SIKKIM

A Short Political History

LAL BAHADUR BASNET

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Preface

Between the two most populous Asian countries, Communist China on the north and Democratic India on the south, lie the three Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan, the last relics of feudal monarchy. Forming a buffer zone between the two giants, the three kingdoms are faced with a situation that at once poses a threat to their very existence and ensures the continuity of their anachronistic systems. Of the three, Nepal, with its Panchayat Democracy, buttressed by the ever-present threat of the Security Act, a powerful army, and an equally powerful police, has become a political hothouse; Bhutan, with its dark dungeons for the non-conformists, is perhaps the last Shangrila, a land closed alike to people and ideas from the outside world, despite its entry into the United Nations Organisation.

Hemmed in between Nepal and Bhutan lies the smallest of the three kingdoms, Sikkim. More advanced than either Nepal or Bhutan in many ways, not the least of which is the comparatively more liberal form of government that tolerates the existence of political parties, tiny Sikkim has her own cartload of contradictions. Being a 'Protectorate' of India, and therefore under the Indian defence system, Sikkim has a border with the Tibetan Region of China which often becomes uncomfortably 'live' to warrant its being flashed in the headlines of the world press.

Sikkim is a pseudo-democracy, the creation of the interplay of the "neo-imperialistic" policies pursued by the Government of India, the protecting power, and the vaulting ambitions of the ruling house, which, while posing as an enlightened monarchy had been successful in eroding whatever little of democracy was introduced in Sikkim in the first years of her contact with a

newly independent India. If the gains of the two parties had been satisfactory to them, the alliance would perhaps have continued indefinitely. But the ambitions of the ruling house took a shape that boded ill for the continued honeymoon of the two partners. It was only a matter of time before the essential conflict in their respective stands broke surface. The ruling house was eventually trapped between the resurgent wrath of the great majority of the people and the "special interests" of the Government of India.

The events in Sikkim following upon the independence of India provide a fascinating subject for study from many points of view. It is primarily this part of Sikkim's political history that has inspired the present work. There are few books written on Sikkim, and even these few suffer from the limitations imposed by the fact that either they are written by Indians, whose patriotism blurs their vision, or by other people whose objectivity has, more often than not, been seriously clouded by the lavish hospitality accorded them by the ruling house at the expense of the tax-payer.

The people of Sikkim, the ignored entity, has been utterly eclipsed, though both the ruling house and the Indian Government have always professed to be actuated by the interests of the masses in defending their respective stands. Thus far the Sikkimese people and its hopes and aspirations have been conveniently ignored. This book seeks to present the political history of Sikkim from the viewpoint of the masses.

The present book has been divided into two parts. The first part deals with the period antecedent to 15 August 1947, the day India won her independence from British rule. The second part deals with the interplay of political parties, the ruling house, and the Government of India, on the political stage of Sikkim, in the post-1947 period up to the end of May 1973.

15 June 1973
Gangtok,
SIKKIM

LAL BAHADUR BASNET

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PART I

THE PAST

(.....to 15 August 1947)

CHAPTER I

A Short Geographical Introduction

On the map Sikkim appears as a narrow strip of territory, squeezed between Nepal on the west and Bhutan on the east. A tongue-shaped southward projection of Tibet, the Chumbi Valley, is driven like a wedge between Sikkim and Bhutan for more than half the length of Sikkim's eastern border. On the south lie the hill areas of Darjeeling District of West Bengal, India, and on the north lies the Tibet Region of China. Sikkim lies between 27°-5′ and 28°-10′ North Latitudes, and between 88°-4′ and 88°-58′ East Longitudes. It has an area of 2,818 square miles.

The truncated look that Sikkim wears on the map has been the result of pressures and conquests on the part of its neighbours, all of them, in the past. Sikkim, at one time, extended far to the west and included Limbuan (home of the Limbus), now in Nepal. Chumbi Valley and parts of Western Bhutan were then Sikkimese territory. Southward, Sikkim extended right up to Titaliya on the Bihar-Bengal border, and included the whole of Darjeeling District.

The whole of Sikkim is mountainous, with no flat land at all. The mountains of Sikkim shoot out of the vast snowy range on the south of the Tibetan plateau. A series of ranges proceeds in the general direction N-S from this snowy southern buttress of Tibet. These ranges are further cut into innumerable smaller ones, spreading in chaotic confusion in all directions. The Singlila Range forms the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal. On this range are Darjeeling, Phalut,

Sandakpu, and the famous peak of Kanchenjunga. Further to the east is the Chola Range. This range forms the eastern boundary of Sikkim with Tibet. The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet was fixed in 1890 by the Anglo-Chinese Convention, which laid down :—

"The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain ranges separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Tista and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu, and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier, and follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nepal territory."*

The River Dichu forms the natural boundary between Sikkim and Bhutan. On the Chola Range are located numerous passes, including the Jelep-la pass and the famous Nathu-la Pass. Thus the north, east and west of Sikkim are highly mountainous. There are many lofty peaks, eternally under snow, and the loftiest of them all is Kanchenjunga (28,146'), the third highest peak in the world.

The Tista river with its tributaries is an important feature of Sikkim's geography. It flows through the whole length of the country, swelling with the water brought down by numerous mountain streams on the way, to debouch into the plains of India. Rungeet is the other important river.

Lying on the direct path of the south-west monsoon, Sikkim receives abundant rainfall. Owing to its topography, Sikkim has a wide range of climatic zones even for its small size. While keeping this in mind, Sikkim can be said to have a temperate climate.

Three distinct peoples constitute the population of Sikkim. The Lepchas are the original inhabitants of Sikkim. Next come the Bhutiyas, and lastly the Gorkhas or Nepalese.

Today the Nepalese are the most numerous and form roughly 75% of the total population of 20,30,95. The Lepchas and Bhutiyas are roughly 13% and 12% of the population. The very name Sikkim is the gift of the Nepalese people. The

*See page 189 for full text of the Treaty.

Lepchas used to call their land Neliang (literally the country of caverns that gave them shelter). This was later supplanted by Ren-jong or Denzong (valley of rice). In those distant days, when the Lepchas of Denzong and the Limbus of eastern Nepal moved freely into each other's territories—for, to all intents and purposes, these two lands formed one territory—, a Limbu girl was married to a Lepcha chief. When the bride entered her husband's house, she exclaimed in her own tongue "Su Him", new house. This word not only got currency but, with the passage of time, was corrupted into Sukhim, which was later anglicized into Sikkim.

An overwhelming majority of the population of Sikkim gets its living from the cultivation of the soil. Animal husbandry, pig-raising, and poultry form an adjunct to the practice of agriculture. The main products are paddy, maize, wheat, barley, millets, buckwheat, cardamom, potatoes, apples and oranges.

Sikkim is poor in mineral resources. Some copper is mined at Rangpo. Small quantities of zinc, lead, and graphite also occur.

Mahayana Buddhism, being the religion of the ruling family, enjoys a privileged position. Buddhist monasteries are given aid from the general revenue. The Bhutiyas are all Buddhists. A large number of Lepchas is also Buddhist, the rest being divided between spirit-worshippers and Christians. The Nepalese, barring a small Christian minority, are Hindus. The Nepali language is the lingua franca of Sikkim. The official language is English. Sikkim has few towns, the largest town, Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, has a population of 10,000. All other towns, such as they are, have populations below 5,000. Very few Sikkimese are in business. All trade and business is concentrated in the hands of Indian businessmen.

Before development works started in Sikkim, means of transport and communication, as everything else, were in a very poor condition. But now Sikkim has a nice net-work of roads and a tolerably good system of transportation. Beginning from 1954, Sikkim received Rs. 20·37 crores (dollars 27·16

million) aid from India for three plans ending in 1971.* While the revenue of Sikkim Government in 1947 was only Rs. 60,000 (dollars 8,000), it has now gone up to Rs. 40 million (dollars 5·33 million). Even after making due allowance for the change in price index, the difference remains imposingly substantial.

Forests constitute about 1/3rd of the total area of Sikkim. In the sub-tropical zone, which extends up to 5,000′ several varieties of bamboo, ferns, tree ferns, pandanus, and sal are found. In the temperate zone and in northern valleys are found cherry, laurel, oak, chestnut, firs, pines, maples and magnolia. At an altitude of 8,000 rhododendrons abound.

Sikkim is noted for its floral wealth. There are some 4,000 varieties of flowering plants. Some 600 species of orchids also occur in Sikkim.

For its size, Sikkim has a fairly wide variety of fauna. Panda, otter, ovis nahura, ovisamon, musk deer, ghoral, boar, leopard cat, tiger, barking deer, sambar and black bear are the wild animals found in Sikkim. There are about 500 species of birds and 600 species of butterfly.

*For Indian aid after 1971, see Chapter XX p. 154.

CHAPTER II

The Lepchas

THE Lepchas are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim. The name Lepcha was given them by the Nepalese and is derived from the word 'Lapcho' or a cairn, the original Lepcha place of worship. The Nepalese changed the word into Lapche, a word still very much in use among both the Nepalese and the Lepchas themselves, and the British gave it the modern form of Lepcha. The Lepchas called themselves Rong-pa, *i.e.*, people living in ravines. There could not be an apter name for this people. Who were the first Lepchas, where did they come from, and what were their traditions and history are questions destined never to be answered ; for whatever written literature the Lepchas had possessed was systematically destroyed by the Tibetan priests during the first days of close contact between the two peoples. Some scholars hold that the first ancestors of the Lepchas came from Tibet or China via Assam. The Lepchas would, perhaps, have completely lost their identity by the time they first came in contact with the British representatives of the East India Company but for the fact that, in the early nineteenth century, when the British first entered Sikkim, the land and the people were yet untouched by the march of time, and Sikkim was a big jungle with scattered human habitations. And the Lepchas had managed, to a large extent, to preserve much of what must have been the dominant characteristics of their forebears and the scattered memories of their traditions.

