the real emancipation and true welfare of our people, and vows to implement their given sacred word to the people of Sikkim."

Election Results

The Sikkim Congress swept the poll. It captured 29 seats in the Assembly. The Sikkim National Party and the Independents were completely routed. The election results proved that Kazi Lhendup Dorj was a 'National leader'. He was not only elected unopposed but under his leadership the people returned his Party Colleagues with massive majorities. Such a majority was unthinkable on Sikkim political scenario. But it augurs well for the political stability of the kingdom.

New Directions of Sikkimese Scene

The landslide victory of the Sikkim congress in the general election augurs well for political stability and orderly progress in the protectorate. A new era opens in Sikkim. The doubts expressed over the validity of the Tripartite agreement which sought to ensure "equitable representation to all sections of the people" while recommending a system of election based on "one man one vote" have been proved baseless. The representation of the Sikkim Subjects Act provided for a structure that divides the seats equally between the two main ethnic groups, the Nepalis and the Bhutia-Lepchas. Two seats are reserved, one for the Sangha, the Buddhists monastic order, in the 16 seats allotted to the Bhutia-Lepchas, and the other for a scheduled caste representative, in the 16 seats allotted to the Nepali group. The youth congress and several other critics were bitterly

opposed to the arrangement on the ground that it might embitter relations among all the three ethnic groups and lead to polarisation of political forces on racial lines. But the Sikkim Congress swept the poll and except two, it took all the Bhutia, Lepcha and Nepali seats, demonstrating its widest support among all the Communities in Sikkim. Much of the credit for the happy outcome must clearly go to the President of the Sikkim Congress, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, who has not only emerged as a national leader, but successfully rallied the three Communities under the banner of his party. This will augur well for the achievement of the desirable goal of integration particularly after Communal passions had been aroused to fever pitch in the political upheavals of April 1973.

India has reason to be gratified about the role it has been able to play in the birth of Sikkimese democracy, which has been acknowledged by the Chogyal as well as the various political parties in the Kingdom. There is now hope that the kind of communalism that marked politics and administration in Sikkim in the past will disappear gradually.

It would however, be naive to assume that all of Sikkim's problems have been solved. The Sikkim Congress is a heterogeneous organisation. Kazi Lhendup Dorji's youthful Nepalese aides, for instance, talk dramatically of revolution, hinting darkly at guerrilla warfare, if revolutionary and drastic changes are not introduced in the kingdom. Oppression is vividly described and radical solutions are laid down with greater bombast. Besides party affiliations only manifest themselves on the eve of the elections. Hitherto such integrative tendencies have proved to be ephemeral.

However, the present electoral victory of Sikkim Congress promises an era of hope and stability. The Sikkim Congress had many things going for it, notably its composition and past. The party is a product of the merger of the predominantly Nepalese Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim Janata Congress. Their combined political base spans the entire ethnic spectrum of the Himalayan Kingdom. Thus it had an inherent advantage over the National Party, which claims to represent the interests of the Bhutia-Lepcha minority. The momentum gathered by the two constituents of the Congress during their agitation against the Chogyal in April 1973 was enough to see the party through the elections. Last year's populist halo and the party's carefully cultivated progressive postures have helped it immensely. Unlike its rival, the Congress is also politically articulate and well organized. Neither the National Party's Organization nor its record could measure upto the challenge posed by the Sikkim Congress. Though the Sikkim Congress now holds 29 of the 32 seats in the newly elected assembly, it will not be able to make any worth-while contribution to the well being of the people unless it acts with restraint. The promises are plenty but the realisation of the Kingdom's full potential and the achievement of a better life

for the vast majority of its people will ultimately depend on the political maturity that the leaders of the parties particularly of the Sikkim Congress, display in the future. It would be a tragedy if the Sikkim Congress utilises its new found legislative strength to continue with its confrontation with the palace because that would be a sure way to hamper essential progress and harmony within the Kingdom. The political atmosphere in the protectorate will be needlessly vitiated, for instance if it tries in haste to fulfil its electoral promises of abolishing the Chogyal's private estate, the vast tracts of land spread throughout the Kingdom that traditionally belong to the Chogyal and the various members of the royal family. It may be mentioned here that any reference to the Chogyal or members of the ruling family is specifically barred by the Tripartite Agreement. The Agreement lays down: "The Assembly shall not discuss or ask questions on "the Chogyal and the members of the Ruling Family".

Instead of these political quibblings the protectorate plainly needs a period of political stability to get on with the tasks of the development. Sikkim's total revenue has gone up from Rs. 10 lakhs in 1954 to over Rs. 4 crores at present. Sikkim is on the threshold of a multi-faceted economic breakthrough. Various plan projects, generously assisted by India, are ensuring fresh gains in such fields as agriculture, small scale industries, irrigation and power generation. The Kingdom's brewery project has made its mark on the European market. The State Owned Mining Corporation has immediate plans to open up many new copper mines and to set up a plant to process ore. After leading a victory procession to Gangtok from one of his Southern Camps, Kazi Lhendup Dorj Khangsarpa said that the new Government would give priority to best utilization of Indian aid money for the benefit and amelioration of the standard of living of the common man in Sikkim. This is the need of the hour.

From the point of view of India, the landslide victory of the Sikkim Congress in the first ever popular election on the single vote and adult franchise basis to the Sikkim Assembly is significant above all, as a verdict in favour of Indo-Sikkim friendship and co-operation. The Congress had made this as one of its main poll planks. The vote is a decisive answer to the elements, said to have dubious inspiration, seeking to alter the traditional as well as treaty relationship with India. The Chogyal, who expressed complete satisfaction with the election arrangements, has also acknowledged the gains from India's economic and political assistance. While inaugurating the Assembly on May 10, 1974, the Chogyal said: "All these achievements had been possible through the enormous aid and the assistance of the Government of India. We must therefore place on record our deep sense of gratitude to the Government and the people of India and Sikkim would be further strengthened with more enduring ties".

But the Indo-Sikkim ties will be on test in the coming months. The way the political issues are tackled with tact and grace in Gangtok shall determine the future of India's credibility in the Kingdom. The Sikkim Congress wants a truly democratic government in Sikkim. Kazi in a letter to Shri B.S. Das in May 1974 said: "Our taking of oath (as members of the Assembly) therefore, cannot limit in any way our right to work for a new constitutional framework in accordance with our mandate". The feelings against Chogyal are so intense that not a single Sikkim Congress Party member attended the lunch hosted by the Chogyal on the eve of the inauguration of the Assembly.

The New Assembly Meets in Gangtok—May 1974

Kazi Lhendup Dorji has been elected as the leader of the Sikkim Congress legislature party in the newly Constituted Assembly. The new Sikkim Assembly was inaugurated by the Chogyal of Sikkim on May 10, 1974 in Gangtok. Inaugurating the new Sikkim Assembly he said: "the country was passing through a very critical period, and expressed the hope that the assembly members would live upto the high expectations and contribute their utmost to our earnest endeavour for the welfare and prosperity of the Sikkimese people through selfless devotion and service. . . . The future of the Country and Sikkimese rested on the level of our wisdom, maturity and performance".

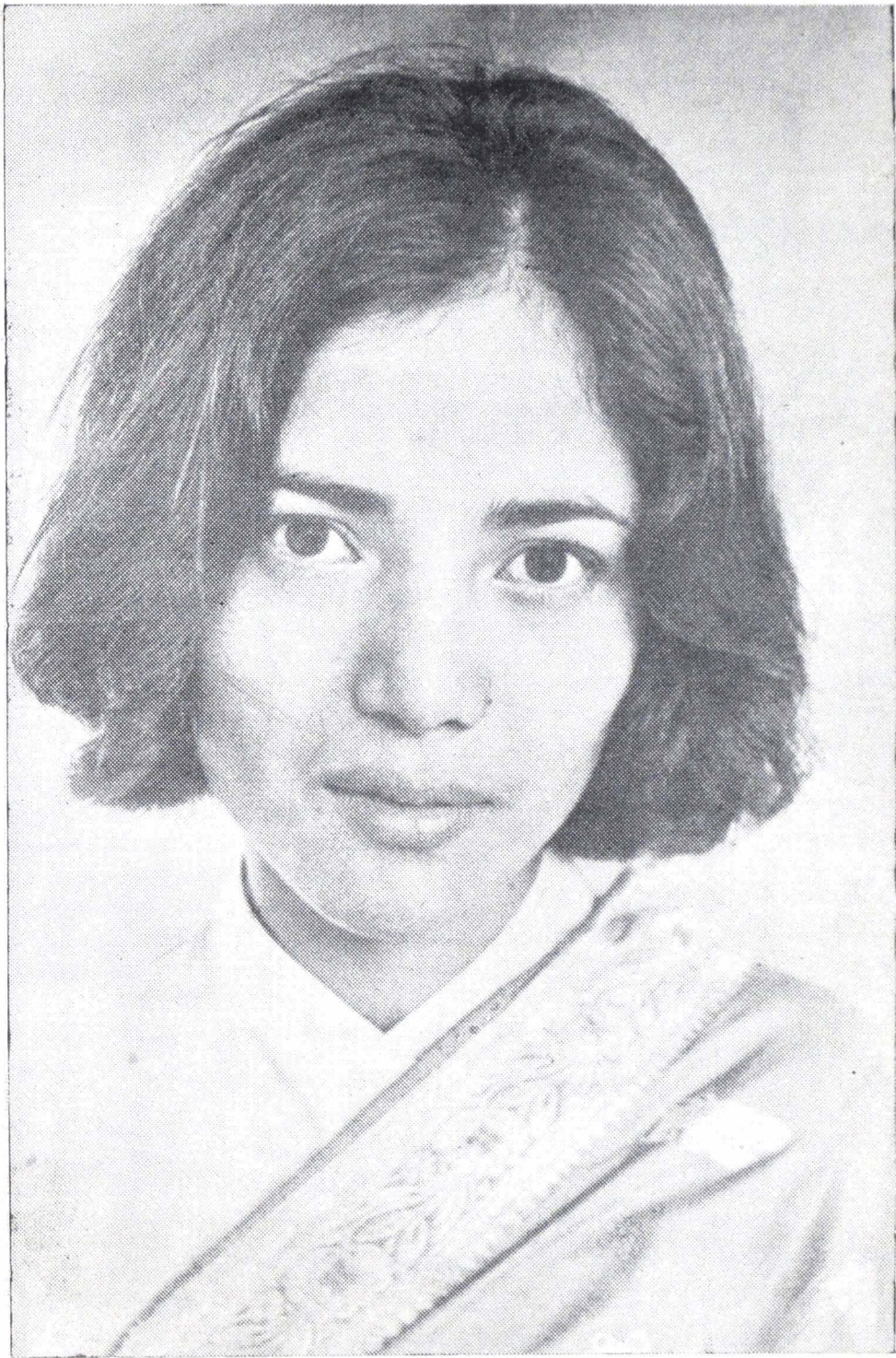
Beyond the May 8 Agreement nothing has so far been defined about the powers of the Assembly and the Executive Council. This is an evolutionary process and will take sometime to be clearly defined. Growth and flexibility are the essence of a democratic process. Kazi said in Gangtok on April 25, 1974 that "Sikkim must have a Government where the will of the people shall prevail. In a truly democratic spirit elected representatives of the people must be allowed to rule in the name of our Sikkimese people". Kazi has already announced that a detailed written constitution shall be drafted in next few months to usher in an era of democratic government in the Kingdom. The Assembly has also passed a unanimous resolution on May 11, 1974 to make the Chogyal a constitutional ruler and called upon the Government of India to implement the promises of a democratic and representative government as enshrined in the Tripartite Agreement of May 8, 1973.

The feelings for a democratic regime are so intense that the Sikkim Congress members of the newly constituted assembly took the prescribed Oath under protest. In a letter to the President of the Assembly, Mr. B.S. Das, the leader of the Sikkim Congress assembly party, Kazi Lhendup Dorj said: "the party had already expressed its strong objections in principle to taking the traditional

Oath which says : 'I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Chogyal of Sikkim and the constitution by law established'. The Kazi said : "Our taking of Oath, therefore, cannot limit in any way our right to work for a new constitutional framework in accordance with our mandate".

Sikkim is on the thresold of a great change. On May 11, 1974 in a vote of thanks for the Chogyal's inaugural address, the Assembly by a a resolution reaffirmed the principles, purposes and provisions of the agreement of May 8, 1973 between the Government of India, the Chogyal and the leaders of the political parties in Sikkim and called for speedy development of the constitutional framework established by that agreement. The resolution asked the Government of India to depute immediately a constitutional adviser to work out the details for realising the various aims of the resolution. Mr. Rajgopalan, a constitutional expert, has been deputed to Gangtok by the Government of India. A 10-member delegation of the Sikkim Congress led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji met the Indian Constitutional expert in Gangtok on May 23, 1974. According to the spokesman of the Sikkim Congress, they discussed matters relating to the drafting of the constitution for the King and formulation of the rules governing the conduct of business in the assembly. The Chogyol has also visited New Delhi in the third week of May, for consultations with the officials of the Ministry of External Affairs, changes are taking place in Sikkim with swift pace. The coming months shall witness momentous changes in the Sikkim scenario. But development with stability is essential for this strategically located tiny Kingdom.