Almost all the representatives of civilized humanity who encountered the Lepchas of Sikkim during those days are agreed

on the good nature, docility, honesty, and hospitality of these people. General Mainwaring, who took the Lepchas under his wing and studied their mores, language, and history, was so impressed as to think that the Lepchas were the original, unspoilt children of Adam and Eve who had managed to escape, somehow, the baneful effect of the curse the rest of humanity has had to suffer because of our erring first parents having eaten of the forbidden fruit. Mainwaring's researches into the linguistics of the Lepchas led him to conclude that the Lepcha speech belonged to a hoary antiquity, almost taking us back to the Garden of Eden. While all this would be going too far, the fact remains that the Lepchas were ideal children of nature even in the early nineteenth century, after more than three centuries of contact with the Tibetans. Based on the writings of these pioneers of civilization, we have the following picture of the Lepcha society as it must have been before the advent of the Tibetans :—

The Rongs (the word Lepcha was then unknown) were the archetypal lotus-eaters. They were hunters of nomadic habits, roaming at large in thickets in search of food. They had no settled life. "They lived in caves or bamboo huts amidst the vast, wild, magnificent forests, old as the hills themselves." Each family lived by itself, with the least interference from neighbours. Their needs were few, and the jungle provided almost all of them, including food. Cultivation of patches of land, where they grew dry rice, millets, buckwheat, and murwa, was also practised. The yield lent variety to the food and also supplemented it. The Rongs were indolent by nature and hard work was taboo. But they were good eaters and thrift was alien to their nature. Their improvident habits earned them the nickname 'Menthurgya'—people who do not think of tomorrow.

To say that the Rongs were mild, timid, and peaceful would be only partly describing their characteristics. The whole Rong outlook, his religion, mores, culture, and habits were so formed as to reduce strife to a minimum, if not altogether banish it from his life. So, the dominant characteristic of the Rongs was to yield to anything and everything that demanded the least strife. And that has at once been the virtue and the bane of the Rongs and their descendants. Apart from their outward conduct, the

religion of the Rongs also illustrates their basic character. The Rongs, being children of nature, worshipped nature or spirits of nature. The spirits were classified into two categories : the good ones and the evil ones. The Rongs were too indolent to care for or worship the good spirits, for the good spirits were good and there was no reason to fear them. But they were careful to propitiate the evil spirits and employed professionals (Boomthings) to ward them off. In primitive societies women constitute, more often than not, a major cause of trouble. The Rongs took care of this by so evolving their social code as to give a man the choice of copulating with a wide range of women relations and *vice versa* : a man inherited all the widows of his patrilineal relations, *i.e.*, brothers, uncles, and even grand-uncles ; the sisters of all such women relations could be copulated with, of course with their consent, whenever time and opportunity permitted a couple. So sex was no problem for the Rong men or women—and a major cause of strife was removed.

The Rongs were ill-prepared for contact with the rest of humanity, the accursed majority of Adam and Eve's children. They seem to have had some form of organisation before the Tibetans overshadowed them. The Rongs were organised by one Turve, who was eventually given the title of 'Punu' or king. Turve Punu was killed during one of the frequent encounters with the Kirats, the forebears of the modern Rais and Limbus of eastern Nepal. He was followed by three successive Punus. With the death of the last king, Tubh Athak Punu, the Lepcha kingship came to an end. Gradually the tribe began to elect a venerable old man who exercised the mild functions of a respected elder rather than the authority of a tribal chief. The elder was looked upon as a teacher and guide. He also performed the functions of the tribal priest. The Rongs had their own alphabet and a rich folk legend. Their version of the 'flood' and the 'Tower of Babel' has been handed down to their descendants. The Tendong Hill is their Mount Ararat. This is all that remains of the Rongs' history before the advent of the Tibetans.

The Tibetan immigration was a mere trickle at first. There was land enough. The Rongs shifted their habitations in order

to remain aloof from the more virile, hardy, tough, and possessive immigrants. More Tibetans poured in. The Rongs could not go on shifting. They had to live as the Tibetans' neighbours, if not with them in the same village. Consistent with their dislike for strife, the Rongs further stretched their flexible social code and invented the degrading myth that they were lowly (A-den ; literally, created or fashioned) and the Tibetans were high-born (Bar-fung-mo; literally, flowing from on high). Thereafter the socio-political fabric of the Rongs suffered a change for worse until it passed out of the memory of its children.

CHAPTER III

The Bhutiyas

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries religious strife between rival sects in Tibet had resulted in frequent wars. As the Gelug-pas (Yellow Hat Sect) gradually gained the upper hand, priests of the rival orders fled with their chosen followers. Quite a few of these fugitives went southward into Sikkim. As has already been briefly noted, the Rongs tried to accommodate the immigrant Tibetans by assigning to them the status of aristocrats. For once the Rong docility paid rich dividends, even if temporarily. They could not have chosen a more effective protective barrier against the Tibetan tide. The obvious Rong subservience blunted the edge of Tibetan aggressiveness. They got what they wanted—land to settle on, and pasture for their herds of yaks—without any struggle, without any resistance on the part of the natives. The Tibetans could not, without compromising their newly acquired status of a superior people, at least in the eyes of the Rongs, mingle with them. The net result was that, during a considerable period, the Rongs were left very much to themselves. In character the two peoples were poles apart : the Tibetans were very property conscious, the Rongs were carefree ; the Tibetans were vigorous and aggressive, the Rongs were timid and docile ; the Tibetans were polyandrous, the Rongs detested polyandry and were polygynous ; last but not the least, the Tibetans were Lamaist Buddhists while the Rongs were spirit-worshippers.

With the steady increase in the numbers of the Tibetan immigrants, the need for some sort of organisation was felt.

The Tibetans had come from a land where spiritual and temporal authority lay heavy on the populace. Habitual subservience to authority had eroded their natural sense of justice and made them unfit for peaceful co-existence with the simple Rongs. If the Rongs were not to be permanently alienated, some acceptable authority to ensure a modicum of law and order was essential. Besides this, the Tibetan lamas (priests) were also faced with the problem of bringing the easy-going, 'demon-worshipping' Rongs into the fold of Lamaist Buddhism. The lamas, used to a sacerdotal society, smarted under an anarchical system that did not permit them to wield their spiritual authority, with its wide range of privileges and prerogatives, except over the few Tibetans.

The Tibetan lamas in Sikkim were the pure product of the lamaist polity of Tibet. Having known no system other than the Tibetan one, the lamas, the only enlightened element among the people, set about to extend the Tibetan system into Sikkim. The only difficulty lay in the fact that the Rongs were the product of a very different environment, where they had neither felt the need for such authority nor known its restrictive applications. The initial attempts of the lamas to promote cohesion among the Tibetans and the Rongs and wean away the latter from spirit-worship had been frustrated not so much by the opposition of these people as by their indifference. A highly intricate ritual that sought to turn the Rongs and Tibetans into blood-brothers and enjoin perpetual frendship upon the two peoples had also failed to make any dent in the Rongs' preference for keeping aloof and free from any shackles.

But the Tibetans' perseverance had made some gains. That the Rongs did not oppose their participation in the 'brotherhood' ritual seems to have prepared them psychologically for the next step envisaged by the lamas to bring the Rongs, together with the Tibetans, under a spiritual and temporal yoke.

Three of the most venerable lamas met at Yoksam and decided upon organising Sikkim under a ruler, with spiritual and temporal authority, as the first step. In order to allay Rong suspicions, the whole thing was highly coloured with religious rigmarole—at which the lamas excelled—and lest

they should object to a Tibetan ruler being foisted on them, a highly impressive genealogy going back to a semi-divine origin was invented for the proposed ruler and, what is more, the sanction of the venerated Lepcha Elder, Thekong Tek, was interwoven with it. The legendary genealogy of the man chosen to rule Sikkim, one Phuntsog Namgyal of Gangtok, runs thus :—

Phuntsog Namgyal was the direct descendant of a prince who had, in the ninth century, founded the kingdom of Minyak in Kham, East Tibet. Many generations later, a prince of the Minyak House went on a pilgrimage. At Sakya, one of his sons, named Khye-Bumsa, married a daughter of the Hierarch. Khye-Bumsa settled in the Chumbi Valley.

Khye-Bumsa, being childless, was advised to seek the blessings of the Rong Elder, Thekong Tek. Khye-Bumsa crossed into the Rong domain, where not only did he secure the Rong Elder's blessings for three sons but also the prophecy that his descendants would become the rulers of Sikkim, while Thekong Tek's own people, the Rongs would become their subjects, and servitors. A blood-brotherhood was sworn between Khye-Bumsa and Thekong Tek at Kabi Lungtsok, signifying the unification of the Tibetans and the Rongs.

Though Khye Bumsa remained and died at Chumbi, his three sons crossed into Sikkim and settled there. Khye-Bumsa's youngest son was Mipon Rab. Mipon Rab's fourth son, Guru Tashi, shifted to Gangtok. Guru Tashi's eldest son was named Jowa Apha. Jowa Apha's son was Guru Tenzing, and Guru Tenzing's son was Phuntsog Namgyal.....

Divested of the embellishments that surround the ancestry of the Tibetan rulers of Sikkim, the plain facts of history record that Phuntsog Namgyal, at that time, was residing at Gangtok. Some accounts show him as having entered Sikkim via the Jelep-la Pass in 1641, while others say that his family had been residents in Sikkim for some generations. Phuntsog Namgyal was a man of substance and commanded respect among not only his neighbours but also the people of the surrounding localities.

The lamas took Phuntsog Namgyal to Yoksam, where, amid great rejoicings and feastings, he was 'consecrated' the ruler of

Sikkim in the year 1642. The title of Chogyal (Dharma Raja) was conferred upon him, thus investing him with spiritual authority along with the temporal.

Phuntsog Namgyal and some other Tibetans of means married Rong wives. The Tibetans came gradually to be known as Bhutiyas, and the Rongs as Lepchas. The Lepchas were drawn, willy-nilly, ever closer to the Bhutiyas, which resulted in periodical outbursts of quarrel among the two peoples.

CHAPTER IV

The Kingdom : Early Years

THE Tibetans, with the 'consecration' of Phuntsog Namgyal, proceeded to consolidate and strengthen their position. Towards the west, Limbuan remained friendly as in former times. Towards the south-west was a small territory inhabited by Mangars, under a Mangar chieftain who seems to have recognised the Sikkim ruler by sending some presents. A delegation was sent to the Dalai Lama, who, as a mark of recognition and acceptance of the Sikkim ruler's vassalage, sent some presents and the traditional scarf. The matrimonial alliance Phuntsog Namgyal and some of his Tibetan friends had entered into with Lepcha families not only gave a new respectability to some notable Lepcha families but also went a long way in modifying the T betan immigrants' language into the present Bhutiya language and in evolving many common customs.

On the advice of the lamas, Phuntsog Namgyal divided the territory of Sikkim into 12 dzongs (districts), each under a Lepcha dzongpen or district chief. A body of councillors, composed of 12 Tibetans, was also formed. The lamas induced the dzongpens to symbolically surrender their lands to the ruler. After some initial hesitation and suspicion, this was done. Subsequently the lands were returned to the owners. This symbolic surrender has a significance in that some Sikkimese rulers have harboured the notion that the land belongs to them and that the occupants of the land are not the real owners but trustees of the land in their possession, from which they can be evicted at the will of the ruler.