Sikkim does not lag behind



Kumari Hemlata Chettri, is the first and the only woman legislator of Sikkim. She is the youngest member of Sikkim Assembly,

Sikkim—Storm and Consolidation

The thimble—sized Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim which is virtually squeezed in by the table top shaped Nepal in the west, Bhutan and the Chumbi Valley of Tibet in the east and which was probably the most secluded and isolated political unit in the world when India became independent in August 1947, witnessed a storm and upheaval of great magnitude during the last 15 months. The slow march of history, which would have taken long in touching the heights of Kanchenjunga, suddenly speeded up after the mass upsurge that rocked the Kingdom in April, 1973. After the happenings of 1973, Sikkim has moved from feudalistic paternalism to a more democratically conceived constitutional monarchy. The old order in Sikkim has changed, yielding place to the new. The adoption of the new constitution ends once and for all the contradictions in the previous set up which sought to reconcile the irreconcilable, to reconcile representative democracy with a monarchical system. Effective power within the Kingdom will now vest with the people, where it should and not with the Chogyal, who has been relegated to the position of a constitutional ruler. Kazi Lhendup Dorji said that the enactment of the Government of Sikkim Act which gave the constitutional framework for a democratic government has been a historic landmark in the life of Sikkim.¹ Sikkim is on a threshold of a great change. The storm that overtook this tiny kingdom has subsided and the people are firmly proceeding towards consolidating the hard earned fruits of their prolonged struggle to achieve democratic government. The train of events in Sikkim were so swift and irrevocable that the whole world was taken by surprise the way peaceful revolution rocked the Himalayan ramparts. The events leading from storm to consolidation were truly dramatic.

Democratic Set Up For Sikkim : A Saga Of Storm And Consolidation.

Amidst mounting tension caused by the last minute attempts by some palace officials to obstruct adoption of the new constitution,

the Sikkim Assembly on June 20, 1974 by an overwhelming majority approved the Government of Sikkim Bill 1974, which contemplated more powers to the legislature and the council of Ministers and intended to make the Chogyal a titular head. The Assembly also resolved to have closer links with India². Attempts by some Palace Officials and their supporters to prevent the Assembly from approving the constitution Bill which intended to reduce the powers of the feudal and the bureaucratic hierarchy, had caused strong resentment amongst the members of the Assembly. Notwithstanding the near unanimous support that the bill enjoyed in the 32 member Assembly, the Palace supporters, Bhutiyas and Palace guards, tried to create obstructions. The Palace guards surrounded the Assembly building and prevented members from entering the Assembly Chamber. The Police had to resort to lathi charge to enable the members to attend the crucial session. In spite of the fact that the Bill was passed, and despite appeals from the Political Officer and the Chief Executive to exercise restraint, Palace supporters held demonstrations, causing some tension in Gangtok. They took out processions shouting slogans against the new constitutional framework which had been endorsed unanimously by the Sikkim Assembly on June 20.³

Followers of the Sikkim Congress held demonstrations in various parts of the state to express their resentment against the movement launched by the Pro-Palace elements on the adoption of the Constitution Bill. It seemed as if the confrontation between the Chogyal and the elected representatives would deepen. It may be recalled here that Elections were held in Sikkim in April, 1974 on the basis of one man one vote in order to afford an opportunity to the people to give vent to their aspirations. These elections were held in pursuance of a promise made by the Chogyal himself in April, 1973 that a democratic and responsible set up will be established in the Kingdom. These assurances were amply recorded in the tripartite agreement signed by the Chogyal, the various political leaders of Sikkim and the Government of India.⁴

Paudyal Goes On Fast—A Ripple On Sikkim's Placid Surface

It may be pointed out here that before the Assembly had approved the Bill on June 20, a young and energetic newly elected Sikkim congress legislator from Loosing—Pachekhani constituency in East Sikkim, who was born in the year of Sikkim's first popular political upheaval in 1949, went on an indefinite hunger strike on June 19, 1974 till his demands were conceded. He wanted the constitution to be drafted by an "elected representative group" of Sikkimese intellectuals and a constitutional adviser ; Finance, Home and Establishment departments, which were hitherto administered by the Chogyal in his personal discretion, should be given to the elected representatives of the people ; as Sikkim had a separate identity, it

should have a Prime Minister or a Chairman of Council of Ministers and not a Chief Minister. Sarvshri Nanda Kumar Subedi, Karma Peda and N.K. upreti also joined in the protest fast. They gave up the fast on June 20, 1974. Mr. Paudyal also agreed to give up the fast on 23 June in deference to the wishes of his elders.

A 10 man delegation of officials consisting of the Chief Secretary and Secretaries, met Kazi Lhendup Dorji, leader of the congress assembly party on June 21 in connection with the constitution. They also wanted the autonomy of Sikkim to be kept intact.

Though the constitution Bill was passed by the Assembly unanimously, still these demands do show the direction of developments in the fast changing Sikkimese scenario. The younger generation desires active say in such matters. The action however, is symbolic of the presence of fringe elements in the party who are not enthused with the party's moderate approach in this regard.

Chogyal's Sudden Dash To Delhi, June 25, 1974 And India's Advise To Settle Matters With Sikkimese People.

Five day's after the unanimous endorsement by the Assembly of the constitutional framework for a democratic set up and adoption of a resolution urging closer links with India, the Chogyal of Sikkim arrived in New Delhi for a second time in a fortnight on 25th June, 1974 for discussions and clarifications with the Government of India. He had come to represent to the Indian Government against various provisions of the draft constitution.⁵ In fact he had drafted detailed comments showing important lacuna and anomalies he had noticed in the draft constitution. He had prepared these with the expert legal advice taken from some eminent legal practioners from India.

But the Chogyal was believed to have been advised by Mr. Swaran Singh, External Affairs Minister that he should settle with his own people any points of differences over the draft constitution. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, also advised the Chogyal to give his assent to the constitution Bill which the Sikkim Assembly had approved even second time on June 28, 1974. An official spokesman, briefing newsmen about the Chogyal's meetings with the Prime Minister said that his main aim was to seek further discussions and to ask for more delay (perhaps in the enactment of the constitution Bill). He was told by her that the Bill had already been passed second time unanimously by the Sikkim Assembly on June, 28, 1974 and it would be advisable for him to give his assent to it. He was advised that he should "seek reconciliation with his people, to respect their urges and aspirations and become a part of the democratic process in Sikkim by playing his legitimate and honourable role in it."⁶

In the meanwhile Kazi Lhendup Dorji, the President of Sikkim Congress gave telegrams to the Chogyal and the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. This added a new dimension to the otherwise tense

Sikkimese political scenario. Mr. Dorji said in his telegram to the Chogyal that the members of the Assembly were shocked that "you are continuing to obstruct the enactment of the Bill which has been prepared after consultation with you as well as members of the Assembly and which is based on the agreement of May 8, 1973 to which you are a signatory. The members were convinced that unless the Bill was enacted and further steps taken immediately for responsible government there will be a complete breakdown in administration. We have urged the Government of India that unless you promulgate the Bill within 48 hours the Government of India should take necessary steps under the provisions of the agreement of May 8, 1973, to ensure that the Bill is enacted immediately." In his telegram to the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Sikkim leader said that the Government of India should take necessary steps under the provisions of May 8, 1973 agreement if the Chogyal does not give his assent within 48 hours. The agreement referred to above stipulates: "In cases involving amity between the various sections of the population of Sikkim, or the development of democratic government and efficient administration in Sikkim any difference of opinion between the Chief Executive and the Chogyal shall be referred to the Political Officer in Sikkim, who shall obtain the advice of the Government of India, which shall be binding."⁸

The Central Executive of the Sikkim Congress bluntly told the Chogyal in a strongly worded resolution passed in Gangtok that he must either accept the constitution or quit Sikkim's political scene.

It must be pointed out here that the birth of the new Sikkimese constitution has been accompanied by a considerable amount of confusion and tension, quite a large part of which was avoidable. For example, the Chogyal seemed to consider the Bill passed by the Assembly on June 20, as only a "Draft" or a "Resolution" for his consideration and comment. In support of his argument the Chogyal even quoted a letter from Mr. K. S. Bajpai, the Indian Political Officer in Gangtok. In a letter written on June 20, Mr. Bajpai told the Chogyal that "at this stage the Assembly could only consider any document or proposal and express its views on it in the form of a resolution. The decision of the Assembly must then be submitted to you for your approval. If you agree with the Assembly, then the document will be resubmitted to the Assembly for adoption as a formal bill, which would then become an act on your assent. If you do not agree with the assembly at this stage, the next step would be for you to inform both the Assembly and the Government of India that you wished for changes or alternatives, and the matter would then be reconsidered by the Government of India, after consultation with you and members of Assembly".⁹ But on June 23, 1974 in another letter to the Chogyal, Mr. Bajpai while referring to the new constitutional framework wrote: "we believe this framework is in the best interests of the Chogyal and all the people of Sikkim. The Assembly has given

its endorsement and it has now become urgently necessary for you to give your assent. The Assembly members have requested that it be given within two days. We hope and trust that you will head their urgings".¹⁰ The chogyal's statement said that the stand taken by the Political Officer in his letter of June, 23 was in "complete contradiction" of the stand taken by him in his letter of June 20."¹¹

Though this argument has in a sense been overtaken by events with an emergency session of the Assembly on June 28, going through a clause by clause reading of the Bill, such ambiguities should not have been allowed to arise. In spite of the fact that there had been tension and increasing expression of the popular will to have the constitution promulgated immediately, still its passage smacks of haste. The Chogyal and his supporters could have been given some more time to explain their view point to the people.

However, in advising the ruler to return to Gangtok and seek reconciliation with his people, the Government of India took an upright and firm stand that a solution to the constitutional impasse in Sikkim must be worked out basically between the Chogyal and his people, with such assistance as New Delhi is able to provide. The South Block did not repeat the mistakes committed in 1949. Dynamic and ideologically consistent policies have been followed in Sikkim by Smt. Indira Gandhi and these have been firmly executed by the Officials of the Ministry of External Affairs. Unlike 1949, the Government of India upheld and supported the democratic movement in Sikkim. While talking to the visiting members of the Sikkim Assembly in New Delhi on July 9, 1974 Mrs. Indira Gandhi rightly said: "India was deeply committed to democracy and wished Sikkim to develop in its own way to bring comforts to its people."¹²

Sikkim Congress Boycotts Assembly July 2, 1974

In a day of dramatic developments on July 2, 1974, the Sikkim Congress legislature party boycotted an emergency session of the Assembly convened by its President Mr. B.S. Das, at the request of the Chogyal. In a letter to the Assembly President, the party said: "we find no reason for convening the session when the House has already passed the Sikkim Government Bill, 1974, twice on June 20 and 28. We are not going to participate in the session unless the Chogyal gives his assent to the Bill. If the Chogyal does not give his assent to the Bill tonight, we will depend on the Government of India to give effect to the Bill by tomorrow under the provisions of the May 8, 1973 agreement. The view of the Chogyal and Government of India on the Bill must have been made known to each other during the prolonged talks in New Delhi. The Chogyal's views were made known to us by you at our meeting on June, 28. We had already requested the Chogyal to enact the Bill within 48 hours of our adoption of the Bill. This time has long since passed. The Government of India has been requested to give effect to the Bill in

case the Chogyal does not do it himself. We had waited for the Government of India's reply. We now request you to inform the Government of India that it must proceed according to the provisions of May 8, 1973 agreement."¹³

The letter was signed by 28 out of 31 members of the party. The Chogyal giving his reaction to the boycott of the Assembly session by the Sikkim Congress members, said in a Press release : "The well established constitutional procedure that the Bill may be referred back by the Head of the State for further reconsideration by the House, is sought to be circumvented". The Chogyal said that the emergent session of the Assembly was convened on his orders so that he "might address the House on Sikkim Government Bill, 1974, passed by the Assembly and place before them his advice and legal comments."¹⁴

It may be mentioned here that the Indian Political Officer, Mr. K.S. Bajpai made strenuous efforts to get the members agree to attend the special session where the Chogyal would elaborate his comments on the Bill. But the Sikkim Congress was in complete defiant mood. Mr. Dorji told newsmen in Gangtok that his party would not agree to any suggestion of the Chogyal to address the House before giving assent to the Bill.¹⁵

Storm Subsides Over Sikkim And The Chogyal Ushers In Era Of Democracy

The political storm which had been blowing in this otherwise peaceful abode in the Himalayas, subsided on July 3, 1974 when on a compromise solution between the Chogyal and the Sikkim Congress, the Assembly held an emergency session to hear Chogyal's views on the constitution Bill without his personal presence. The Assembly president, Mr. B.S. Das read the Chogyal's address. The Chogyal in his address said :

"I have come to address the Hon'ble Members as we are faced with the sacred task of framing a Constitution for the country which will have far reaching effect on Sikkim, her people and her very close relationship with India, our protecting power. This is undoubtedly a historic measure which the Hon'ble Members, as the elected representatives of the people, and The Chogyal have a responsibility to study and understand very carefully before adopting the proposed Bill. There have been differences of opinion between different sections of the people on the Bill which is inevitable in a democratic process and we must learn to accept and tolerate these in the larger cause of our country and our people. Our duty is to ensure that these differences do not ultimately bring unhappiness and sufferings to the people at large.

“Since the Hon’ble Members had endorsed the draft “Government of Sikkim Bill 1974” and had proposed amendments through the resolutions passed in the House on 20th June 1974, it was incumbent upon me not only to discuss the proposed Bill with the Government of India but also to seek legal advice and other consultations so that the Hon’ble members may have a fuller appraisal of the various implications in the Bill. A constitution should be in consonance with the aspirations of our people and the Hon’ble Members for establishing a full responsible and democratic Government and to safeguard Sikkim’s separate identity under the 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty which would be affected by clause 30 in Chapter VI of the Bill.

“It is on this account that I went to Delhi, only after the Hon’ble House have had the opportunity of taking up the Bill on 20th June 1974 and returned last night at the earliest opportunity after my last meeting with the Prime Minister of India on 30th June evening. I have therefore, not tried to delay or obstruct the Assembly for taking up the Bill.

“I am placing before the House my detailed comments on the draft Bill in its original form and further comments on the eight amendments proposed by the Hon’ble House on 20th June 1974. These comments prepared with legal advice could show the important lacuna and anomalies as has been noticed. While placing these comments before the Hon’ble House I would like to repeat once again that I do not seek any reservations for myself personally. The three basic principles I have kept in mind, which also have been conveyed to the Prime Minister of India on 15th June 1974 and the Hon’ble Members through my note of 24th June 1974 to the President of the Assembly and to which I am irrevocably committed are :—

1. the maximum participation by the people of Sikkim in the governance of our country which means the establishing of a full responsible and democratic Government of Sikkim.
2. respecting the legitimate rights and responsibilities of the Government of India in Sikkim, and
3. ensuring the separate identity and internal autonomy of Sikkim guaranteed under 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty.

“My view points have now been laid before the Hon’ble House for considering the Bill in the larger interest of Sikkim, her people and Indo-Sikkim relations.”¹⁶

However, the Bill was adopted in original form by the House for the third time since its first introduction on May 11, 1974. The Chogyal waited in his palace for the verdict of the Assembly

proceedings. The Assembly meeting completed the formality of considering the Bill in the light of the Chogyal's views in a record time of half an hour. The Bill was passed again without any modifications. The members also repeated their wish for the immediate implementation of the Sikkim constitution as adopted by the Assembly on June 20 for the first time.

The Chogyal set the tiny but the strategically located Himalayan Kingdom into a new era as full fledged democracy on July 4, 1974, when he signed the Government of Sikkim Bill, 1974 which transfers much of his powers' to the newly elected representatives of the people. The 51 year old Chogyal, Palden Thondup Namgyal, signed the proclamation at a brief ceremony at the palace declaring : "I hereby approve the Government of Sikkim Bill 1974 for promulgation which has my formal assent, under my seal and signature"¹⁷. The brief but historic and solemn ceremony at the palace, which lasted for seven minutes only, was attended by Mr. Kewal Singh, India's Foreign Secretary, Mr. K.S. Bajpai, Political Officer, Mr. B.S. Das, Chief Executive, all the newly elected Assembly members and senior Indian and Sikkim Officials¹⁸. One copy of the signed Bill has been kept at the Palace, one given to the Assembly members and one to the Government of India. Speaking on the occasion the Chogyal extended his co-operation to Assembly members and said : "This is our country. These are our own people and we have to work together for betterment of the country. Whatever misunderstanding was there has been removed"¹⁹. Reciprocating the sentiments expressed by the Chogyal, Mr. Dorji said : "we should forget and forgive everything. We should co-operate with the people to give a good administration to the state. There should not remain any bad blood."²⁰ The palace ceremony over, Mr. Kewal Singh held a reception at India House in honour of the Chogyal and Assembly members marking the happy end to the fortnight old constitutional deadlock. Besides Mr. Bajpai and Mr. Das the reception was attended by the top officials of the Sikkim Government. Mr. Kewal Singh congratulated the Assembly members on behalf of the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the people of India. He assured them of all possible help from the Government of India for the economic and social development of Sikkim. He extended Mrs. Indira Gandhi's invitation to the Assembly members to Visit Delhi at the earliest opportunity.

The endorsement of the new Constitution by the Chogyal is the natural culmination of the process that began with the popular upsurge of April, 1973 for more power to the people and the resultant tripartite agreement between the Chogyal, the Government of India and the political parties stipulating election under one man one vote principle. It is good that the Chogyal has decided to come to terms with the changed political situation in the Himalayan Kingdom. If he had acted with wisdom and restraint in time, the ugly events

Representative of Democratic Urge



Kazi Lhendup Dorji, leader of the Sikkim Assembly with some of the members of the Sikkim Assembly during their goodwill tour of India in July 1974.

of June 1974, when some misguided Palace loyalists, officials and guards, tried to obstruct and sabotage the advent of parliamentary democracy in Sikkim, would have been averted. Historically conflict and resistance have almost invariably accompanied situations where old order has had to yield place to a new one. The Chogyal's sagacious and matured reaction to the popular uprising of April 1973 and agreeing to sign the subsequent tripartite agreement, which clearly outlined a new political framework for 'the Himalayan miniscule, caused the general expectation that the transition in this case also would be smooth and painless. The Chogyal's short volte face and the attempt by the Palace officials and guard to obstruct the adoption of Sikkim's new constitution was at once surprising and unfortunate. It created considerable mistrust and tension between the Chogyal and the Sikkim Congress, the party which commands an over whelming majority in the Sikkim Assembly. Their action was not only violative of the Tripartite agreement, it was wholly ill-advised even from their own point of view, for a development like this is bound to further alienate the Chogyal from the people. Nothing could be more absurd than to believe that while the whole world is advancing, time can stand still in this secluded Himalayan Kingdom.

But as the dominant political party, the Sikkim Congress has the responsibility to display more maturity and not to be swayed into extremist postures by the more militant younger elements in its ranks. The hope of Sikkim is pinned in Kazi Lhendup Dorji, who is the acknowledged national leader at the moment. Despite the prominent role he played during the struggle for constitutional rule he seems to be one father—figure who enjoys the confidence even of his political forces. Speaking of his Government's programmes, Mr. Dorji said that the first priority would be given to the Socio-economic reforms to remove the existing imbalances and leakages of funds due to corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. But nothing would be done in any spirit of vengeance.²¹

Only future will tell whether democracy and its spirit are firmly planted in Sikkim or not. Political wisdom and the interests of the people of the Sikkim demand an orderly transition to democracy and modernity. Absolute monarchy is absolutely out of date in the seventies of our century. This fact has to be grasped and realised by the feudal and bureaucratic order. The Chogyal has to come to terms with the current realities. He has an important and honourable role to play in Sikkim both as a person and as an institution. If there seems to be a tendency among the Sikkimese people to lean heavily on India this is because a fear psychosis is lurking in their minds about the Chogyal who has amply demonstrated by his actions that he is inimical to the change and is only waiting for time and opportunity to retrieve his former powers and position.

The New Constitution : A Flashing Beacon Of New Sikkim

The tides of democracy have touched the mountain heights of Sikkim. For the last 25 years, the people of Sikkim had been fighting to get a parliamentary system of government and democratic set up. This urge for democratic government was conceded in the tripartite agreement signed in May 1973. The demand for the drafting of a new Constitution to lay down a new Constitutional framework was accepted.

Consequently at the request of the Chogyal, the Government of India had deputed one of its former law Secretary, Mr. G.R. Rajagopal, to prepare a draft constitution in terms of the declared wishes of the people of Sikkim for a democratic set up in the Kingdom. Earlier in its resolution adopted on May 11, 1974, the Sikkim Assembly had requested the Government of India to immediately depute a constitutional adviser to Gangtok for suggesting a legal and constitutional framework for the objectives set out in the National Assembly resolution. It wanted the powers of the Chogyal, the chief executive, the council of Ministers and the Assembly to be defined. The Assembly also wanted the constitutional adviser to give the specific proposals for further strengthening the Indo-Sikkimese relationship and for Sikkim's participation in the political and economic institutions of India. With these instructions and mandate from the Assembly, Mr. Rajagopal had been to Sikkim twice and had long discussions with the Chogyal and other political leaders in Sikkim. In fact the basic groundwork for the present constitution was the tripartite agreement of May 1973.

In spite of a fortnight of tension and storm that overtook this 'thimble-sized' Kingdom, the constitution was adopted on July 4, 1974, when the Chogyal gave his final assent on the Sikkim Government Bill, 1974.

The following are the salient provisions of the Bill passed by the Sikkim Assembly in Gangtok on June 28, 1974 and approved by the Chogyal on July 4, 1974 to be the Constitution of Sikkim.²²

The Chogyal And His Privileges

The Chogyal shall take precedence over all other persons in Sikkim and he shall continue to enjoy the honour, position and other personal privileges hitherto enjoyed by him. (Section 3)

The Chogyal shall exercise his powers and perform his functions in accordance with the provisions of this Act, and nothing contained in section 3 shall effect the provision of this section. (Section 4)

All executive action of the Government of Sikkim taken in accordance with the provisions of this act shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the Chogyal.

Sikkim Assembly

- (1) There shall be an Assembly for Sikkim.
- (2) The total number of seats in the Assembly to be filled by persons chosen by direct election shall be such as may be determined by law.

Elections To The Sikkim Assembly

- (i) For the purpose of elections to the Sikkim Assembly, Sikkim shall be divided into constituencies in such manner as may be determined by law.
- (ii) The Government of Sikkim may make rules for the purpose of providing that the Assembly adequately represents the various sections of the population, this is to say, while fully protecting the legitimate rights and interests of Sikkimese of Lepcha or Bhutia origin and of Sikkimese of Nepali origin and other Sikkimese, including Tsongs and scheduled Castes no single section of the population is allowed to acquire a dominating position (in the affairs of Sikkim) mainly by reason of its ethnic origin. (Section 7)

Election Commission Of India To Conduct Elections

For ensuring free and fair elections in Sikkim, the Chogyal shall appoint a representative of the Election Commission of India nominated by the Government of India in this behalf and the elections shall be conducted under the supervision of such representative, and for this purpose the representative shall have all powers necessary for the effective discharge of his functions. (Section 8)

Qualifications For Membership Of Assembly

A person shall not be qualified to be chosen to fill a seat in the Assembly unless he :

- (a) is an elector for any constituency and makes and subscribes before some person authorised by the authority conducting the election an oath or affirmation according to the form set out in the Schedule.
- (b) is not less than 25 years of age ;
- (c) possesses such other qualifications as may be specified in any law for the time being in force. (Section 9)

Elections On The Basis of Adult Suffrage

- (1) The elections to the Sikkim Assembly shall be on the basis of one man one vote, that is to say, every person who on the prescribed date is a subject of Sikkim, is not less than twenty one years of age and is not otherwise disqualified under this Act or under any other law on the ground of residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election.
- (2) Every person whose name is for the time being entered in the electoral roll of any constituency shall be entitled to vote at the election of a member from that constituency. (Section 10).

Duration And Summoning Of Assembly

The Assembly shall, unless sooner dissolved continue for four years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer and the expiration of the said period of four years shall operate as a dissolution of the Assembly.

The Chogyal shall, on the advice of the President of the Assembly, summon the Assembly to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit, but six months shall not intervene between its last sitting in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session.

Speaker And Deputy Speaker Of Assembly

- (1) The Chief Executive shall be *ex-officio* President of the Assembly and as such shall perform the functions of the Speaker thereof.
- (2) The Assembly shall, as soon as may be, choose a member to be Deputy Speaker thereof who shall act as speaker during the absence of the President of the Assembly from any sitting of the Assembly. (Section 13)

The Chogyal may address the Assembly after intimating to the President of the Assembly his intention to do so.

Oath Or Affirmation By Members And Vacation Of Seats

Every member of the Assembly shall, before taking his seat, make and subscribe before the Chogyal or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose, in the Schedule.

If a member of the Assembly

- (a) becomes subject to any disqualification mentioned in section 17 for membership of the Assembly, or

- (b) resigns his seat by writing under his hand addressed to the President of the Assembly,
his seat shall thereupon become vacant.

Disqualification For Membership

- (1) A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of the Assembly—
- (a) If he holds any office of profit under the Government of Sikkim other than an office declared by law not to disqualify its holder.
 - (b) If he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court.
 - (c) If he is so disqualified by or under any law.
- (2) for the purpose of this section, a person shall not be deemed to hold an office of profit under the Government of Sikkim by reason only that he is a Minister,
- (3) If any question arises as to whether a member of the Assembly has become disqualified for being such a member under the provision of sub-section (i) the question shall be referred for the decision of the Chogyal and his decision shall be final.
- (4) Before giving any decision on any such question, the Chogyal shall obtain the opinion of the Election Commission of India or such other election authority as may be specified by the Government of India for the purpose, and shall act according to such opinion. (Section 17)

If a person sits or votes as a member of the Assembly before he has complied with requirements of Section 15 or when he knows that he is not qualified or that he is disqualified for membership thereof, he shall be liable in respect of each day on which he so sits or votes to a penalty of one hundred rupees to be recovered as a debt to be due to the Government of Sikkim.

Powers And Privileges Of Members

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this act, and to the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of the Assembly, there shall be freedom of speech in the Assembly.
- (2) No member shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in the Assembly or in any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under

the authorities of the Assembly of any report, paper, votes or other proceedings. (Section 19)

Powers And Functions Of The Assembly

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Assembly may discuss, make recommendations or make laws for the whole or any part of Sikkim with respect to any of the following matters, namely—
 - (a) Education.
 - (b) Public Health.
 - (c) Excise.
 - (d) Press and Publicity.
 - (e) Transport.
 - (f) Bazars.
 - (g) Forests.
 - (h) Public Works.
 - (i) Agriculture.
 - (j) Food Supplies.
 - (k) Economic and Social Planning including state enterprises.
 - (l) Land revenue.
- (2) Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Assembly shall also have the right to discuss and make recommendations with respect to any matter not enumerated in sub-section (i) which may from time to time be referred to it by the Chief Executive.
- (3) The Chogyal shall on the recommendation of the Government of India, by notification in the Sikkim Darbar Gazette and any other matter to the matters enumerated in sub-section (1) and thereupon the matter so added shall be deemed to have been included in that sub section for the purposes of this Act. (Section 20)

Assent To Bills

When a Bill has been passed by the Assembly, it shall be presented to the Chogyal and the Chogyal shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assents therefrom.