As has already been mentioned in Chapter I, the kingdom of Sikkim was much larger during its infancy than today. This, however, is a point that has to be understood in its proper perspective. At the time the Lepchas and the Bhutiyas were brought together, a small group of Limbus, called Tsongs in Sikkim, was also living in Sikkim. The Tsongs, according to Tibetan traditions, were originally inhabitants of the Tsangpo Valley in Tibet, from where they migrated to Sikkim and beyond, to Limbuan, in what is today Eastern Nepal. The Tsongs or Limbus in Limbuan far outnumbered their kinsmen in Sikkim. There had been free intercourse between the Limbus of Limbuan and the Tsongs and the Lepchas of Sikkim before the advent of the Tibetans on the political stage of Sikkim. The establishment of Bhutiya (Tibetan) rule in Sikkim did not in any way affect the free intercourse between Limbuan and Sikkim. Since the Limbus were not organised under any central authority, and since they looked east rather than west for their dealings, this loose link has been interpreted as the 'whole' of Limbuan being a part of Sikkim of those days. The allegiance of the Sikkim Tsongs to the Sikkim ruler is primarily responsible for such misinterpretation. A look at the population of the Bhutiyas and Lepchas will help dispel this false notion : in 1891, there were 5,762 Lepchas and 4,894 Bhutiyas in Sikkim. More than two centuries earlier, the Bhutiyas and Lepchas could hardly have numbered more than three or four thousand. The absurdity of Sikkim, with such a total population, extending its sway over the warlike Limbus of Limbuan at once leaps to the eye. The want of organised territorial units on its borders, at that time, must have been another factor lending support to such claims.

Emboldened by their success in drawing the Lepchas into the net of Tibetan or Bhutiya rule, the lamas became aggressive in their zeal to spread their religion among the Lepchas. Though called Buddhism the creed of the lamas "has set aside the tenets of Buddha, and those retained are lost in a maze of ritual ; so nothing remains of the original religion but the name". They persuaded the Lepchas to bring all of their written literature, containing their traditions and creed, under some pretext. And they burnt all the Lepcha literature they managed to collect. If the lamas' high-handedness did not provoke any immediate

hostile reactions, it was mainly because of Lepcha timidity and sense of helplessness. But the suspicion of the Tibetan took deep roots in the Lepcha mind. No wonder then, the quarrels between the Lepchas and the Bhutiyas became frequent. The animus was carried higher up, and the Lepcha and the Bhutiya factions among the dzongpens and the councillors were destined to create trouble not only affecting themselves but the kingdom as a whole.

On his death, Phuntsog Namgyal was succeeded by his only son, Tensung Namgyal (born in 1644). Soon after his consecration in 1670, Tensung Namgyal moved his capital from Yoksam to Rabdantse. With the assistance of Lama Jig-med Gyatsho, who had come from Tibet, the monastery at Sangchelling was completed. This monastery was open to all alike, no matter of what descent. So another monastery was erected at Pemiongchi, and this monastery was meant for persons of pure descent, *i.e.*, Tibetans only. This building was erected on a site about half a mile to the west of the present gompa of Pemiongchi.

Tensung Namgyal married three wives : a Tibetan, a Bhutanese and a Limbu girl. The Limbu girl, daughter of Chief Yo-Yo-Hang, brought seven maidens with her. These maidens were married into leading families of Sikkim. Tensung Namgyal reduced the number of councillors to 8 chosen from among the highest Lepcha and Bhutiya families. These councillors, in course of time, developed into the all-powerful kazis. Tensung Namgyal, by his three marriages, seems to have prepared the ground for the beginning of external incursions into Sikkim.

CHAPTER V

The Bhutanese Incursions

TENSUNG Namgyal died in the year 1700. Chador Namgyal, Tensung's son by the Tibetan wife, succeeded his father. He was then a boy of 14. His half-sister, Pedi Wangmo, daughter of the Bhutanese wife of Tensung, claimed her right to the succession by virtue of her seniority in age. Both sides mustered their supporters, but Pedi Wangmo had the advantage that she could count on her Bhutanese connections to help her. The Bhutanese were consolidating their kingdom at about this time. On the invitation of Pedi Wangmo, the Deb Raja of Bhutan sent a force to invade Sikkim. This incursion was to be the prelude to continued hostility between Sikkim and Bhutan in future years.

Unable to withstand the Bhutanese invasion, Chador had to flee for his life. With the help of a loyal councillor, Yugthing Yeshe, Chador fled to Tibet via Elam and Walong in Limbuan. In Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, Chador studied Buddhism and Astrology under the patronage of the Sixth Dalai Lama. So pleased was the Dalai Lama with the services of Chador that he granted him two fiefs in Central Tibet. Unfortunately for Chador, the Sixth Dalai Lama's career was cut short by a summons from China. The Sixth Dalai Lama was a 'gay young blade', in the words of the courtesans of Tibet, among whom he had many liaisons. The Dalai Lama took a fling at life with gay abandon, paying little or no heed to the conventions of his high office and the vow of celibacy that went

with it. On his way to China, he died—very probably he was killed.

Chador wrote a letter to the Deb Raja of Bhutan stating that Tibet was the father ; Bhutan, the mother ; and Sikkim, the child ; the three were one family, one nation. This letter, supported by mediations on the part of some highly-placed Tibetans, made the Deb Raja relent, and he withdrew his occupation force from Rabdantse in 1706. During the period of the Bhutanese occupation, the invaders had heavily colonised the eastern part of Sikkim that was contiguous to Bhutan. This territory, which included the modern Kalimpong and adjoining areas, was a permanent loss to Sikkim.

Chador Namgyal returned to Rabdantse accompanied by Lama Jig-med Pao and tried to clear the Bhutanese from such pockets as they had settled in. This nettled the Deb Raja and he sent a small force in support of the Bhutanese settlers. Chador had to accept the loss of some more territory.

Chador's long sojourn in Tibet had turned him into an ardent Buddhist of the lamaist variety. He founded the great monastery of Pemiongchi, the inspiration for the style of which was derived from Mindoling in Tibet, which he had known so well. He greatly expanded the monastic system and introduced many innovations. He also modified the Lepcha alphabet.

Though the Bhutanese incursions into Sikkim had come to a temporary halt, the original cause of their first invasion still smouldered. Pedi Wangmo's position had been greatly weakened by her having formed a liaison with the third lama of the Rabjungpa Sect. Since the vows of the sect were very strict, the liaison was considered a mortal sin. In the hopes of mitigating the erring lama's spiritual punishment, and as an expiatory offering for her share in the offence, Pedi Wangmo built the Guru Lakhang Monastery at Tashiding. Though apparently thwarted in her designs to seize power, Pedi Wangmo was far from reconciled with her half-brother. While the Raja, being unwell, had gone to the Ralang Hot Springs, in 1716, for treatment, Pedi Wangmo conspired with the physician, who opened the Raja's veins and thus caused his death. This did not help

Pedi Wangmo or her cause, for she was strangled to death for her part in Chador's death, while the physician was executed.

Chador Namgyal's son, Gyurmed Namgyal, became the Raja of Sikkim in 1717 at the age of ten. During his minority, Lama Jig-med Pao acted as regent. Gyurmed, not very robust, was subject to fits caused by a malignant disease that had afflicted him in his childhood. "He was at all events eccentric, if not actually weak in intellect".

In 1718 the Dzungar Mongols invaded Tibet. This led to the persecution of the Nyingma-pa (Red Had) Sect. The Mindoling abbot fled and sought refuge in Sikkim with his family. The abbot had a daughter of Gyurmed's age. Gyurmed was married to the abbot's daughter. The lady was so exceedingly plain that the Raja would "not live or have anything to do with her". Accordingly he removed himself to Di-Chhin-Ling Monastery, near Geyzing. The Rani continued to live at Rabdantse. The Raja came increasingly under the influence of the Lepchas and their form of worship. This led to fights between the Lepcha priests and the lamas.

The Bhutanese raided inside Sikkimese territory from time to time. Their raids apart, they left no opportunity pass to foment trouble in Sikkim whenever distance from the capital led any group to grow restive. Such uprisings became frequent during Gyurmed's reign. He, therefore, set about to fortify Rabdantse against Bhutanese incursions as also against local adventurers. Impressment of labour had to be resorted to. Since impressment virtually amounted to forced labour without payment of any wages, many Tsongs, on whom the impressment sat heavy, fled en masse to Limbuan, the home of their kith and kin. The Tsongs became hostile to the Bhutiyas, which resulted in the total rupture between the Limbus of Limbuan and the Bhutiyas of Sikkim. Whatever little influence the rulers of Sikkim had over the Limbus of Limbuan was snapped. This alienation of the Limbus or Tsongs as the Sikkimese called them was to be the source of great trouble to the rulers of Sikkim some decades later.

Worn out by internal dissensions, and disgusted with his conjugal life, Gyurmed disguised himself as a mendicant and went on a pilgrimage to Tibet. Nobody in that country suspected his identity, until he came before Wangchuk Dorze, the ninth incarnation of the Karmapa Lama. That ecclesiastic penetrated the Raja's disguise and treated him royally. In consequence the Karmapa Lama is much looked upon by Sikkim Buddhists.

Fed up with the Raja's eccentricities and her blighted conjugal life, the Rani took the opportunity of the Raja's absence to go back to her parental home in Tibet, never to return.

Shortly afterwards Gyurmed returned to Sikkim. The Marriage of Gyurmed and the abbot's daughter had not resulted in any issue. It is very probable that Gyurmed, because of his affliction, was either sterile or impotent. Two facts point to impotence rather than to sterility. His wife was so dissatisfied with him that she went back to her father's house at the first opportunity that afforded itself, never to return. Secondly, Gyurmed, when pressed by his councillors to marry for a second time, flatly refused to do so. Now, a ruler, in his prime, knowing full well that he had no heir to succeed him, and having no means of ascertaining his sterility, would not refuse a second marriage so adamantly as Gyurmed did. The fact that his wife deserted him should have prompted him, as in duty bound, to marry for the second time, if only to beget an heir. Gyurmed's refusal makes sense only if he, poor fellow, was totally impotent.

All this was enough to make Gyurmed ill. Before long he died, at the age of 26, in the year 1733. The high lamas and councillors were sorely troubled as there were already factions ready to take advantage of such situations. By sheer good luck, a nun was found to be pregnant—by no means a rare phenomenon—, and a high lama had the brainwave to concoct the story that Gyurmed had, before his death, given out that this particular nun had been impregnated by him. The nun obliged by giving birth to a male child not long after, and thus the Namgyal dynasty was given a fresh lease of life. This was a happy solution to more than one ticklish problem. But even so, there was trouble that rocked Sikkim for quite a few years.

CHAPTER VI

The Gorkha Onslaught

TROUBLE started as soon as the infant Namgyal Phuntsog, the nun's son, was installed as the new ruler of Sikkim in succession to Gyurmed Namgyal. While one faction led by Chandzod Karwang, leader of the Lepchas, supported the infant's cause, another faction led by the Treasurer, Tamding, leader of the Bhutiyas, refused to countenance the claims of an unknown nun's son, whose paternity was so obviously doubtful. Tamding, by the very nature of his job, had been a close confidant of Gyurmed. More than anybody else among the nobility, he had the opportunity to study the aversion displayed by Gyurmed to the company of women. The Tibetans have always had a robust attitude towards sex. Extra-marital connections are not looked down upon. Both sexes enjoy great freedom and indulge themselves freely. The rulers have always considered it their privilege to have intimate relations with beautiful women of the nobility as well as of the less privileged. While the women consider such favours with obvious pride, their menfolk, far from resenting such liaisons, feel honoured. Many a ruler has had a brood of bastards. Tamding knew, if anybody did, that Gyurmed's failure to indulge himself in this respect stemmed not from continence but from physical disadvantage. He could not digest the lama's story. Not only did he question the legitimacy of the child but also assumed the powers of the ruler himself. This slightly weakened his stand. Tamding managed to rule for three years.

The two factions could not, however, come to terms, and fighting broke out. Eventually, Tamding was beaten, and he fled, in 1740, to Tibet to place his side of the case before the Tibetan authorities. The Tibetans mediated between the two factions and decided in favour of the infant, primarily because he was backed by the victorious faction, among whom were the high lamas. In order to preclude resumption of hostilities between the two factions, Tibet sent one Rabden Sarpa to act as regent until Namgyal Phuntsog came of age.

Rabden's regency is notable for two things. He saw that the Sikkimese were short of salt and had to travel long distances to procure it. So, whenever someone came to see him with presents for the settlement of disputes, Rabden gave him a quantity of salt. This resulted in almost a regular flow of visitors to collect salt. Rabden had the names of all the recipients of salt carefully noted in a roster. He thus succeeded in compiling a crude type of census. On this he based his assessment of land revenue, an event that seems to have been novel in the life of the people of Sikkim. That apart, Rabden Sarpa levied a tax on trade. Obviously, the assessment of revenue must have been restricted to a small section of the population, the people living not very far from the capital.

The second was Sikkim's rupture with the Mangars. During the regency of Rabden, the Mangar Chief happened to die. His son was chosen to succeed as the new chief. Keeping in mind the cordial relations that had obtained between the rulers of Sikkim and the Mangar chiefs right from the inception of the kingdom, the Mangars had sent an invitation to the ruler of Sikkim. Rabden, being unaware of these relations, and dreading travel to hotter regions, neither went himself nor had the foresight to send any delegation to represent the Sikkim ruler. As against such attitude on the part of the Regent, the Deb Raja of Bhutan attended in person the installation of the new Mangar Chief.

The young Mangar Chief felt insulted, and, as was the custom in those days, took advantage of the presence of the Deb Raja by planning a joint invasion of Sikkim's capital. Rabden, however, sought the intervention of Tibet, which exercised suffi-

cient influence over Bhutan, and the invasion was called off before much harm could be done. Though Sikkim was thus able to ward off the Mangar-Bhutanese invasion, its relations with the Mangars were permanently ruptured. Never again would the pride of the Mangars let them resume their old friendship with the Bhutiya rulers of Sikkim.

Towards the closing years of Namgyal Phuntsog's reign, a new power was rising westwards. Prithvi Narayan Shah, ruler of the small principality of Gorkha, in Western Nepal, had embarked upon a career of military exploits that was to result in the consolidation and unification of the numerous petty principalities scattered all over Nepal. One by one the valiant Gorkhalis (people from Gorkha) conquered these principalities and advanced in a relentless wave until Prithvi Narayan Shah was the unchallenged master of the whole of Nepal, except the east, the Rai and Limbu territories. Prithvi Narayan Shah died in 1775, leaving much of his projected mission unfinished. But he had succeeded in forging a new nation, creating feelings of unity among the many tribes inhabiting Nepal, and rallying them under the Gorkha banner. The nascent nation, in the first vigour of its birth, inspired by the example of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his valiant soldiers, and flushed by the victories of Gorkha arms, continued its career of conquest. With the establishment of the Gorkha kingdom's capital at Kathmandu, supplanting the Newar rulers of the Kathmandu Valley, Gorkha armies advanced towards the west sweeping everything before them right up to the bank of River Sutlej in the Punjab. Eastward lay the territory of the Rais and Limbus, and, further east lay Sikkim.

While the Gorkha threat was not yet imminent, the Bhutanese struck Sikkim once again. They occupied all the territory east of River Tista and ravaged the countryside. The Bhutanese, finding little resistance to their marauding advance, were lulled into a false sense of security. At Tama-la, below Mafi-la, the main body of the Bhutanese troops was ambushed and slaughtered to a man. This took care of the Bhutanese for the time being.

The Sikkimese could pay more attention to the Gorkha threat that was looming large. While the wave of Gorkha

advance eastward was still far away, it sent ripples that lapped the Sikkim marches. Small bands of Gorkha adventurers made their way right up to the border, and began their raids inside the territory of Sikkim. The Bhutiyas and Lepchas of Sikkim were successful in keeping the raids of these irregular bands of Gorkhas under check. At Namchi one such band of about a hundred men was trapped and killed to a man. The Bhutiyas and Lepchas jubilantly paraded the severed limbs of the slain Gorkhas. There were many such skirmishes. In these skirmishes, the Lepcha leader, Chuthup, distinguished himself, earning the sobriquet 'Satrajeet' (victor of seventeen fights) from his Gorkha adversaries.

In 1780 Namgyal Phuntsog died. He was succeeded by his 11-year-old son, Tenzing Namgyal. Tenzing Namgyal was married to Chuthup's half-sister, Anyo Gyelum, daughter of Chandzod Karwang.

Towards the beginning of 1787, the Gorkhas were completing their conquest of Limbuan. Two or three small bands of Gorkhas again started trouble in Sikkim. Chuthup and another eader, Dhakar Chandzok, chased them. Carried away by their success against small, irregular bands of Gorkhas, they underestimated the might of Gorkha arms and pushed their way far into the Nepalese territory, penetrating as far as Chainpore. There they met, for the first time in their military career, Gorkha troops, who were completing the consolidation of Limbuan before advancing further east. Chuthup, alias Satrajeet, and his companion, Dhakar Chandzok, were severely beaten by the Gorkha troops. Dhakar Chandzok lost his life. The Bhutiya-Lepcha force was scattered, and Satrajeet had to beat a hasty retreat. Satrajeet had met more than his match, and we no more hear of this valiant Lepcha's military exploits. The Gorkha invasion of Sikkim was about to begin in right earnest. Satrajeet's services were not available to Sikkim when she needed them most.

In 1788-89, the Gorkha General, Jahar Singh, crossed the Chiabhanjang Pass, taking the Bhutiyas and Lepchas by complete surprise, and made a lightning raid on Rabdantse. The capital was caught napping, and the most disorganised abandonment of any capital imaginable took place. Terrified by the sudden-

ness of the blow, the Bhutiyas and Lepchas fled for their lives. The Raja and Rani had to flee so precipitately that the very thought of saving any valuable property had to be abandoned. The Rani snatched from the altar a mask of Kanchenjunga and carried it in the bosom of her dress. One loyal kazi bore the infant son of the Raja on his shoulders. And the small band of fugitives fled during the night eastwards. So close was the pursuit that the Raja and his band of faithful followers had to subsist, for days together, on yam and other edible roots. The Lepchas' unrivalled knowledge of the jungle and its produce came in handy. After days of toil, the party made its way to Kabi. The Raja and his family lived in great misery, suffering untold hardship, and nursing bitter hatred for the Gorkhas. Tsugphud Namgyal, the infant son of the Raja, was to be afflicted with a perpetual trauma of the Gorkha terror and to transmit it to his posterity.

Any hopes of relief were further dispelled when the invaders were reinforced by another army under the redoubtable General, Damodar Pandey, who conquered the whole of Sikkim west of the River Tista. There, on the right bank of the Tista, at the confluence of the Tista and the Rungeet, the Gorkhas celebrated their victory on the Magha Sankranti day (middle of January) of 1789, cleaning their khukries of gore and making merry, an event the Beni Mela, at the same spot, commemorates to this day.

In the meanwhile the miseries of Tenzing Namgyal continued unabated. The Bhutiyas and Lepchas had fled "seeking shelter in caves and caverns, amidst thick jungles, abandoning their homes, hearths, and fields. There was no agriculture, hence no revenue. The Raja lived at Kabi with his family and a small band of faithful followers. Reduced to the direst of circumstances, some of the Raja's followers used to collect magenta dye and sell at Phari, and with the proceeds of the sale was bought the salt for the Raja's kitchen". Hearing of the Sikkim Raja's pitiful plight, the Deb Raja of Bhutan, exercising Buddhist charity, sent some supplies and twelve hundred rupees. Some kazis were also helpful with supplies. Unable to bear the hard life, Tenzing Namgyal sought asylum in Tibet, in 1790.

In 1791 a Gorkha army invaded Tibet, entering 275 miles into the forbidden land, and sacked the Tashilhunpo Monastery, the seat of the Tashi Lama. The following year, a huge Chinese army advanced towards Nepal. The Chinese had asked for such assistance as the Bhutiyas and Lepchas of Sikkim were able to muster. But when the victorious Chinese and the vanquished Gorkhas signed the Sino-Nepalese Treaty, the claims of Sikkim were conveniently forgotten by the Chinese General on the plea that there was no representative from Sikkim to stake her claims. In fact, the Chinese Army, in spite of its overall success, had been so badly mauled and battered by the Gorkhas that the Chinese General was in a hurry to get back home once the Gorkhas had accepted the suzerainty of China over Nepal and agreed to pay some tribute to the Chinese Emperor every five years. Whatever hopes Tenzing Namgyal had harboured of restoring his fortunes were shattered. West of the Tista the Gorkhas were still the masters. And Tibet swallowed up Chumbi Valley and the two fiefs granted to Chador Namgyal by the Sixth Dalai Lama.