Provided that the Chogyal may, as soon as possible after the presentation to him of a Bill for assent, return the Bill to the Assembly with a message requesting that they will consider the Bill or any specified provisions thereof and in particular, will consider the desirability of introducing any such amendments he may recommend in his message and, when a Bill is so returned, the Assembly shall consider it accordingly within a period of three months from the date of receipt of such message and, if it is again passed by the Assembly with or without amendments and presented to the Chogyal for assent, the Chogyal shall not withhold assent therefrom.

Provided further that the Chogyal shall reserve for the consideration of the Government of India any bill which would, if it became law, affect any of the responsibilities of the Government of India or any of the special responsibilities of the Chief Executive referred to in section 28 and shall act according to the decision of the Government of India. (Section 21)

Courts Not To Inquire Into Proceedings Of Assembly

- (1) The validity of any proceedings in the Assembly shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity in procedure.
- (2) No officer or member of the Assembly in whom powers are vested by or under this act for regulating the procedure or the conduct of business or for maintaining order in the Assembly shall be subject to the jurisdiction of any court in respect of the exercise by him of these powers.

Rules Of Procedure

- (1) The Assembly may make rules for regulating, subject to the provisions of this act, its procedure and the conduct of its business.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub section (1) or any other provisions of this Act, the Assembly shall not discuss or ask questions on any of the following, namely—
 - (a) The Chogyal and members of the ruling family ;
 - (b) any matter pending before a court of law ;
 - (c) the appointment of the Chief Executive or members of the Judiciary ;
 - (d) any matter which is exclusively the responsibility of the Government of India, whether under this act or under any agreement or otherwise. (Section 23)

Council Of Ministers, Its Composition And Powers

There shall be a Executive Council (in this Act referred to as the Council of Ministers) with one of the members thereof at the head who shall be designated as the Chief Minister and the others as Ministers.

- (2) The Council of Ministers shall be in charge of the administrative departments allotted to them and shall advise the Chogyal in respect of all matters within their jurisdiction.
- (3) Every advice tendered by the Council of Ministers shall be communicated to the Chogyal through the Chief Executive who may, if he is of opinion that the advice affects or is likely to affect any of his special responsibilities or the responsibilities of the Government of India referred to in section 28, require the council of Ministers to modify the advice accordingly.
- (4) The question whether any, and if so what, advice was tendered by Ministers to the Chogyal shall not be inquired into by any court. (Section 24)

Appointment And Removal Of Ministers

- (1) The Chief Minister and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive.
- (2) The council of Ministers shall be responsible to the Assembly.
- (3) Before a Minister enters upon his office, The Chogyal or such other person as may be authorised in this behalf, shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Schedule. (Section 25)

The executive power of the Council of Ministers shall extend to the matters referred to in section 20.

The Chogyal shall, on the recommendation of the Chief executive taken in consultation with the Chief Minister, make rules for the allocation of business to the Ministers and for the more convenient transaction of business.

Chief Executive And His Functions

- (1) At the head of the Administration in Sikkim, there shall be a Chief Executive, who shall be a person nominated by the Government of India and appointed to that post by the Chogyal.

- (2) The functions of the Chief Executive shall be to ensure that—
- (a) the responsibilities of the Government of India in or in relation to Sikkim as respects all or any of the matters referred to in the Agreement of the 8th May, 1973 between the Chogyal, the Government of India and the leaders of the Political Parties representing the people of Sikkim, or any other agreement entered into between the Chogyal and the Government of India, whether before or after the Commencement of this Act ;
 - (b) the special responsibilities of the Chief Executive referred to in the Agreement of the 8th May, 1973 aforesaid ;
- are duly discharged.
- (3) The Chief Executive shall have all the powers necessary for the discharge of his functions and responsibilities, and the executive power in Sikkim shall be so exercised as to ensure compliance with any decisions taken or orders or directions issued by the Government of India in the due discharge of the responsibilities. (Section 28)

Performance Of Functions By The Chief Executive

- (1) The Chief Executive shall—
- (a) where any action taken in the performance of his functions concerns to matter the administrative functions relating to which have been allocated to a Minister, act in consultation with the Minister in respect thereof ;
 - (b) submit all important matters to the Chogyal for his information and for his approval of the action proposed to be taken provided that where immediate action is required the Chief Executive may take such action as he thinks fit and shall obtain the Chogyal's approval as soon as after the action has been taken as possible.
 - (c) advise the Chogyal in respect of all other matters.
- (2) Where a difference of opinion between the Chief executive and the Chogyal in respect of any matter, it shall be referred to the Government of India for decision and the decision of the Government of India shall be final. (Section 29).

Association With Government Of India

For the speedy development of Sikkim in the social, economic and political fields, the Government of Sikkim may—

- (a) request the Government of India to include the planned development of Sikkim within the ambit of the Planning Commission of India while that Commission is preparing plans for the economic and social development of India to appropriately associate officials from Sikkim in such work ;
- (b) request the Government of India to provide facilities for students from Sikkim in Institutions for higher learning and for the employment of people from Sikkim in the Public Services of India (including All-India Services) at par with those available to citizens of India ;
- (c) seek participation and representation for the people of Sikkim in the political institutions of India. (Section 30)

Independence Of Judiciary

All judges shall be independent in the exercise of their judicial functions and subject only to this act and the laws. (Section 31)

Basic Human Rights And Fundamental Freedom

- (1) All sections of the people in Sikkim shall enjoy basic human rights and fundamental freedom without discrimination.
- (2) The Government of Sikkim shall make every endeavour to secure for the people of Sikkim the enjoyment of the aforesaid rights and to maintain and promote communal harmony.
- (3) Notwithstanding anything contained in the aforesaid provisions special provision shall be made for the advancement or the protection of the aboriginal inhabitants of Sikkim and other minorities. (Section 32)

Existing Assembly To Be The First Sikkim Assembly Under This Act

The Assembly which has been formed as a result of the elections held in Sikkim in April, 1974 shall be deemed to be the first Assembly duly constituted under this Act, and shall be entitled to exercise the powers and perform the functions conferred on the Assembly by this act. (Section 33)

Power To Remove Difficulties

If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this act, the Chogyal may, in consultation with the Chief Executive, by order, do anything not inconsistent with the provision of this Act, which appear to be expedient or necessary for the purpose of removing the difficulty. (Section 34)

India Need To Tread The Path Warily

Sikkim is one of the vulnerable and sensitive spots on India's north eastern borders on account of its geographical and strategic situation. India has both an immediate as well as long term interest in Sikkim. Political development in Sikkim should be encouraged to evolve in a direction that leads to the development and stability of Sikkim as well as fits in with the larger Indian Himalayan (frontier) policy. But it should be remembered that Sikkim is a protectorate of India, not an integral part of India. Sikkim has a distinct socio-cultural identity which should not be allowed to disappear. The recent happenings in Sikkim are being very closely watched elsewhere. It is necessary that the Indian presence should be as limited and unobtrusive as possible and that the Sikkimese are made to feel that they are genuinely the masters of their own affairs. But the Government of Sikkim Act 1974 takes India deeper into Sikkim's internal affairs. Considering that Sikkim's Communications, defence and external relations are the Government of India's responsibility under 1950 treaty, the extended Indian role in that state would not only seem suspect but unnecessary in terms of India's vital security and strategic interest in that area.

The Critic might argue that the movement for more democratisation has not found complete fulfilment in so far as the crucial powers have more obviously than before, been transferred from the Chogyal to the Indian Government and not so much to the people of Sikkim. To support this, it is pointed out by them that both the Chief Executive and the Election Commissioner are nominated by the Government of India with the former concurrently acting as the speaker of the Sikkim Assembly also. The constitution has also vested real executive and legislative powers in the Chief Executive, which appears to be completely arbitrary, uncanalised and unguided and militates against the objectives of constitutional reforms in Sikkim namely the establishment of a fully responsible Government in Sikkim with a democratic constitution. Besides, the Chogyal's right to reserve any bill for the consideration of the Government of India is subject to the latter's decision being binding on him ; the Chief Minister and other Ministers shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive ; and the Chief Executive may ask for modification of any advice by the council of Ministers if he feels it interferes either with his special responsi-

bilities (which are wide) or with those of the Government of India. Thus the critic can say that it seems India has grown from protecting authority to a paramount power.

Though the above criticism has been stretched too far, it is entirely possible, however that certain elements might over a period of time begin to chafe at the "Indian" safeguards. Some elements may in future plan to get a revocation of the parity clause in the election law that now provides balanced electoral representation to the Napalese and Bhutia—Lepchas. The majority party also intends to take over palace lands despite the constitutional bar discussing on matters relating to the Chogyal or his family or matters concerning them. There are fears that this probably would become another focus of discontent and political instability, leading to further and unpleasant expansion of Indian responsibilities in the state. India is bound to be burdened with a greatly diversified worries in Sikkim. In short, too much concentration of powers in the hands of Indian officials may lead to possible future agitations against India under the constitution. The National Assembly does not enjoy the powers of even the legislative assembly of an Indian State. It may be pointed out that democratisation has not found complete fulfilment in so far as the crucial powers have more obviously than before, been transferred from the Chogyal to the Indian Government and not so much to the people of Sikkim. To support this, it is pointed out by them that both the Chief Executive and the Election Commissioner are nominated by the Government of India with the former concurrently acting as the speaker of the Sikkim Assembly also. Even regarding the performance of functions by the Chief Executive the Constitution lays down in section 20 thus :—

“(1) The Chief Executive shall—

(a) Where any action taken in the performance of his functions concerns to matter, the administrative functions relating to which have been allocated to a Minister, act in consultation with the Minister in respect thereof,

(b) submit all important matters to the Chogyal for his information and for his approval of the action proposed to be taken the Chogyal shall not withhold assent therefrom :

Provided further that the Chogyal shall reserve for the consideration of the Government of India any bill which would, if it became law, affect any of the responsibilities of the Government of India or any of the special responsibilities of the Chief Executive referred to in section 28 and shall act according to the decision of the Government of India.”

It seems there is some element of truth in the observation that India has devolved upon it, lot of responsibilities and functions. The Chief Executive has become the Kingpin of the Sikkimese administrative structure. He is at the head of the administration in Sikkim. “In fact, all the executive and legislative authority under the Bill

vests in and flows from the Chief Executive. The Council of Ministers are reduced to the position of merely echoing his decisions and directions''²³. Though he is formally appointed by the Chogyal, he is in fact a nominee of the Government of India. He is responsible to New Delhi, not to Chogyal. Even subjects like internal law and order and framing of annual budget are outside the purview of the duly elected National Assembly of Sikkim. They come under the authority of the Chief Executive.

Hence in the months to come India is bound to be burdened with diversified worries in Sikkim. Such irritants can easily crop up when the preponderant Nepalese may in future plan to get a revocation of the parity clause in the election law which now provides balanced electoral representation to the Nepalese and Bhutia—Lepchas. The indigenous Bhutia-Lepcha community may not accept the abolition of parity clauses.

The Sikkim Congress has made no secret of its intentions to take over palace lands, despite the limitation imposed by the constitution which prohibits discussion on matters relating to the Chogyal or his family or matters concerning them.

Besides, no sooner the present euphoria is over, even Sikkimese politicians may commence the proverbial defection business. Sikkim's experiment with ministry making and the halo of ministerial seats may unleash mutual bickerings and mudslinging, thereby weakening the very fabric of parliamentary system which may impose heavy burdens on Indians. Political defections are very common in the countries of this region.

All these problems will unleash newer responsibilities for India. It might lead Sikkimese to challenge the very basis of India's policies in Sikkim.

It may be mentioned here that India's present Sikkim policy rests on the sole ground that it is respecting the popular will of the people of the Himalayan State. This will call for devolution of powers to the elected representatives from the absolute monarch. The Sikkim constitution, drafted by an Indian expert, and adopted unanimously by the National Assembly satisfies one part of the people's demands but not the other.

The constitution reduces the Chogyal to a figurehead, over which no tears need be shed. But it does not make the people supreme in their land. It passes on the Chogyal's absolutism and prerogatives to the Indian authority, albeit with the expressed will of the Assembly.

Hence for its primary responsibility for foreign affairs, defence, and communications India's interest should essentially be confined to ensuring political stability and development in Sikkim. India should avoid frequent occasions for interference in the internal

matters of the state except when a breakdown of law and order threatens the stability and peace of the Kingdom. Sikkim does provide a fertile ground for anti-Indian propoganda. Consequently, India has to be extremely vigilant. She needs to tread the path warily.

However, Sikkim's advance has been possible largely because of the friendly assistance received from India. India has financed Sikkim's entire development programme thus far. The strength and future of Sikkim lies in a friendly and sympathetic understanding between India and Sikkim since the interest of two countries are just one.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi while welcoming Sikkim's "representatives of the democratic urge" at a fifty minutes meeting on July 9, 1974 in New Delhi assured them that it had always been India's policy to ensure Sikkim's individual personality. She said: "India will render all assistance to Sikkim in its economic development"²⁴. Mr. Swaran Singh while welcoming the members during the day also said : "We respect the individuality of Sikkim and assured full cooperation for building up the new relationship desired by the Assembly members"²⁵.