Tenzing Namgyal died in Lhasa in the year 1793. His son, Tsugphud Namgyal, then a boy of 8, was brought back to Sikkim to be installed as the ruler over the tiny strip that remained as his inheritance. His troubles were destined to be removed by the British, who were then laying the foundations of their Indian Empire, only to give rise to a period of endless trials and tribulations for the House of Namgyal.

CHAPTER VII

Under the British Wing

EVEN as the Gorkhas were extending their kingdom in the Himalayan hills, the British were consolidating their position on the plains of North India. The British had been casting a longing eye on the Tibetan trade, but no opening seemed to be in sight. They were naturally interested in Sikkim, as one of the possible routes to Tibet lay via Sikkim. As yet no opportunity had presented itself for establishing contacts with the Sikkim ruler, who, as we have seen, had been reduced to dire straits as a result of the Gorkha invasion.

It was not long before the Gorkha expansion southward clashed with British interest in the Terai, south of the hills. This culminated in the Anglo-Gorkha War of 1814-16. Though Sikkim was in no position to help the British war effort, either in men or material, the British, with their customary foresight, asked for Sikkim's alliance in the common cause—they had carefully studied the loss of territory sustained by the Sikkim ruler and the utter neglect of his interests by the Chinese General who defeated the Gorkhas, and had promised the ruler the restoration of his former territories, and readily got it.

The British were victorious in the war. A treaty was signed at Segouli. The 'Treaty of Segouly' (Article VI) reads : "The Raja of Nepaul engages never to molest or disturb the Raja of Sikkim in possession of his territories ; but agrees, if any difference should arise between the State of Nepaul and the

Raja of Sikkim, or the subjects of either, that such differences shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government by whose award the Raja of Nepaul engages to abide..."

Armed with the Treaty of Segouli, the British delegated Major Barre Latter, who had had previous contacts with the Sikkimese, to enter into a treaty with the Sikkim ruler with a view to handing over a part of territory Sikkim had lost to Nepal and ensuring Sikkim's friendship. The treaty between the British and the Sikkim ruler was signed in 1817 at Titaliya.* By this treaty the British restored to the Sikkim ruler only parts of his lost territories, including a small tract of the Terai. Article 1 of the Treaty of Titaliya transferred "all the hilly or mountainous country situated to the eastward of the Mechi River and to the westward of the Tista River, formerly possessed by the Rajah of Nepaul, but ceded to the Honourable East India Company by the Treaty of Peace signed at Segoulee." Though the Sikkim ruler was far from satisfied with the terms of the Titaliya Treaty, he had to keep quiet in view of the fact that British generosity was a great deal better than what China and Tibet had done for her.

About two months after the Treaty of Titaliya was signed, the Governor-General of India ceded an additional territory, Morung, lying between the River Mechi and Mahanadi, to the Raja of Sikkim with a view to placating the sense of injury harboured by the Raja.

The evident protective wing of the British was not enough to drive away the fear of the Gorkhas from the mind of Tsugphud Namgyal, who, right from his infancy, had been the hapless victim of the Gorkhas' conquest of Sikkim. He deemed it wise to shift the seat of his government from Rabdantse to Tumlong, away from the Gorkha kingdom's eastern boundary.

As has been pointed out before, despite a superficial sense of unity between the Lepchas and the Bhutiyas, the two

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*For full text of the Treaty, see Appendix 'A'.

communities entertained suspicions of each other resulting, very often, in open acts of hostility. If the Lepchas grew powerful, the Bhutiyas resorted to all sorts of devious means to pull them down, for the Bhutiyas never ceased to look down upon the Lepchas, however high a Lepcha individual or family might rise. The Lepchas were acutely aware of Bhutiya superciliousness and never trusted them.

Tsugphud Namgyal's new capital was the scene of, perhaps, the most serious rift between the Bhutiya and Lepcha factions that had ever taken place, threatening to rend asunder the very fabric of the State. Raja Tsugphud was himself the son of a Lepcha mother. His maternal uncle, Chandzok Bolek, was the Chief Minister. The Bhutiyas began to poison the ears of Tsugphud Namgyal with the supposed or real treachery of Bolek. In 1819 there arose a serious quarrel between the Raja and the Chief Minister. This was patched up. Quarrels arose again in the following year and in 1824, each quarrel being followed by some sort of agreement. Matters came to a head in 1826.

Periodically gifts and offerings from all parts of Sikkim were brought to the ruler by his subjects. Only a part of these offerings, mainly from Western Sikkim, reached the hands of the ruler. The bulk of the offerings was intercepted by Bolek's men at Kabi, where the Chief Minister lived. It cannot be said for certain whether Chandzok Bolek had ordered the interception or the guards took such liberties on their own ; word, however, got around to some Bhutiya kazis living in Tumlong. They resented this. A whispering campaign was launched against Bolek.

Eventually, the Bhutiya faction, led by Tung-yik Menchoo, father of the future Dewan Namgyal, succeeded in convincing Tsugphud Namgyal that Bolek was engaged in a conspiracy against the Raja's life. Tsugphud Namgyal was also persuaded to agree to subject Bolek to a strange test devised by the Bhutiyas. A deputation was sent with the Raja's summons to Bolek's house. The Chief Minister put on his best apparel and came to the door of his house to accompany the deputation.

The deputationists, composed mostly of the conspirators against Bolek, had with them an assassin with a muzzle loading gun. The test the Raja had agreed to was that if the gun went off, when fired, it would be taken as Bolek's guilt ; and if it did not, he should be deemed to be innocent.

With the heedlessness of the innocent, Bolek stepped out of his house to be disturbed by the ominous click of the hammer falling on the cap. His suspicions were, however, aroused, and immediately confirmed by a second click. He turned and tried to rush into the safety of his house. The Bhutiyas cut down the old man. His protesting wife was also killed. Bolek's two sons tried to escape, chased by the murderous band of Bhutiyas. The two brothers hid themselves in a cave. The Bhutiyas used dogs to trail them. The cave was smoked. One of the brothers rushed out, unarmed as he was, only to be hacked into pieces. The other was killed with the sharpened tips of long bamboo poles.

The gun that had refused to go off in the first instance was now, by common consent, primed again and fired, successfully this time. The report of the gun reached the ears of Tsugphud Namgyal, bearing with it the 'proof' of the guilt of the treacherously slain Chief Minister. But the truth soon leaked out. The close relatives of the fallen Chief Minister fled to East Nepal with 800 Lepchas in a veritable exodus, seriously depleting the Lepcha population in Sikkim. The leaders of the exodus were later 'pardoned' by the Raja and persuaded to return to their land of birth. While some of them were returning to Sikkim, they were persecuted by the Khangsa Dewan, so they retraced their footsteps back to Nepal, more bitter than before.

These Lepchas had found willing adventurers among the Gorkhas of East Nepal to carry out raids inside the territory of Sikkim. To make matters worse, they had active sympathisers within Sikkim itself. These raids and their increasing frequency found the Raja helpless. With no other choice left to him, he turned towards the British, who, under the Treaty of Titaliya, had taken it upon themselves to protect Sikkim from the depredations of the Gorkhas of Nepal,

and were now only too willing to help the Sikkim Raja whenever any dispute arose between him and the Gorkhas. One such dispute arose in 1827 over Ontoo, a hill situated on the east of River Mechi. On the Raja's request for arbitration, the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, sent Captain (later General) G.W.K. Lloyd and Mr. G.W. Grant, I.C.S., in 1828, to investigate and settle the dispute.

While in Sikkim, Captain Lloyd came upon a small village on a ridge called Dorje Liang (modern Darjeeling). He thought that the site was ideally suited for development into a hill station where the soldiers and civilians of the British East India Company could rest in summer, away from the debilitating heat of the plains. He submitted a report to this effect on his return to India. The proposal was favourably received by the Governor-General.

Apart from Darjeeling's suitability as a hill station, its utility as a window on Sikkim, from where a careful watch could be maintained on Tibetan intentions with regard to the opening of a trade route to that land, had not escaped the keen observation of the British. Since the cession of Darjeeling is still a live issue, and the last word on the subject has yet to be said, it is a matter of great relevance to any historical study of Sikkim and, as such, deserves to be dwelt upon at some length.

If the British had looked upon the Treaty of Titaliya as the 'open sesame' to Sikkim, and thence to Tibet, the immediate future was to belie this optimism. Tibet continued to be the 'forbidden land' and Sikkim, its gateway, equally closed to the British. So, the continued skirmishes between the Gorkhas and the Sikkimese, aggravated by the mass exodus of the Lepcha population following the assassination of the Bolek family, were a godsend for the British. Naturally, they were more than keen on acquiring Dorje Liang. The matter was discussed at the highest level and the Governor-General was of the opinion that the desire of the British Government should be communicated to the Raja of Sikkim and, if the Raja was willing to give his assent, the terms of the grant should be ascertained. He also suggested a compensation in money as the most convenient to the British Government in every respect.

The Governor-General's proposal was strongly opposed by some members of his council. Sir Charles Metcalfe was of the opinion that the Raja of Sikkim would not be agreeable to the grant. He further opined that the Raja might not deem it prudent to flatly refuse the grant fearing adverse reaction. And that, according to Sir Charles Metcalfe, would amount to undue influence, which it would not be fair to exercise. There were others of similar opinion. It was, therefore, decided that the gentleman who would be employed to make the overture to the Sikkim Raja should be instructed to apprise the Raja that he was perfectly at liberty to decline the grant of the land if he did not consider his own interests promoted by doing so. The consensus was that if the terms offered to the Raja "were not sufficient to overcome his reluctance in making the cession, the matter should not be insisted upon."

The subject, however, was not broached even though Captain Lloyd, in the meanwhile, had visited the site with Mr. Grant and Captain Herbert, a survey officer, and submitted a report favouring the acquisition and development of Darjeeling. The matter, nevertheless, continued to be very much in the minds of the people concerned with the furtherance of British interests in these parts.

The next opportunity afforded itself in 1834-35, when British good offices were sought by the Raja in making some border adjustment with Nepal. Luckily, Captain Lloyd (now Major), the man who had fathered the idea and nurtured it, was available and deputed for the job. He was entrusted with the task of negotiating with the Raja of Sikkim, on the first convenient occasion, for the cession of Darjeeling in return for an equivalent in land or money as the Raja deemed reasonable. Lest the Raja should be led to harbour any suspicions with regard to British intentions, Major Lloyd was asked to make it very clear that the climate of Darjeeling, and hence its suitability as a sanatorium, were the only reasons that had induced the British Government to seek its possession.

When the matter was put before the Raja, the original doubts raised by Sir Charles Metcalfe were confirmed, for the

Raja was not very happy with the proposal. The matter dragged on for some time. While the British were offering either money or land in the plains, the Sikkim Raja sought the retrocession of Debgong, which had once belonged to him, by the British. The Raja also asked the British to compel Ramoo Pradhan of Morung to account for the arrears of two years' revenue to the Raja.

The British thought that the Raja was being unreasonable inasmuch as he was annexing two conditions to the cession, namely, the retrocession of Debgong and surrender of revenue accounts by Ramoo Pradhan. The fact that Ramoo Pradhan had been depositing the revenue with the British authorities further complicated the matter. So the demands of the Raja were found too impracticable to be complied with. While letters were being exchanged between Major Lloyd and the British Government, the whole deal was given a curious turn by a small act to which the Raja and the British were to attach mutually contradictory meanings.

Raja Tsugphud Namgyal, on being first apprised of the Governor-General's wishes for the cession of Darjeeling, had not only stated what he desired as compensation but had also prepared a deed ceding Darjeeling to the British. When the deal was apparently stalled on account of the Raja's demands not being acceptable to the British Government, Major Lloyd who was in possession of the deed, wrote to the Raja that although he had already received the deed, he would forthwith return it if, in consequence of the Raja's not having obtained his two requests, he felt indisposed to cede Darjeeling. He added the significant rider that if the Raja "from friendship to the British Government, still thought proper to give Darjeeling, he should say so." The Raja's reply was that, having already given the grant, he could not depart from it.

The Raja's reply was given one interpretation while, as it turned out later, something very different was meant by the writer.

Major Lloyd concluded that Raja Tsugphud Namgyal had made the grant free and unconditional. He sent a letter

to the Governor-General, apprising him of the grant. The Governor-General wrote to the Raja, thanking him profusely for the "proof of friendship" and accepting the grant of the land. Darjeeling came into the hands of the British.

The Sikkim Raja's real intentions came to light when, after patiently waiting for some time for the fulfilment of his demands by the British, he was moved to protest against their unusual tardiness in discharging their side of the contract. The Raja, when he said that the grant having already been made, he would not depart from it, had meant that the grant was made and was binding on him as much as his conditions were binding on the grantee. In other words, if the British wanted Darjeeling to be ceded to them, they had to abide by the Raja's demands. If they could not honour the Raja's terms, it was assumed that the cession was automatically cancelled. Since the British had taken possession of Darjeeling, the Raja was now pressing for the fulfilment of his demands. Protest followed protest. At long last the British offered Rs. 3,000/- per annum. Raja Tsugphud Namgyal had no choice but to accept it. He made it very plain, however, that he was accepting the offer reluctantly, and added that the amount might be increased. The first payment was made in 1841, including the arrears from 1835 to 1840. In the year 1846, the amount was raised to Rs. 6,000/- per annum.

The loss of Darjeeling entailed further trouble for Sikkim. The Tibetans, always suspicious of the British, visited their wrath on the Raja of Sikkim by forbidding him to visit Tibet more than once in 8 years. The subjects of the Raja, who had enjoyed grazing rights across the Tibetan border in the frontier area, were thereafter denied these rights. The occupation of Darjeeling by the British was to herald the gradual penetration of the British authority, this time eventually to reduce the Raja of Sikkim to a cipher.

For the British the acquisition of Darjeeling was the realisation of their long cherished desire to get a foothold within the territory of Sikkim, from where they could apply themselves to more effectively building bridges to Lhasa. They, therefore, began to develop Darjeeling without delay. For the rulers of

Sikkim and Bhutan and Tibet, the British proximity was far from pleasant. They saw the British entry into these regions as the harbinger of a formidable challenge to their way of life. The Sikkim Raja's bid to keep the British at arm's length had failed. He now tried to devise ways and means to thwart the British in the implementation of their projected development of Darjeeling. Prompted by the instinct of self-preservation, and egged on by Bhutan and Tibet, the Raja was led to adopt measures that soon brought matters to a head.

A little knowledge of the outside world would have saved the Sikkim Raja and his councillors from embarking upon a course foredoomed to fail. But the very nature of their society precluded any knowledge except the lamaist teaching from reaching them. It was a very unequal struggle. On one side were the British—from the subaltern to the general, from the lowest district official to the Governor-General, every British representative considered himself a proud member of the mightiest empire the world had ever seen, and was fired by the highest imperialistic fervour in full knowledge of the fact that his every endeavour in the furtherance of the empire's interests had the backing of the whole might of the empire. Ranged against the representatives of such an empire was a coterie of councillors, nurtured on the exploitation of a primitive people, in a puny, primitive land, with no financial and military resources worth the name.

The blatantly unequal struggle was further accentuated by the fact that the councillors of the Sikkim Raja were far from united amongst themselves. The Bhutiyas and the Lepchas were, as ever, split in factions. The British took full advantage of this rift. They found the Lepchas congenial and amenable to reason. On the other hand, they considered the Bhutiyas shifty, cunning, and obdurate. The British had their friends among the Lepcha councillors who kept them posted of the Bhutiya conspiracy against British interests.

The man who stood out in his relentless opposition to the British was Dewan Namgyal, popularly known as the 'pagla' (mad) Dewan or minister. Even the British had this to say of Dewan Namgyal : "He was a man of considerable

strength of character and real ability, a quality so rare in these parts." Dewan Namgyal, the son of Tung-yik Minchoo, the leader of the Bhutiya conspiracy against Bolek, was a man of standing among the Bhutiyas. Besides this obvious advantage, he deliberately chose a carefully calculated course for his elevation. Having studied that the Raja was partial to his concubine, by whom he had two illegitimate children—a son and a daughter—, Namgyal attached himself to the concubine and her children. Eventually he wooed and married the daughter. Thereafter Namgyal's elevation was only a matter of time. His natural abilities were already there. And soon he was the chief among the Raja's councillors, and the natural leader of the Bhutiya faction.

So rapid was the development of Darjeeling under the British that it soon became an eyesore to the Sikkimese authorities. The population grew by leaps and bounds, chiefly by immigration from the neighbouring kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, in all of which slavery was prevalent. There was free trade in labour and all other commodities in Darjeeling. There was plenty of forest land for settlers and every encouragement given to new arrivals. The increased importance of Darjeeling, under free institutions, was a source of constant jealousy and annoyance to the Dewan, whose interests as the monopolist of all trade in Sikkim were greatly hurt. The principal people of Sikkim, all of them slave owners, were also hurt by the loss of rights over slaves who settled in Darjeeling as British subjects. Threats and intimidations were practised on such people. Worse still, occasionally British subjects from Darjeeling were kidnapped and sold in slavery. There were many outstanding issues to be settled between the Darjeeling administration and the Sikkim ruler. It was at such a time, in 1848, that Dr. Joseph Hooker, the British naturalist, came to Darjeeling to explore the Himalayan region surrounding it.

On being asked by the British Government, Dr. Campbell, Superintendent of Darjeeling, wrote to the Sikkim authorities seeking permission for Dr. Hooker to travel in the territory of Sikkim. Dewan Namgyal tried his best to stall so innocuous a request, giving way after a prolonged correspondence. Dr.

Campbell felt that if he could meet the Raja of Sikkim, he would be in a position to clear any misunderstanding the Raja might have and thereby pave the way for better relations between the Raja's administration and the British administration in Darjeeling. Therefore, with the permission of the British Government, Dr. Campbell set out for the Raja's seat at Tumlong in November, 1848. Dr. Campbell reached the Tista River to be confronted by officials from Sikkim who would not let him cross the border.

After a great deal of stalling, Dr. Campbell was at last allowed to meet the Raja. While Dr. Campbell was far from successful in his mission of improving relations between the two administrations, he came back with a first-hand, albeit limited, knowledge of the working of the Raja's mind. His face to face encounter with Dewan Namgyal convinced him of that man's implacable hatred for the British. He knew that until there was someone from among the more congenial Lepchas functioning as the Dewan, there was no hope of any change in the Sikkim Raja's attitude towards the British. Right then there was no prospect of bringing about this change.

The next year, Dr. Hooker was making a second tour of Sikkim. Dr. Campbell accompanied him, and the two went right up to the Tibetan frontier and crossed it. Making a long detour, they descended upon Tumlong.

Dr. Campbell had very much been looking forward to a tête-à-tête with the Raja since Dewan Namgyal was away in Chumbi, and Dr. Campbell's Lepcha friend, Chebu Lama, happened to be officiating. But all the efforts of the Lepcha councillor were set at naught by the Dewan's supporters. Disgusted, Dr. Campbell set out with Dr. Hooker towards the Chola Pass at the Sikkim-Tibet border. Beyond Chola Pass lay Chumbi. A body of Tibetan officials met them on the other side of the Chola Pass and turned them back. It appeared that Dewan Namgyal had not been lying idle, for a body of Sikkimese men appeared at the Chola Pass and arrested the two travellers. While Dr. Hooker was not ill-treated, Dr. Campbell was tortured.

Led like ordinary criminals, the two members of the British Empire were brought to Tumlong and promptly locked up. About a fortnight later Dewan Namgyal returned from Chumbi. Drs. Hooker and Campbell were produced before the Dewan, who allowed them to write to their Government of their arrest. The object appears to have been to force Campbell to agree to the dictation of the Dewan regarding the giving up of the escaped slaves, and to detain him until the British Government should sanction what Campbell committed under duress. The British Government, however, declared that such extorted conditions would not be confirmed and that the Raja's head should answer for it if a hair of the head of Dr. Campbell or Dr. Hooker were hurt. This was enough to intimidate the Raja and Dewan Namgyal.

On 9th December, 1849, Drs. Hooker and Campbell set off for Darjeeling under an armed guard, having spent a month as the Sikkim Raja's prisoners.

The Raja capitulated when the British threatened to march into Sikkim. As a result of this episode, the Raja of Sikkim lost the Rs. 6,000/- per annum that he was getting as compensation for Darjeeling. The British also annexed the Sikkim Terai and the hill areas bounded by the Rummam River on the north, the Great Rungeet and the Tista on the east, and the Nepal frontier on the west. This additional territory was added to Darjeeling. Chebu Lama was appointed the Sikkim Raja's agent (vakil) at Darjeeling. Dewan Namgyal fell from power. Relations between the Sikkim Raja and the British administration at Darjeeling greatly improved.