China Blurts Out Against India

Ever since the Chinese swarmed south into Tibet in 1950, they have evinced keen interest in Sikkim and other Himalayan Kingdoms. For through this tiny State of Sikkim, which rises from a tropically luxuriant South to the snowclad wilderness in the north passes the shortest route from the Chinese occupied Tibet to the plains of India. The Chinese have never looked with pleasure the Indian presence and influence in Sikkim and Bhutan. Hence an important plank of China's Himalayan policy has been to work against the Indian ties with Sikkim and other Himalayan Kingdoms. The present Chinese reaction over happenings in Sikkim can be easily appreciated in this background.

Chinese reaction is clearly visible in an article that appeared in *'Peking Peoples Daily'* recently. The commentater has said in the article that "the constitution Bill is in essence designed to deprive Sikkim of its very right to independence and reduce it to a colony of India. The Chogyal was right by resisting such truculent and unjustified interference, control and pressure of the Government of India. India's crude expansionist act against Sikkim has aroused indignation among all justice upholding countries and people the world over."²⁶

The purpose of the Peking's diatribe has been to caricature India as a threat to her small neighbours. China's objective in

supporting the cause of Chogyal is to sow the seeds of discord in Sikkim against India and to weaken India's image in the region. The ethnic composition of Sikkim has further enabled it to be exploited for anti-India purposes by playing upon Bhutia-Lepcha minority complexes against the political aspirations of the larger Nepalese population. Of late, to penetrate in Sikkimese affairs China had been strengthening her influence among the lower and middle rank Sikkimese Government Officials, a majority of whom happened to be of Tibetan stock.

Besides, Sikkim being strategically too close to Tibet, Peking is not happy about the growth of political self consciousness in the entire sub—Himalayan region. Tibet also gets contaminated by it. Hence an important objective of China's Himalayan policy has been to work against the Indian ties with Sikkim and other Himalayan Kingdoms. This is amply borne out by the fact that the *Peking's people's Daily* has gone all out to support the cause of the Chogyal, who at least in China's revolutionary consistency should have been dubbed as a feudal anachronism. But the leader of the Sikkim Congress, Kazi Lhendup Dorji on his arrival in New Delhi on July 8, 1974 reiterated that the long term interest of Sikkim lay in strengthening Indo-Sikkim cooperation and "inter relationship."²⁷ It seems that the Chinese propaganda has not met with any success in Sikkim for the present. As against this, Soviet Russia has hailed the new Sikkim set up. The signing of Sikkim's constitution has been considered in Moscow as a resolution of political crisis in that Himalayan State. A *Pravda* report said that the constitution widened the powers of National Assembly enabling its members to discuss a number of important socio-political and economic problems and to pass appropriate resolutions on them. An earlier report said that endorsement of the constitution removed the last obstacle to the setting up of a democratic government in the country which would follow in the near future.

Pravda describes Sikkim as a protectorate of India. Soviet Russia has appreciated the Indian gesture in bringing order and stability in this remote Himalayan Kingdom of Sikkim. Even the Western countries have not made any comments challenging Indian bonafides in Sikkim. This clearly demonstrates that China has not succeeded in her objectives for the present.

The resilience of India's foreign policy has been amply demonstrated in the delicate handling of developments in Sikkim. The Indian action in taking over the internal administration of Sikkim in April 1973 was to secure the democratic aspirations of the people there and to prevent the collapse of the present administrative machinery. This has helped her to adopt the first ever democratic constitution for the State in July 1974. India has reason to be gratified about the role it has been able to play in the birth of democracy in Sikkim. The Chinese outburst against India is nothing

but a propoganda to malign her in the eyes of her immediate neighbours.

Sikkim Legislators In Delhi—July 1974

All the 32 members of the Sikkim Assembly led by their veteran national leader, Kazi Lhendup Dorji visited India in the second week of July 1974 as a gesture of goodwill towards India and its leaders who cooperated in helping the democratic process in Sikkim²⁸.

During their five days visit, the Sikkim legislators had elaborate talks with Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, External Affairs Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh, Planning Minister, Mr. D.P. Dhar and several high officials of the Government of India on the new administrative arrangements in Sikkim and India's economic and technical assistance to Sikkim's socio-economic development and the scope of further constitutional progress. They also met the President of India, Shri V.V. Giri, Vice President, Shri G.S. Pathak and the Congress President Dr. S.D. Sharma.

The Assembly leader and Sikkim's first Chief Minister designate under the new constitution, Kazi Lhendup Dorji—Khangsarpa told newsmen at the airport on his arrival in New Delhi on July 8, 1974 that Sikkim has always had a very special relationship with India and we intended to make it closer in the interest of our people to safeguard our democracy and further our progress. In his statement issued on his arrival at New Delhi Kazi Lhendup Dorji said :

“It is a great privilege and pleasure for all the Members of the Sikkim Assembly to come to Delhi. The Government of India have always been good enough to invite various groups from Sikkim in the past including members of the former elected Council but this is the first time that representatives of the Sikkimese people elected on the truly democratic principle of one man one vote have the opportunity to come. Each of us is proud to have won the confidence of the people of Sikkim and become a Member of the Sikkim Assembly which is to exercise the powers that a democratically constituted legislative body should have. The formation of our Assembly and the enactment of the Government of Sikkim Bill which provides the constitutional framework for Sikkim within which we will function, have been historic landmarks in the progress of Sikkim. They have been made possible by the goodwill and good offices of the Government of India.

“I need not recall that the beginnings of our democratic progress lie in the historical Agreement of May 8th, 1973, when it was the first time the people of Sikkim were allowed a voice on the very basis of our constitutional set-up. Since then, our views have been

clearly and consistently expressed in the electoral campaign that we waged and in the manifesto of the party to which thirtyone of us belong, on the basis of which I can say that the thirty second Member also has never had any difference of opinion, in the unanimously adopted Resolution of our Assembly session of May 11th, 1974, and now in the Government of Sikkim Act, 1974. We all pledged ourselves essentially for the achievement of the principles, purposes and objectives of the Agreement of May 8th. I can not sum up our aims any better than to repeat what was said in the preamble of that Agreement, namely, we "are convinced that the long term interest of Sikkim as a whole call for :

- (i) the establishment of a fully responsible Government in Sikkim with a more democratic Constitution, the guarantee of fundamental rights, the rule of law, and independent judiciary, and greater legislative and executive powers for the elected representatives of the people ;
- (ii) a system of elections based on adult suffrage which will give equitable representation to all sections of the people on the basis of the principle of one man one vote ;
- (iii) the strengthening of Indo-Sikkim cooperation and inter-relationship.

"We are clear that inspite of many difficulties and obstacles, the democratic set-up in Sikkim has been achieved and we are hoping to work it out in a spirit of goodwill and harmony with all groups. Above all, we are grateful for the cooperation and help extended by the Government of India. Sikkim has always had a very special relationship with India and we intend to make it closer in the interests of our people, to safeguard our democracy and further our progress. We know that we shall continue to have the full sympathy from the Government of India and that our destiny is safe with India.

"Once again may I say we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to be here and convey our thanks to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and other leaders of the Government of India for all they have done, and all that we know they will continue to do for our people."²⁹

Later in the day while welcoming the legislators from Sikkim, Mrs. Gandhi said that it was for the people of Sikkim and their leaders to visualise what kind of Sikkim they wanted to build. In this task she promised India's sympathies will be with Sikkim³⁰.

This visit was important and historic since it was the first ever visit of the newly elected legislators to this country and shall pave the ground for a mature understanding and intimate relationship between Sikkim and India.

The Chief Minister designate, Kazi Lhendup Dorji before leaving New Delhi on July 11, 1974 echoed his sentiments for a very close and intimate relationship between the two countries. In his message released on the eve of his departure, he said : "The entire membership of the Sikkim Assembly leaves Delhi greatly heartened by the meetings which they had the honour to have with the President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Planning Minister and other leaders and officials of the Government of India.

2. "As we have explained to these leaders, our people have had a special relationship with India for over a 100 years. In 1950, when the Government of India's exclusive responsibilities for defence and external relations for Sikkim were reaffirmed, it was also reaffirmed that the Government of India had the responsibility for law and order and good Government in Sikkim. But in practice the relevant powers were exercised by the palace. For 25 years the people of Sikkim put up with this, still hoping that the Palace would allow them the progressive growth of democracy. We and the Government of India have all tolerated it. We must be frank and say what we feel that the Government of India was too tolerant. Ultimately last year our people had launched a movement trying to change the feudal and hierarchical system. We have now had a chance to explain directly to the leaders of the Government of India how we have felt about the things in Sikkim in the past. We now have the framework for a new democratic set up in our Government of Sikkim Act which we have unanimously adopted. We believe it would be essential for the Government of India to discharge the responsibilities set out for them in the resolutions and in the Act. Thus will our new democratic set-up be so secure that it cannot ever be challenged from any quarter and thus will the true aspirations of our people be realised.

3. "Our visit has been a part of the enormous flow of goodwill that has become stronger between the peoples of Sikkim and the Government of India. We are grateful for the assurances given to us by the Indian leaders to help us develop economically and politically and to consider how to meet the requests we have made in our resolutions and in the constitutional framework for closer relations. We are specially grateful for the assistance we can look forward to for developing our economy, to bring more benefits to the common people of Sikkim. On our part we are glad to have had an opportunity to convey to the leaders in Delhi our appreciation for their sympathy and understanding of our problems and for enabling democracy to be born in Sikkim. The main point we wished the Government of India to hear from us was that we rely upon them to ensure all aspects of our constitutional framework with India and the surety of India's safeguards for our constitutional development. We leave in the hope that our desires will be met by the Government of India, and soon."³¹

Sikkim's Moment Of Glory And Consolidation

July 1974 shall go down in the political and constitutional history of Sikkim as a month of momentous and significant importance. The stage has been set for the auspicious formation of the first ever popular and responsible government in the state under the leadership of its veteran and devoted political leader, Kazi Lhendup Dorji of Khangsarpa. The whole kingdom is wearing a festive and joyous mood. Sikkim 'the minute dot on the School Child's map' has become the centre of worldwide attention. Democracy shall be on test and trial in the Himalayas. It is hoped that the newly formed Council of Ministers shall be a 'trend setter' for her other neighbours. It shall prove to be the beginning of a new revolution in this 'miniscule' of the Himalayas.

On this moment of Sikkim's glory and achievement it is hoped that the traditional ethnic rivalry will give way to cooperation and collaboration among the different sections of the population in the state. The Chogyal and the different political parties in the kingdom shall adjust themselves to the fast changing political and social milieu in the state. It is heartening to watch the efforts of the Sikkim Congress under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorji, who is trying to foster the feeling that the interests of the various ethnic groups are not antagonistic but complementary. The Party's acceptance of the newly devised electoral formula under which 75 per cent strong Nepali community accepted parity of seats with the Bhutia—Lepchas in the 32—member Sikkim Assembly is an objective test and proof of the newly established atmosphere in the kingdom. This atmosphere and the non-racial and non-communal platform helped the Sikkim Congress not only to steamroll all opposition during the last April elections giving fantastic majority in the Assembly (31 out of 32 seats), but has helped in developing a feeling among the people of the Bhutia—Lepcha community that the Palace is not the only place of their support, shelter and sustenance. It is an encouraging phenomenon of the Sikkim's political landscape that Kazi Lhendup Dorji, (a Bhutia) has become the accredited national leader of the people in the Kingdom. He enjoys the unchallenged and unquestioned loyalty of the preponderant Nepali community in the state. This promises an orderly transition from a time-worn feudal order towards a vigorous and hopeful atmosphere for the establishment of a parliamentary and responsible government under Kazi Lhendup Dorji in July 1974. At its best, it is the completion of the efforts of the Sikkimese people of the last 25 years.

In this changed landscape, the issue of Sikkim's relations with India cannot be isolated from the framework of the newly established internal settlement. The May 1973 agreement and the present constitution amply demonstrates the immense faith reposed by the people of Sikkim in the Government of India. Before leaving

New Delhi on July 11, 1974 with the Sikkimese legislators, Kazi Lhendup Dorji said: "The main point we wished the Government of India to hear from us was that we rely upon them to ensure all aspects of our constitutional framework with India and the surety of India's safeguards for our constitutional development"³². In almost all her internal matters greater Indian involvement was sought by the visiting delegation. In the months to come, India will be closely associated in achieving further constitutional reforms, administrative efficiency, economic progress communal harmony and greater association with India. But at this moment of Sikkim's era of change and consolidation, India should tread the path warily and the Indian diplomacy should be directed at removing any fear of Indian domination that might lurk in the minds of the Sikkimese, who may be sensitive to the fact that their southern neighbour is a big country.

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LIST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SIKKIM ASSEMBLY 1974

1. Shri Lhendup Dorji Kazi
2. Shri Degay Bhutia
3. Kumari Hemlata Chettri
4. Shri Narbahadur Khatiwada
5. Shri Nanda Kumar Subedi
6. Shri Nayen Tsering Lepcha
7. Shri B.B. Gurung
8. Shri Chatur Singh Rai
9. Shri Krishna Bahadur Limboo
10. Shri Krishna Chandra Pradhan
11. Shri Passang Tshering Bhutia
12. Shri Adar Singh Lepcha
13. Shri Ratna Bijay Rai
14. Shri Nanda Bahadur Rai
15. Shri Bhuwani Prasad Kharel
16. Shri Badri Nath Pradhan
17. Shri Kehar Singh Karki
18. Shri Bhawani Prasad Dahal
19. Shri Mohan Gurung
20. Shri Sonpom Lepcha
21. Shri R.C. Poudyal
22. Shri Kusu Das
23. Shri Loden Tsering Lepcha
24. Shri Tasa Tengay Lepcha
25. Shri Kalzang Gyatso Bhutia

26. Shri Rinzing Tongden Lepcha
27. Shri Shepechung Bhutia
28. Shri Phigu Tshering Bhutia
29. Shri Dugo Bhutia
30. Shri Nim Tshering Lepcha
31. Shri Dorjee Tshering Bhutia
32. Shri Karma Gonpo Lama

All except Shri Kalzang Gyatso Bhutia are the members of Sikkim Congress. Shri Bhutia is the only member of Sikkim National Party in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly.

APPENDIX
AND
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appendices

APPENDIX I

NAMES OF PLACES

Barmie	The rough ridge
Bithang-tsho	The lake of the cow yak
Chola Moo (Tsho-la-mo)	The lake of our lady or the goddess
Chola	The principal pass
Chomolhari	The hill of our lady goddess
Denjong	The valley of rice
Gangtok	The summit of the ridge
Gnatong	The forest meadow
Jelep-La	The easy, level pass
Kanchenjunga	The greatest snowy mountain of the five treasure houses.
Lachen	Big pass
Lachung	Little pass
Lagyap	The back of the pass
Lungthu	The descent into the valley
Mon-pa	Dwellers in low country
Nathu-la	The path of the listening ear
Pankim	The King's Minister
Pashok	Jungle or forest
Phallut	The bare denuded peak
Phicungong	The home of the dwarf bamboo
Rangit	The depression in the hills
Rang-nyu (Teesta)	The pure river
Ratong (source of Rangit)	The surging, swallowing one
Rhenock	The black hill
Rabdentse	The height of the chief residence
Rong-pa	Dwellers in steep country

Samdong	The bridge head
Sanchal	The damp misty hill
Sandak-phu	The high ridge
Sebu-la	The cold pass
Singalela	The hill of the wild alder
Sikkim	New House
Tantizo (Tanyektsho)	The lake of the horse tail
Teesta (Tista)	The beneficent rock
Yak-la	The path used by graziers
Yoksam	Meeting place of the Three Lamas

APPENDIX II

Translation of the Deed of Grant making over Darjeeling to the East India Company dated 29th Maugh, Sambat 1891, A.D., 1st February 1835.

The Governor-General having expressed his desire for the possession of the Hill of Darjeeling, on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of his Government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, I, the Sikkimputtee Rajah, out of friendship to the said Governor-General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is, all the land South of the Great Ranjeet River, east of the Balasur, Kahail, and Little Ranjeet Rivers, and West of the Rungno and Mahanaddi Rivers.

A. CAMPBELL

Superintendent of Darjeeling and in charge of political relations with Sikkim.

Seal of the Rajah
prefixed to the document.

APPENDIX III

Treaty, Covenant, or Agreement entered into by the Honourable Ashley Eden, Envoy and Special Commissioner on the Part of the British Government, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Right Honourable Charles, Earl Canning, Governor-General in Council, and by His Highness Sekeong Kuzoo, Maharajah of Sikkim on his own Part,—1861

Whereas the continued deprivations and misconduct of the officers and subjects of the Maharajah of Sikkim, and the neglect of

the Maharajah to afford satisfaction for the misdeeds of his people have resulted in an interruption, for many years past, of the harmony which previously existed between the British Government and the Government of Sikkim, and have led ultimately to the invasion and conquest of Sikkim by a British force; and whereas the Maharajah of Sikkim has now expressed his sincere regret for the misconduct of his servants and subjects, his determination to do all in his power to obviate future misunderstanding, and his desire to be again admitted into friendship and alliance with the British Government, it is hereby agreed as follows :—

1

All previous treaties made between the British Government and the Sikkim Government are hereby formally cancelled.

2

The whole of Sikkim territory now in the occupation of the British forces is restored to the Maharajah of Sikkim, and there shall henceforth be peace and amity between the two states.

3

The Maharajah of Sikkim undertakes, so far as is within his power, to restore within one month from the date of signing this Treaty all public property which was abandoned by the detachment of British Troops at Rinchinpoong.

4

In indemnification of the expenses incurred in 1860 by the British Government in occupying a portion of the territory of Sikkim as a means of enforcing just claims which had been evaded by the Government of Sikkim, and as a compensation to the British subjects who were pillaged and kidnapped by the Subjects of Sikkim, the Sikkim Government agrees to pay to the British authorities at Darjeeling the sum of 7,000 (seven thousand) rupees in the following instalments, that is to say :—

May 1st, 1861	1,000
November 1st, 1861	3,000
May 1st, 1862	3,000

As security for the due payment of this amount, it is further agreed that, in the event of any of these instalments not being duly paid on the date appointed, the Government of Sikkim shall make over the British Government that portion of its territory bounded on the South by the River Ramma, on the east by the Great Runjeet River, on the north by a line from the Great Runjeet to the Singaleelah Range, including the monasteries of Tassing,

Pemonchi, and Changacheling, and on the west by the Singaleelah Mountain Rang, and the British Government shall retain possession of this territory and collect the revenue thereof, until the full amount, with all expenses of occupation and collection and interest at 6 per cent per annum, are realized.

5

The Government of Sikkim engages that its subjects shall never again commit deprivations on British territory, or kidnap or otherwise molest British subjects. In the event of any such deprivation or kidnapping taking place, the Government of Sikkim undertakes to deliver up all the persons engaged in such malpractice, as well as the Sirdars or other chiefs conniving at or benefitting thereby.

6

The Government of Sikkim will at all times seize and deliver up any criminals, defaulters, or other delinquents who may have taken refuge within its territory, on demand being duly made in writing by the British Government through their accredited agents. Should any delay occur in complying with such demand, the police of the British Government may follow the person whose surrender has been demanded into any part of Sikkim territory, and shall, on showing a warrant, duly signed by the British Agent, receive every assistance and protection in the prosecution of their object from the Sikkim officers.

7

Inasmuch as the late misunderstandings between the two Governments have been mainly fomented by the acts of the ex-Dewan Namguay, the Government of Sikkim engages that neither the said Namguay, nor any of his blood relations shall ever again be allowed to set foot in Sikkim or to take part in the Council of, or hold any office under, the Maharajah or any of the Maharajah's family at Choombi.

8

The Government of Sikkim from this date abolishes all restrictions on travellers and monopolies in trade between the British territories and Sikkim. There shall henceforth be a free reciprocal intercourse, and full liberty of Commerce between subjects of both countries; it shall be lawful for British subjects to go into any part of Sikkim for the purpose of travel or trade, and the subjects of all countries shall be permitted to reside in and pass through Sikkim, and to expose their goods for sale at any place and in any manner that may best suit their purpose, without any interference whatever, except as is hereinafter provided.

9

The Government of Sikkim engages to afford protection to all travellers, merchants or traders of all countries, whether residing in, trading in, or passing through Sikkim. If any merchant, traveller or trader, being a European British subject, shall commit any offence contrary to the laws of Sikkim, and such person shall be punished by the representative of the British Government resident at Darjeeling, and the Sikkim Government will at once deliver such offender over to the British authorities for this purpose, and will, on no account, detain such offender in Sikkim on any pretext or pretence whatever. All other British subjects residing in the country to be liable to the laws of Sikkim; but such persons shall, on no account, be punished with loss of limb, or maiming, or torture, and every case of punishment of a British subject shall at once be reported to Darjeeling.

10

No duties or fees of any sort shall be demanded by the Sikkim Government of any person or persons on account of goods exported into the British territories from Sikkim, or imported into Sikkim from the British territories.

11

On all goods passing into or out of Tibet, Bhootan or Nepal, the Government of Sikkim may levy a duty of customs according to such a scale as may, from time to time, be determined and published, without reference to the destination of the goods, provided, however, that such duty shall, on no account, exceed 5 per cent on the value of goods at the time and place of the levy of duty. On the payment of the duty aforesaid a pass shall be given exempting such goods from liability to further payment on any account whatever.

12

With the view to protect the Government of Sikkim from fraud on account of under-valuation for assessment of duty, it is agreed that the custom officers shall have the option of taking over for the Government any goods at the value affixed on them by the owner.

13

In the event of the British Government desiring to open out a road through Sikkim, with the view of encouraging trade, the Sikkim Government will raise no objection thereto, and will afford every protection and aid to the party engaged in the work. If a road is constructed, the Government of Sikkim undertakes to keep it in

repair, and to erect and maintain suitable travellers' resthouses throughout its route.

14

If the British Government desires to make either a topographical or geological survey of Sikkim, the Sikkim Government will raise no objection to this being done, and will afford protection and assistance to the officers employed in this duty.

15

Inasmuch as many of the late misunderstandings have had their foundation in the custom which exists in Sikkim of dealing in slaves, the Government of Sikkim binds itself, from this date, to punish severely any person trafficking in human beings, or seizing persons for the purpose of using them as slaves.

16

Henceforth the subjects of Sikkim may transport themselves without let or hindrance to any country to which they may wish to remove. In the same way the Government of Sikkim has authority to permit the subjects of other countries, not being criminals or defaulters, to take refuge in Sikkim.

17

The Government of Sikkim engages to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against any of the neighbouring states which are allies of the British Government. If any disputes or questions arise between the people of Sikkim and those of the neighbouring states, such disputes or questions shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government, and Sikkim Government agrees to abide by the decision of the British Government.

18

The whole military force of Sikkim shall join and afford every aid and facility to British Troops when employed in the Hills.

19

The Government of Sikkim will not cede or lease any portion of its territory to another state without the permission of the British Government.

20

The Government of Sikkim engages that no armed force belonging to any other country shall pass through Sikkim without the sanction of the British Government.

21

Seven of the criminals, whose surrender was demanded by the British Government, having fled from Sikkim and taken refuge in Bhootan, the Government of Sikkim engages to do all in its power to obtain the delivery of those persons from the Bhootan Government, and in the event of any of these men again returning to Sikkim, the Sikkim Government binds itself to sieze them, and to make them over to the British Authorities at Darjeeling without delay.

22

With the view to the establishment of an efficient Government in Sikkim, and to the better maintenance of friendly relations with the British Government, the Maharajah of Sikkim agrees to remove the seat of his Government from Tibet to Sikkim and to reside there for nine months in the year. It is further agreed that a Vakeel shall be accredited by the Sikkim Government, who shall reside permanently at Darjeeling.

23

This treaty, consisting of twenty-three Articles, being settled and concluded by the Honourable Ashley Eden, British Envoy, and His Highness Sekeong Kuzoo Sikkimputtee, Maharajah, at Tumloong, this 28th day of March 1861, corresponding with 17th Dao Neepoo 61, Mr. Eden has delivered to the Maharajah a copy of the same in English, with translation in Nagri and Bhootiah, under the seal and signature of the Said Honorable Ashley Eden and His Highness the Sikkimputtee Maharajah, and the Sikkimputtee Maharajah has in the like manner delivered to the said Hon'ble Ashley Eden another copy also in English, with translation in Nagri and Bhootiah, bearing the seal of His Highness and the said Hon'ble Ashley Eden. The Envoy engages to procure the delivery to His Highness, within six weeks from this date, of a copy of this Treaty duly ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council, and this Treaty shall in the meantime be in full force.

SEKEONG KUZOO SIKKIMPUTTEE
ASHLEY EDEN
ENVOY
CANNING

Ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council at Calcutta on the sixteenth day of April 1861.

C. U. ATCHISON
UNDER-SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT
OF INDIA.

APPENDIX IV

*Convention between Great Britain and China relating to
Sikkim and Tibet—1890*

Whereas Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of China, are sincerely desirous to maintain and perpetuate the relations of friendship and good understanding which now exists between their respective Empires, and whereas recent occurrences have tended towards a disturbance of the said relations, and it is desirable to clearly define and permanently settle certain matters connected with the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, Her Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the Emperor of China have resolved to conclude a Convention on this subject and have, for this purpose, named plenipotentiaries, that is to say ;

Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, His Excellency the Most Hon'ble Henry Charles Keith Petty Fitzmaurice, G.M.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.M.I.E., Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

And His Majesty the Emperor of China, His Excellency Sheng Tai, Imperial Associate Resident in Tibet, Military Deputy Lieutenant Governor.

Who having met and communicated to each other their full powers, and finding these to be in proper form, having agreed upon the following Convention in eight Articles.

I

The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into 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.

II

It is admitted that the British Government, whose protectorate over the Sikkim state is hereby recognised, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that state, and except through and with the permission of the British Government, neither the Ruler of the State nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal with any other country.

III

The Government of Great Britain and Ireland and the Government of China engage reciprocally to respect the boundary

as defined in Article I, and to prevent acts of aggression from their respective sides of the frontier.

IV

The question of providing increased facilities for trade across the Sikkim-Tibet frontier will hereafter be discussed with a view to a mutually satisfactory arrangement by High Contracting powers.

V

The question of pasturage on the Sikkim side of the frontier is reserved for further examination and future adjustment.

VI

The High Contracting powers reserve for discussion and arrangement the method in which official communications between the British authorities in India and the authorities in Tibet shall be conducted.

VII

Two joint Commissioners shall, within six months from the ratification of this Convention, be appointed one by the British Government in India, the other by the Chinese Resident in Tibet. The said Commissioners shall meet and discuss the questions which by the last three preceding Articles have been reserved.

VIII

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratification shall be exchanged in London as soon as possible after the date of the signature thereof.