Dr. Campbell was, however, far from satisfied with the mild reaction of his Government to what he considered an outrageous behaviour on the part of the Sikkim Raja. He continued to look for an opening that would afford him the opportunity to avenge himself. To make matters worse, Dewan Namgyal was, before long, back in power.

In 1860 some residents of Darjeeling were kidnapped by the Sikkimese. This had been one of the pin-pricks Dewan Namgyal had used right from the day the development of Darjeeling

had started under the superintendence of Dr. Campbell. Taking advantage of the pretext provided by the latest kidnappings, Dr. Campbell marched into the territory of Sikkim at the head of a small body of native troops, only to be pushed back by a stronger contingent of the Sikkimese. This sparked off real hostilities.

A small expeditionary force under the command of Lt. Col. Gawler, with Ashley Eden as the Political Officer, entered Sikkim. The force of 1,800 troops was sufficient to bring the Raja and his recalcitrant councillors to their proper senses. Dr. Campbell was a strong advocate of Sikkim's annexation to the British Empire, but his counsels were overruled in the larger imperial interests.

A new treaty, consisting of 23 articles, was signed between the British and the Sikkim Raja in 1861.* While Sikkim remained theoretically independent, it had to make many concessions to the British. Dewan Namgyal was banished. Sikkim was opened for free trade with India. Sikkim also agreed to render all possible help to the British in their efforts to develop trade with Tibet. The Raja of Sikkim began to be addressed as the Maharaja, though there was no formal declaration to that effect.

*For full text of the treaty see Appendix 'B'.

CHAPTER VIII

The Gorkha Immigration

WHILE the 1861 Treaty allowed the British a great say in any matter that affected their interests in Sikkim, they still believed in using tact rather than their newly-acquired powers in gradually converting the Sikkim ruler to share with them their cherished desire to open trade with Tibet. The British saw to it that their own friends were placed in key positions in Sikkim. Their arch enemy, Dewan Namgyal, was banished from Sikkim, and the Treaty excluded not only the banished Dewan but also his blood relations from enjoying any office in Sikkim. The British were now all set for the opening up of Sikkim as a prelude to the next and more important step of opening up Tibet. Sikkim in those days was still covered with dense forests. The Bhutiyas and Lepchas together formed a small population, which always posed the question of labour shortage. It was at this stage that the solution of this problem was seen by the British in encouraging the immigration of Nepalese and settling them on the unoccupied lands of Sikkim.

The Nepalese, for whom the word Gorkha has been used in this book as a synonym, had had contacts with the Bhutiyas and Lepchas of Sikkim under far from congenial circumstances. In the strange ways of fate, the Nepalese, who had followed a career of pillage and conquest of Sikkimese territory beginning with the closing years of the 18th century, were ultimately to form not only the most numerous of the ethnic elements that formed the population of Sikkim but were also to lay the firm

foundations of the agrarian economy of Sikkim. But such transformation took many years. And the early years of the immigration of the Nepalese were full of strife on account of the opposition of the Bhutiyas under the leadership of the rulers of Sikkim, who had inherited an almost atavistic trauma of the Gorkha dread.

The British, for their part, had come under the spell, as it were, of the Nepalese following the Gorkha War of 1814-16. While it is beyond the scope of this book to dwell at any length on the burgeoning of British-Gorkha relations, a brief notice is necessary for the proper understanding of the immigration of the Nepalese in such numbers as to form the most important group inhabiting the entire region that includes Darjeeling and Sikkim.

The Anglo-Gorkha War had brought two brave and warlike peoples, the British and the Gorkhas, face to face in many encounters in the field of battle stretching from the Sutlej to the Tista. While the fortunes of war were ultimately to go to the British, the two adversaries had learnt, during the numerous encounters, to respect each other for bravery and other qualities. Soon after the cessation of hostilities, the British were to befriend the Gorkhas, enrol them in their army, and exploit them for the furtherance of British imperialist interests. History has recorded the gallantry displayed by Gorkha soldiers in many a far-flung battlefield in the cause of the British Empire. It was not long before the Gorkhas were the most trusted element among the soldiers in India, their stock rising with every trial the British Empire had to undergo.

This apart, the British had also studied that the Gorkha made as good a peasant in peace-time as he made a soldier in war. The combination of these two sterling qualities and the similarity between the topography of the Gorkha home in Nepal and Sikkim made him the ideal immigrant to fill in the empty spaces of Sikkim. The Bhutiyas and Lepchas made poor farmers partly because of their ignorance of the methods of cultivation and partly because of a natural indolence. The Lepcha had always been used to easy-going ways and was averse to hard labour or, for that matter, any other form of strife and

struggle. The Bhutiya, while having a natural aptitude for trade, was loath to physical labour. So, the British encouraged the immigration of Nepalese settlers to open up Sikkim. There were some among the Raja's councillors who shared this view of the British and took active interest in settling the Nepalese immigrants. These councillors, prominent among whom were the two Khangsa brothers (Phodang Lama and the Khangsa Dewan), were greatly rewarded for this farsightedness, for they were the first beneficiaries of Gorkha toil and industry. Wherever the Gorkhas were settled, they cleared the jungle, terraced the hill sides for the cultivation of paddy, and began a mode of agriculture that obtains to this day, and forms the very basis of Sikkim's economy. It was the Gorkha immigrants who brought cardamom seeds from Nepal into Sikkim. Cardamom, like rubber, was to flourish in its new home while its production in its original home languished into insignificance. In the years immediately following the 1861 Treaty, the Gorkha immigration into Sikkim had just begun with the British as its advocates, some important councillors as its supporters, and the majority of the councillors, headed by the ruler, opposing it tooth and nail. The Raja and his obdurate councillors were prompted by prejudice against the Gorkha immigrants, it being far beyond them to take into account the economic and the long-term benefits accruing to the country and the people.

Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal, towards the last years of his rule, led a retired life, leaving the cares of the State to his son, Sidkeong Namgyal, who had signed the Treaty of 1861 as the 'Maharaja' of Sikkim even when his father was alive. In 1863, Tsugphud Namgyal died. Sidkeong Namgyal formally succeeded his father at the age of 42.

Sidkeong Namgyal had seen the operation of British power in Sikkim and was clever enough to draw his own conclusions. He went all out to ingratiate himself with the British authorities. It was mainly due to Sidkeong Namgyal's having established cordial relations with the British that the latter increased the Darjeeling subvention to nine thousand rupees in 1868, and to twelve thousand rupees per annum in 1874. The British also granted the Sikkim ruler a salute of 15 guns.

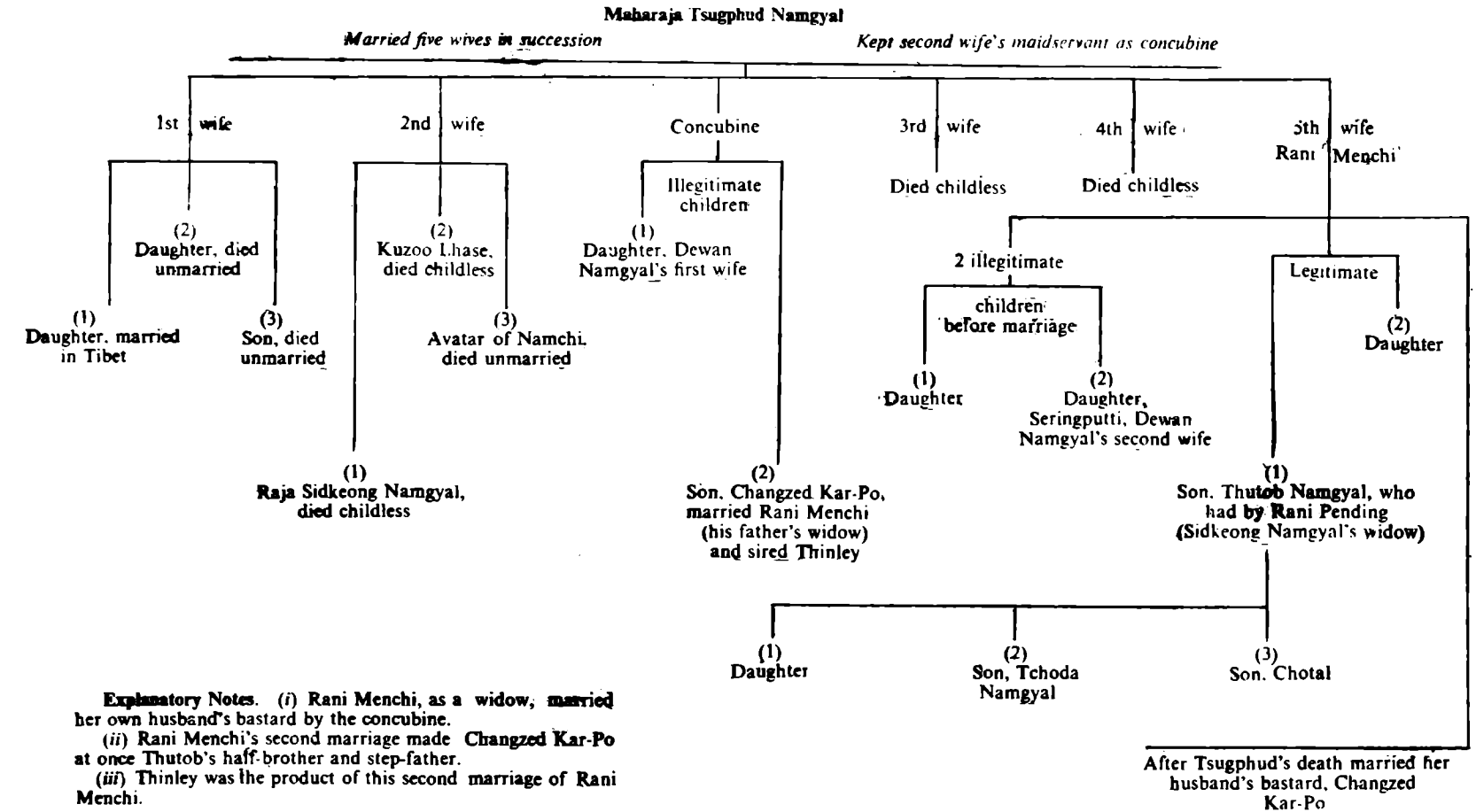
Fittingly enough, it was Sidkeong Namgyal who granted the first lease to the Gorkha settlers. In the year 1867 a formal grant of lease was accorded to two Newar brothers, the traders Luxmi Prasads. Emboldened by his rapport with the British, Sidkeong Namgyal requested permission for the return of Dewan Namgyal, but the request was turned down.