In witness whereof the respective negotiators have signed the same and affixed thereunto the seals of their arms.

Done in quadruplicate at Calcutta this seventeenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety, corresponding with the Chinese date the twenty-seventh day of the second moon of the sixteenth year of Kuang Hsu.

LANSDOWNE
CHINESE SEAL AND SIGNATURE

APPENDIX V

*Regulations Regarding Trade, Communication, and Pasturage
(to be Appended to the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of
1890-1893).*

Trade

I

A trade-mart shall be established at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the frontier, and shall be open to all British subjects for purposes of trade from the first day of May 1894. The Government of India shall be free to send officers to reside at Yatung to watch the conditions of British trade at that mart.

II

British subjects trading at Yatung shall be at liberty to travel to and fro between the frontier and Yatung, to reside at Yatung, and to rent houses and godowns for their own accommodation and the storage of their goods. The Chinese Government undertake that suitable buildings for the above purposes shall be provided for British subjects, and also that a special and fitting residence shall be provided for the officer or officers appointed by the Government of India under Regulation I to reside at Yatung. British subjects shall be at liberty to sell their goods to whomsoever they please, to purchase native commodities in kind or in money, to hire transport of any kind, and in general to conduct their business transactions in conformity with local usage, and without any vexatious restrictions. Such British subjects shall receive efficient protection for their persons and property. At Lang-Jo and Ta-Chun, between the frontier and Yatung, where rest-houses have been built by the Tibetan authorities, British subjects can break their journey in consideration of a daily rent.

III

Import and export trade in the following articles—arms, ammunition, military stores, salt, liquors, and intoxicating or narcotic drugs, may at the option of either Government be entirely prohibited, or permitted only on such conditions as either Government on their own side may think fit to impose.

IV

Goods, other than goods of descriptions enumerated in Regulation III, entering Tibet from British India, across the Sikkim-Tibet frontier, or vice-versa, whatever their origin, shall be exempt from duty for a period of five years commencing from the date of opening of Yatung to trade; but after the expiration of this term, if found desirable, a tariff may be mutually agreed upon and enforced.

Indian tea may be imported into Tibet at a rate of duty not exceeding that at which Chinese tea is imported into England, but trade in Indian tea shall not be engaged in during the five years for which other commodities are exempt.

V

All goods on arrival at Yatung, whether from British India or from Tibet, must be reported at the customs stations there for examination, and the report must give full particulars of the description, quantity and value of the goods.

VI

In the event of trade disputes arising between British and Chinese or Tibetan subjects in Tibet, they shall be enquired into and settled in personal conference by the political officer for Sikkim and the Chinese frontier officer. The object of personal conference being to ascertain facts and do justice; where there is a divergence of views the law of the country to which the defendant belongs shall guide.

Communication

VII

Despatches from the Government of India to the Chinese Imperial Resident in Tibet shall be handed over by the political officer for Sikkim to the Chinese frontier officer, who will forward them by special courier.

Despatches from the Chinese Imperial Resident in Tibet to the Government of India will be handed over by the Chinese frontier officer to the political officer for Sikkim, who will forward them as quickly as possible.

VIII

Despatches between the Chinese and Indian officials must be treated with due respect, and Couriers will be assisted in passing to and fro by the officers of each Government.

Pasturage

IX

After the expiration of one year from the date of the opening of Yatung, such Tibetans as continue to graze their cattle in Sikkim will be subject to such Regulations as the British Government may from time to time enact for the general conduct of grazing in Sikkim. Due notice will be given of such Regulations.

General Articles

I

In the event of disagreement between the political officer for Sikkim and the Chinese frontier officer, each official shall report th

matter to his immediate superior, who, in turn, if a settlement is not arrived at between them, shall refer such matter to their respective Governments for disposal.

II

After the lapse of five years from the date on which these Regulations shall come into force, and on six months' notice given by either party, these Regulations shall be subject to revision by Commissioners appointed on both sides for this purpose who shall be empowered to decide on and adopt such amendments and extensions as experience shall prove to be desirable.

III

It having been stipulated that Joint Commissioners shall be appointed by the British and Chinese Governments under the seventh article of the Sikkim-Tibet Convention to meet and discuss, with a view to the final settlement of the questions reserved under articles 4, 5 and 6 of the said Convention; and the Commissioners thus appointed having met and discussed the questions referred to, namely, Trade, Communication and Pasturage, have been further appointed to sign the agreement in nine Regulations and three general articles now arrived at, and to declare that the said nine Regulations and the three general articles form part of the Convention itself.

In witness whereof the respective Commissioners have hereto subscribed their names.

Done in quadruplicate at Darjeeling this 5th day of December, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-three corresponding with the Chinese date the 28th day of the 10th moon of the 19th year of Kaung Hsu.

HO CHANG-JUNG

A. W. PAUL
British Commissioner.

JAMES H. HART

Chinese Commissioner.

The 5th December 1893.

APPENDIX VI

Convention between Great Britain and Tibet—1904

Whereas doubts and difficulties have arisen as to the meaning and validity of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, and the Trade Regulations of 1893, and as to the liabilities of the Tibetan

Government under these agreements; and whereas recent occurrences have tended towards a disturbance of the relations of friendship and good understanding which have existed between the British Government and the Government of Tibet; and whereas it is desirable to restore peace and amicable relations, and to resolve and determine the doubts and difficulties as aforesaid, the said Governments have resolved to conclude a Convention with these objects, and the following articles have been agreed upon by Colonel F. E. Younghusband, C. I. E. in virtue of full powers vested in him by His Britannic Majesty's Government and on behalf of that said Government, and Lo-Sang Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-den Ti-Rimpoche, and the representatives of the Council of the three monasteries, Se-ra, Dre-Pung and Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the National Assembly on behalf of the Government of Tibet :

I

The Government of Tibet engages to respect the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and to recognize the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet, as defined in Article I of the said Convention, and to erect boundary pillars accordingly.

II

The Tibetan Government undertakes to open forthwith trade marts to which all British and Tibetan subjects shall have free right of access at Gyantse and Gartok, as well as at Yatung.

The Regulations applicable to trade mart at Yatung, under the Anglo-Chinese Agreement of 1893, shall, subject to such amendments as may hereafter be agreed upon by Common Consent between the British and Tibetan Governments, apply to the marts above mentioned.

In addition to establishing trade marts at the places mentioned, the Tibetan Government undertakes to place no restrictions on trade by existing routes and to consider the question of establishing fresh trade marts under similar conditions if development of trade requires it.

III

The question of the amendment of the Regulations of 1893 is reserved for separate consideration, and the Tibetan Government undertakes to appoint fully authorized delegates to negotiate with representatives of the British Government as to the details of the amendments required.

IV

The Tibetan Government undertakes to levy no dues of any kind other than those provided for in the tariff to be mutually agreed upon.

V

The Tibetan Government undertakes to keep the roads to Gyantse and Gartok from the frontier clear of all obstruction and in a state of repair suited to the needs of the trade, and to establish at Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok, and at each of the other trade marts that may hereafter be established, a Tibetan Agent who shall receive from the British Agent appointed to watch over British trade at the marts in question any letter which the latter may desire to send to the Tibetan or to the Chinese authorities. The Tibetan Agent shall also be responsible for the due delivery of such communications and for the replies of transmission.

VI

As an indemnity to the British Government for the expense incurred in the despatch of armed troops to Lhasas, to exact reparation for breaches of treaty obligations, and for the insults offered to and attacks upon the British Commissioner and his following and escort, the Tibetan Government engages to pay a sum of pounds five hundred thousand—equivalent to rupees seventy-five lakhs—to the British Government.

The indemnity shall be payable at such place as the British Government may from time to time after due notice, indicate whether in Tibet or in the British districts of Darjeeling or Jalpaiguri, in seventy-five annual instalments of rupees one lakh each on the 1st January in each year, beginning from the 1st January 1906.

VII

As security for the payment of the above-mentioned indemnity, and for the fulfilment of the provisions relative to trade marts specified in Articles II, III, IV, and V, the British Government shall continue to occupy the Chumbi valley until the indemnity has been paid and until the trade marts have been effectively opened for three years, whichever date may be the later.

VIII

The Tibetan Government agrees to raze all forts and fortifications and remove all armaments which might impede the course of free communication between the British frontier and the towns of Gyantse and Lhasa.

IX

The Government of Tibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British Government,—

(a) no portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation, to any European Power;

(b) no such Power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs;

(c) no Representatives or Agents of any Foreign Power shall be admitted to Tibet;

(d) no concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights shall be granted or any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power. In the event of consent to such concession being granted, similar or equivalent concessions shall be granted to the British Government;

(e) no Tibetan revenues, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power.

X

In witness whereof the negotiations have signed the same, and affixed hereunto the seals of their arms.

Done in quintuplicate at Lhasa, this 7th day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and four, corresponding with the Tibetan date, the 27th day of the seventh month of the Wood Dragon year.

Declaration signed by the Viceroy of India on the 11th November 1904, and appended to the ratified Convention of 7th September 1904.

His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, having ratified the Convention which was concluded at Lhasa on 7th September 1904 by Colonel Younghusband, C. I. E. British Commissioner for Tibetan Frontier Matters, on behalf of His Britannic Majesty's Government, and by Lo-sang Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-den Ti-Rimpoche, and the representatives of the Council, of the three monasteries, Se-ra, Dre-Pung and Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the National Assembly, on behalf of the Government of Tibet, is pleased to direct as an act of grace that the sum of money which the Tibetan Government have bound themselves under the terms of Article VI of the said Convention to pay His Majesty's Government as an indemnity for the expenses incurred by the latter in connection with the dispatch of armed forces to Lhasa, be reduced from Rs. 75,00,000, to Rs. 25,00,000, and to declare that the British occupation of the Chumbi valley shall cease after the due payment of the three annual instalments of the said indemnity as fixed by the said Articles, provided, however, that the trade marts as stipulated in Article II of the Convention shall have been effectively opened for three years as provided in Article VI of the Convention and that, in the meantime, the

Tibetans shall have faithfully complied with the terms of the said Convention in all other respect.

Viceroy and Governor-General of
India.

This declaration was signed by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council at Simla on the eleventh day of November, A.D., one thousand nine hundred and four.

S. M. Fraser,
Secretary to the Government of India,
Foreign Department.

APPENDIX VII

Convention between Great Britain and China—1966

Whereas His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of China are sincerely desirous to maintain and perpetuate the relations of friendship and good understanding which now exist between their respective Empires;

And whereas the refusal of Tibet to recognize the validity of or to carry into full effect the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 17th March 1890, and Regulations of 5th December 1893 placed the British Government under the necessity of taking steps to secure their rights and interests under the said Convention and Regulations;

And whereas a Convention of ten articles was signed at Lhasa on 7th September 1904, on behalf of Great Britain and Tibet, and was ratified by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India on behalf of Great Britain on November 11th, 1904 a declaration on behalf of Great Britain modifying its terms under certain conditions being appended thereto;

His Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the Emperor of China have resolved to conclude a Convention on this subject and have for this purpose named plenipotentiaries, that is to say :—

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN AND
IRELAND

Sir Ernest Mason Satow, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, His Said

Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister plenipotentiary to His Majesty the Emperor of China.

AND HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF CHINA

His Excellency Tong-Shao-yi, His Said Majesty's High Commissioner plenipotentiary and a Vice-President of the Board of Foreign Affairs, who having communicated to each other their respective full powers and finding them to be in good and due form have agreed upon and concluded the following Convention in six articles :—

Article I

The Convention concluded on 7th September, 1904, by Great Britain and Tibet, the texts of which in English and Chinese are attached to the present Convention as an annexe, is hereby confirmed, subject to the modifications stated in the declaration appended thereto, and both of the High Contracting parties engage to take at all times such steps as may be necessary to secure the due fulfilment of the terms specified therein.

Article II

The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet. The Government of China also undertakes not to permit any other foreign state to interfere with the territory or internal administration of Tibet.

Article III

The concessions which are mentioned in Article 9 (d) of the Convention concluded on 7th September, 1904 by Great Britain and Tibet are denied to any state or to the subject of any state other than China, but it has been arranged with China that the trade marts specified in Article 2 of the aforesaid Convention Great Britain shall be entitled to lay down telegraph lines connecting with India.

Article IV

The provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and Regulation of 1893 shall, subject to the terms of this present Convention and annexe thereto, remain in full force.

Article V

The English and Chinese texts of the present Convention have been carefully compared and found to correspond, but in the event of there being any difference of meaning between them the English text shall be authoritative.

Article VI

This convention shall be ratified by the Sovereigns of both countries and ratifications shall be exchanged at London within three months after the date of signature by the plenipotentiaries of both powers.

In token whereof the respective plenipotentiaries have signed and sealed this convention, four copies in English and four in Chinese.

Done at Peking this twenty-seventh day of April, one thousand nine hundred and six, being the fourth day of the fourth month of the thirty-second year of the reign of Kuang-Hsu.

Sd. TONG SHAO-TI

Sd. ERNEST SATOW

APPENDIX VIII

TREATY BETWEEN INDIA AND SIKKIM 1950.

The President of India and His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim being desirous of further strengthening the good relations already existing between India and Sikkim, have resolved to enter into a new Treaty with each other, and the President of India has, for the purpose, appointed as his plenipotentiary Shri Harishwar Dayal, Political Officer in Sikkim and His Highness the Maharaja having examined Shri Harishwar Dayal's credentials and found them good and in due form, the two have agreed as follows :—

Article I

All previous treaties between the British Government and Sikkim which are at present in force as between India and Sikkim are hereby formally cancelled.

Article II

Sikkim shall continue to be a Protectorate of India and, subject to the provisions of this Treaty, shall enjoy autonomy in regard to its internal affairs.

Article III

(1) The Government of India will be responsible for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim. It shall have the right to take such measures as it considers necessary for the defence of Sikkim or the security of India, whether preparatory or otherwise, and whether within or outside Sikkim. In particular, the Govern-

ment of India shall have the right to station troops anywhere within Sikkim.

(2) The measures referred to in paragraph (1) will as far as possible be taken by the Government of India in consultation with the Government of Sikkim.

(3) The Government of Sikkim shall not import any arms, ammunition, military stores or other warlike material of any description for any purpose whatsoever without the previous consent of the Government of India,

Article IV

(1) The external relations of Sikkim, whether political, economic or financial, shall be conducted and regulated solely by the Government of India, and the Government of Sikkim shall have no dealings with any foreign power.

(2) Subjects of Sikkim travelling to foreign countries shall be treated as Indian protected persons for the purpose of passports, and shall receive from Indian representatives abroad the same protection and facilities as Indian nationals.

Article V

The Government of Sikkim agrees not to levy any import duty, transit duty or other impost on goods brought into, or in transit through, Sikkim ; and the Government of India agrees not to levy any import or other duty on goods of Sikkimese origin brought into India from Sikkim.

Article VI

(1) The Government of India shall have the exclusive right of constructing, maintaining and regulating the use of railways, aerodromes and landing grounds and air navigation facilities, posts, telegraphs, telephones and wireless installations in Sikkim and the Government of Sikkim shall render the Government of India every assistance in their construction maintenance and protection.

(2) The Government of Sikkim may, however, construct, maintain, and regulate the use of, railways and aerodromes and landing grounds and air navigation facilities to such extent as may be agreed to by the Government of India.

(3) The Government of India shall have the right to construct and maintain in Sikkim roads for strategic purposes and for the purpose of improving communications with India and other adjoining countries ; and the Government of Sikkim shall render the Government of India every assistance in the construction, maintenance and protection of such roads.

Article VII

(1) Subjects of Sikkim shall have the right of entry into, and free movement within, India, and Indian nationals shall have the right of entry into, free movement within, Sikkim.

(2) Subject to such regulations as the Government of Sikkim may prescribe in consultation with the Government of India, Indian nationals shall have :—

- (a) the right to carry on trade and commerce in Sikkim : and
 - (b) When established in any trade in Sikkim, the right to acquire, hold and dispose of any property, movable or immovable, for the purposes of their trade or residence in Sikkim.
- (3) Subjects of Sikkim shall have the same right :—
- (a) to carry on trade and commerce in India, and to employment therein ; and
 - (b) of acquiring, holding and disposing of property, movable and immovable, as Indian nationals.

Article VIII

(1) Indian nationals within Sikkim shall be subject to the laws of Sikkim and subjects of Sikkim within India shall be subject to the laws of India.

(2) Whenever any criminal proceedings are initiated in Sikkim against any Indian national or any person in the service of the Government of India or any foreigner, the Government of Sikkim shall furnish the Representative of the Government of India in Sikkim (hereinafter referred to as the Indian Representative) with particulars of the charges against such person.

If in the case of any person in the service of the Government of India or any foreigner if is so demanded by the Indian Representative, such person shall be handed over to him for trial before such court as may be established for the purpose of the Government of India either in Sikkim or outside.

Article IX

(1) The Government of Sikkim agrees to seize and deliver up any fugitive offender from outside Sikkim who has taken refuge therein on demand being made by the Indian Representative. Should any delay occur in complying with such demand, the Indian police may follow the person whose surrender has been demanded into any part of Sikkim, and shall, on showing a warrant signed by the Indian Representative, receive every assistance and protection in the prosecution of their object from the Sikkim officers.

(2) The Government of India similarly agrees, on demand being made by the Government of Sikkim, to take extradition proceedings against, and surrender, any fugitive offender from Sikkim who has taken refuge in the territory of India.

(3) In this article, "fugitive offender" means a person who is accused of having committed an extradition offence as defined in the First Schedule to the Indian Extradition Act, 1903, any other offence which may hereafter be agreed upon between the Government of India and the Government of Sikkim as being an extradition offence. (see appendix I).

Article X

The Government of India, having in mind the friendly relations already existing between India and Sikkim and now further strengthened by this Treaty, and being desirous of assisting in the development and good administration of Sikkim, agrees to pay the Government of Sikkim a sum of rupees three lakhs every year so long as the terms of this Treaty are duly observed by the Government of Sikkim.

The first payment under this Article will be made before the end of the year 1950, and subsequent payments will be made in the month of August every year.

Article XI

The Government of India shall have the right to appoint a Representative to reside in Sikkim : and the Government of Sikkim shall provide him and his staff with all reasonable facilities in regard to their residential and office accommodation and generally regard to to their carrying out their duties in Sikkim.

Article XII

If any dispute arises in the interpretation of the provisions of this Treaty which cannot be resolved by mutual consultation, the dispute shall be referred to the Chief Justice of India whose decision thereon shall be final.

Article XIII

This Treaty shall come into force without ratification from the date of signature by both the parties.

Done in duplicate at Gangtok on this 5th day of December, 1950.

(Sd.) HARISHWAR DAYAL
Political officer in Sikkim.

(Sd.) TASHI NAMGYAL
His Highness
the Maharaja of Sikkim.

APPENDIX VIII

(LETTERS EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE POLITICAL OFFICER AND THE MAHARAJA OF SIKKIM REGARDING ARTICLE IX, PARA (3) OF THE INDO-SIKKIM TREATY OF 1950)

Copy of Political Officer's letter No. 1 (7)-NS/63 dated 24 December, 1963 addressed to His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim.

As a result of negotiations which took place in Gangtok between us on the question of extradition of fugitive offenders, Article IX paragraph (3) of the Treaty of 1950, it was agreed to modify Article IX paragraph (3) so as to substitute reference to Second Schedule to the Extradition Act of 1962 (Act 34 of 1962) thereto for the First Schedule to the Indian Extradition Act of 1903 respectively.

Accordingly it was agreed that Article IX, paragraph (3) will read as follows :

“In this Article ‘fugitive offender’ means a person who is accused of having committed an extradition offence as defined in the Second Schedule to the Indian Extradition Act of 1962 (Act 34 of 1962) or any other offence which may hereafter be agreed upon between the Government of India and the Government of Sikkim as being an extradition offence”.

I shall be grateful if you will please confirm that the above sets out correctly the understanding reached between us.

Please accept, Your Highness, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Copy of letter No. LCA/91 dated 12 March, 1964 from His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim addressed to the Political Officer in Sikkim, Gangtok.

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 1 (7)—NS/63 of 24th December, 1963 which reads as follows :—

“As a result of negotiations which took place in Gangtok between us on the question of extradition of fugitive offenders, under Article IX paragraph (3) of the Treaty of 1950, it was agreed to modify Article IX paragraph (3) so as to substitute reference to Second Schedule to the Extradition Act of 1962 (Act 34 of 1962) thereto for the First Schedule to the Indian Extradition Act of 1903 respectively,

Accordingly it was agreed that Article IX paragraph (3) will read as follows :—

In this Article ‘fugitive offender’ means a person who is accused of having committed an extradition offence as defined in

the Second Schedule to the Indian Extradition Act of 1962 (Act 34 of 1962) or any other offence which may hereafter be agreed upon between the Government of India and the Government of Sikkim as being an extradition offence”.

It is confirmed that the above sets out correctly the understanding reached between us.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

APPENDIX IX
TEXT OF THE SIKKIM AGREEMENT
8, MAY 1973

An agreement envisaging a democratic set-up for Sikkim and administrative reforms was signed in Gangtok on Tuesday.

The following is the text of the agreement :

Whereas the Chogyal and the people of Sikkim are convinced that their interest and the long-term interest of Sikkim as a whole call for :

(i) The establishment of a fully responsible Government in Sikkim with a more democratic Constitution, the guarantee of Fundamental Rights, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and greater legislative and executive powers for the elected representatives of the people ;

(ii) A system of elections based on adult suffrage which will give equitable representation to all sections of the people on the basis of the principle of one man one vote ;

(iii) The strengthening of Indo-Sikkim co-operation and inter-relationship ; and

Whereas the Chogyal as well as the representatives of the people had requested the government of India :

(i) To take responsibility for the establishment of law and order and good administration in Sikkim following the breakdown of all three ;

(ii) To ensure the further development of a constitutional government, communal harmony, good administration and rapid economic and social development in Sikkim ;

(iii) To provide the head of the administration (Chief Executive) in Sikkim to help achieve and to safeguard all the above needs and objectives ;

Basic rights

And whereas the Government of India have agreed to discharge the responsibilities hereby renewed to them ;

Now, whereas the Government of India, the Chogyal of Sikkim and the leaders of the political parties of Sikkim, have agreed as follow :

(1) The three parties hereby recognise and undertake to ensure the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Sikkim. The people of Sikkim will enjoy the right of election on the basis of adult suffrage to give effect to the principle of one man one vote.

(2) There shall be an assembly in Sikkim. The assembly shall be elected every four years. Elections shall be fair and free and shall be conducted under the supervision of a representative of the Election Commission of India, who shall be appointed for the purpose by the Government of Sikkim.

(3) (i) In accordance with this agreement, the assembly shall have the power to propose laws and adopt resolution for the welfare of the people of Sikkim, on any of the matters enumerated herein below, namely : (i) education, (ii) public health, (iii) excise, (iv) Press and publicity (v) transport, (vi) bazars, (vii) forests, (viii) public works, (ix) agriculture, (x) food supplies ; and (xi) economic and social planning, including state enterprises, (xii) home and establishment, (xiii) finance, and (xiv) land revenue.

(ii) The assembly shall not discuss or ask questions on the following :

(a) The Chogyal and the members of the the ruling family ; (b) Any matter pending before the court of law ; (c) The appointment of the Chief Executive and members of the judiciary ; and (d) Any matter which concerns the responsibilities of the Government of India under this agreement, or under any other agreement between India and Sikkim.

Executive Council

(4) There shall be an Executive Council consisting of elected members of the assembly who shall be appointed to the Executive Council by the Chogyal on the advice of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will preside over the meetings of the Executive Council.

(5) The system of elections shall be so organised as to make the assembly adequately representative of the various sections of the population. The size and composition of the assembly and of the Executive Council shall be such as may be prescribed from time care being taken to ensure that no single section of the population

acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin, and that the rights and interests of the Sikkimese of Bhutia—Lepcha origin and of the Sikkimese of Nepali, which includes Tsong and Scheduled Caste, origin, are fully protected.

(6) The Chogyal shall perform the functions of his high office in accordance with the Constitution of Sikkim as set out in this agreement.

(7) To head the administration in Sikkim there shall be a Chief Executive, who shall be appointed by the Chogyal on the nomination of the Government of India.

(8) The Chief Executive shall have all the powers necessary for the discharge of his functions and responsibilities ; and exercise his powers in the following manner ;

(i) With respect to matters allocated to a member of the Executive Council, he shall act in consultation with the member to whom administrative functions in this regard have been allocated.

(ii) He shall submit all important matters to the Chogyal for his information and for his approval of the action proposed to be taken, except where immediate action is required. In the latter case, he shall obtain the Chogyal's approval as soon after the action has been taken as possible.

(iii) He shall have a special responsibilities to ensure the proper implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes in Sikkim, the smooth and efficient running of its administration, the continued enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedoms by all sections of the population of Sikkim, and the optimum utilisation for the benefit of the people of Sikkim of the funds allocated for the economic and social development of Sikkim.

(iv) In cases involving amity between the various sections of the population of Sikkim, on the development of democratic Government and efficient administration in Sikkim, any difference of opinion between him and the Chogyal shall be referred to the Political Officer in Sikkim, who shall obtain the advice of the Government of India, which shall be binding.

(9) There shall be equality before the law in Sikkim. The judiciary shall remain independent.

(10) The Palace establishment and the Sikkim Guards shall remain directly under the Chogyal.

(11) The Government of India, who are solely responsible for the defence and territorial integrity of Sikkim and who are solely responsible for the conduct and regulations of the external relations of Sikkim, whether political, economic or financial, reaffirm their determination to discharge these and their other responsibilities for

the benefit of the people of Sikkim, for their communal harmony, good administration and economic and social development. It is hereby reaffirmed that they shall have the necessary powers for carrying out these responsibilities.

Done in triplicate at Gangtok on this the eighth day of May of the year one thousand nine hundred and seventy three, A.D.

Sd/- KEWAL SINGH,
Foreign Secretary,
Government of India.

Sd/- PALDEN THONDUP
NAMGYAL,
The Chogyal of Sikkim.

Leaders of the political parties representing the people of Sikkim.

For the Sikkim Janta Congress Sd/-	For the Sikkim National Congress Sd/-	For the Sikkim National Party Sd/-
K. C. Pradhan	K. Lhendup Dorji	Netuk Tsering
B. B. Gurung	C. S. Rai	Man Bahadur Basnet
S. K. Rai	C. B. Chhetri	Tasa Thungay
B. P. Dahul	N. K. Subedi	Padam Khare
B. Kharel	D. N. Tiwari	K. Wangdi

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SINGHIR

MANGAN

GANGTOK

R. TEESTA

R. RANGIT

GEYZING

R. YANGTSI

NAMCHI

TSONGU LAKE

NATHULA (PASS)

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