Sidkeong Namgyal died in 1874. His half-brother, Thutob Namgyal, became the ruler at the age of 14. He married Sidkeong's widow, Rani Pending, in accordance with Bhutiya customs.

To be able to understand the subsequent course of events, it is necessary to examine the family relations of Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal. The genealogical chart is given on page 45 (based on Sikkim Gazetteer, 1894 Ed., page 23), with explanatory notes appended to it, will assist the reader in this.

Thutob Namgyal had inherited from his father Tsugphud Namgyal an implacable hatred for the Nepalese. So when he began his rule, he set to undo, to the extent it lay within his powers, his half-brother's efforts in settling the Nepalese immigrants. As has been said earlier, some councillors had had the keen perception of the benefits accruing to them by the settling of the Nepalese. Following their examples, other landlords had also begun to settle the Nepalese on their lands and reap the fruit of the toil of the immigrants. This, naturally, aroused the ire of the reactionaries at whose head was the ruler himself.

While the pro-immigration faction led by the Khangsa Dewan was having a lively tussle with the anti-immigration faction, prominent among whom were Dala Athing Densapa and Tarching Lama of Pemiongchi, an embezzlement charge was laid against one Lasso Athing. On the charge being substantiated, the Khangsa Dewan ordered the attachment of the land under Lasso Athing and subsequently transferred the lease of the land in favour of Luxmi Das and his brother. This was enough to bring the matter to a head. The anti-immigration Bhutiyas joined together in support of Lasso Athing, paying little heed to the merits of the case, and petitioned the young ruler to approach the Governor of Bengal with



Explanatory Notes. (*i*) Rani Menchi, as a widow, married her own husband's bastard by the concubine.

(*ii*) Rani Menchi's second marriage made Changzed Kar-Po at once Thutob's half-brother and step-father.

(*iii*) Thinley was the product of this second marriage of Rani Menchi.

a view to halting the immigration of the Nepalese into Sikkim. Thutob Namgyal met the British Governor, Ashley Eden, at Kalimpong, and pleaded with him for the stoppage of Nepalese immigration. The Government partially accommodated the Maharaja's request by ordering that the immigrants were to be allowed to settle on uninhabited and waste lands only.

Minor skirmishes between the Nepalese immigrants and the agents of anti-Nepalese Bhutiyas, lay and monk, became more frequent. In 1880, Tarching Lama of Pemiongchi came at the head of his lama and lay followers to Rhenock, where a new Nepalese settlement under the management of Luxmi Das and his brother had sprung up, and tried to use force to eject the settlers. There was a fracas. The settlers were helped by Phodang Lama and his followers. The Pemiongchi group suffered some casualties and retreated to the safety of their monastery. Much against the wishes of Thutob Namgyal, whose rabid hatred of the Napalese was further inflamed by the incident, the Rhenock affairs was settled in favour of the settlers and Phodang Lama. This opened the way for increased settlement of the Nepalese. Thutob Namgyal, in a huff, removed himself to Chumbi.

Interesting developments were taking place at Chumbi. Dewan Namgyal was destined, once again, to play a leading role in the affairs of Sikkim. On account of his long residence in Chumbi, and the resultant close association with Tibetan authorities, with whom he had always enjoyed good relations, he had acquired quite an influential position for himself.

Rani Menchi, Tsugphud Namgyal's widow, had remarried,* taking for her second husband Changzed Kar-po, her first husband's illegitimate son by the concubine. She had borne him a son, Thinley, alias Lhase Khuso, on whom the Rani doted. Dewan Namgyal, who had married Changzed Kar-po's sister, was once again eligible for marriage on account of his first wife's death. He applied himself to wooing, with the frenzied ardour of an old man, Rani Menchi's illegitimate daughter, Serringputti. The young lady would, perhaps, have continued to spurn the 'Pagla' Dewan's attentions, but for the fact that

*See chart on page 45.

her mother, Rani Menchi, had her own game to play. And none but the wily old Dewan had the ability and experience to aid her in her machinations. It was largely through Rani Menchi's efforts that Serringputti agreed to reward the Dewan's attentions by becoming his wife.

In 1879, Changzed Kar-po paid a visit to Gyantse, where he met the Chinese Amban and some Tibetan officials. This visit resulted in the Chinese investiture of Thutob Namgyal with a button of the first rank (plain coral). Kar-po died soon after. The next year Rani Pending also died, leaving behind a daughter and two sons, among them the heir-apparent, Tchoda Namgyal.

Rani Menchi and Dewan Namgyal began to work in concert for the succession of Thinley and the removal of Thutob Namgyal from the Sikkim Gaddi.

Maharaja Thutob Namgyal, who had returned to Tumlong, had evinced no interest in a second marriage. Under friendly pressure, he finally agreed to remarry. In pursuance of this he procured two elephants from the Government of Bengal in 1881 and sent them to the Panchen Lama at Tashilhunpo and the Dalai Lama at Lhasa, seeking their blessings for a suitable match. The elephants and other presents and the proposal for marriage were entrusted to Nudup Gyaltsen (a brother of Phodang Lama) and the Kazi of Rhenock. These officers secured the blessings of the two Grand Lamas and arranged a marriage between Maharaja Thutob Namgyal and a daughter of Shafe Uthok, one of the leading men of Tibet.

Rani Menchi and her son, Thinley, accompanied by Dewan Namgyal, followed the officers shortly afterwards in 1882, apparently having secured from Thutob Namgyal his willingness to enter into a polyandrous marriage contract whereby he and Thinley were to be the joint husbands of the bride-to-be.

The reader will have seen how some of the marriages given in the chart on page 45 border on promiscuity, if not on outright incest. But even this hardly prepares one for the proposed elevation of Thinley to the same level as Maharaja Thutob Namgyal. While Thutob was the legitimate son of Maharaja Tsugphud Namgyal and Rani Menchi, and, as such, of right royal descent, Thinley was the son of Tsugphud Namgyal's ille-

gitimate son and Rani Menchi, who lost the title of 'Rani' as soon as she married Changzed Kar-po. By no stretch of imagination could Thinley claim royalty. Therefore Rani Menchi's efforts for the recognition of Thinley by elevating him to a status equal to that of Thutob were a little far-fetched. But yet such was the pull of the combined forces of Rani Menchi and Dewan Namgyal that they seemed to have been successful in their designs.

Soon after her arrival in Lhasa, Rani Menchi broke off the match arranged by Nudup Gyaltsen and Rhenock Kazi. Yishey Dolma, daughter of an inferior officer in the Dalai Lama's Court, was secured as the joint wife of Thutob Namgyal and Thinley.

The marriage was solemnised at Lhasa, where Thinely, as the man on the spot, and the bride had their honeymoon. When Thinley and the newly-wed Rani left for Chumbi on 5 June, 1883, the Rani was far gone in pregnancy. The Khangsa Dewan had learnt of the Rani's pregnancy and passed on the intelligence to Maharaja Thutob Namgyal. Thutob refused to countenance this. Apparently, Rani Menchi's zeal in having Thinley recognized as Thutob Namgyal's legitimate royal half-brother—in itself a climb-down from her first misguided efforts to have Thutob supplanted by Thinley—seemed to have misfired in the face of Thutob's obduracy.

To the young Rani Yishey, Thutob's anger did not make much sense, and she did not care overmuch to be in any haste to earn his embraces. Thutob had a forbidding hare-lip, and this, combined with the evident display of unreasonable temper, did not make him a charming customer. The Rani, used to Thinley from the very night of her nuptials, and whose child she now carried in her womb, was nothing loath, at first, to the consequences of Thutob's lack of interest in her ; this left her wholly to Thinley. If there had been any other woman in place of Rani Yishey Dolma, she would, perhaps, have preferred the continuation of this arrangement, but the Rani was too gifted a woman to rest content with her position. She was brilliant, within the limitation imposed by her Tibetan upbringing and society, was a gifted conversationalist, and had a deep knowledge of Tibetan

Buddhism. She was an accomplished calligraphist and had many other graces to commend her in the eyes of men. So, before long, she set about to probe what lay at the root of Thutob's aversion to her.

Thutob Namgyal carried on the administration from Tumlong with the help of Khangsa Dewan and Sheo Dewan. Thinley's influence in Chumbi had become great. Rani Yishey Dolma had given birth to Thinley's two children.

In 1885, there was some trouble between the Tibetans and the Bhutanese. The Chinese Amban came down to Phari from Lhasa to mediate between the two disputants. Thutob Namgyal delegated Thinley, who was available at Chumbi itself, and some Kazis, to wait upon the Chinese dignitary. The Amban took it as an insult and asked for an explanation as to why the Maharaja did not attend in person. Informed of the Amban's anger, Thutob Namgyal approached the British for permission to travel to Chumbi to wait upon the Chinese Amban. The British readily agreed to this, urging upon Thutob to make the best use of his time for the purpose of broaching the subject of trade with Tibet, a perpetual obsession of the British. Thutob Namgyal went to Phari only to find that the Amban would not hear of granting him an interview. He wanted to be back, but the British pressed him to stay on in Chumbi until the arrival of a Mr. Macaulay from Darjeeling. The unenviable plight of Thutob Namgyal, sandwiched as he was between two great powers, China and Britain, was to dog him for many years in the future.

During Thutob's stay at Chumbi, Rani Yishey Dolma brought to bear upon him all the feminine charms and wiles she was capable of. By lavishing upon Thutob her unsolicited attentions, and by using influential friends, she brought home to the Maharaja that he himself had given his consent to the joint marriage, and had deputed his half-brother to represent him in the marriage ceremony. It was not long before Thutob Namgyal came round. Thereafter Maharaja Thutob Namgyal and Maharani Yishey Dolma were to remain on the best of understandings, and Yishey Dolma was to combine with her wifely duties the role of a friend and counsellor through all the thick and thin of Thutob's rule.

CHAPTER IX

The British Yoke

THE British could have annexed Sikkim to their Indian Empire, but they did not; for they thought that the gains accruing to them by the exploitation of their hold over Sikkim would, in the long run, outweigh whatever little they would have gained by outright annexation. They were not really interested in Sikkim. Their interest lay in Tibet and the Chinese territory beyond. The annexation of Sikkim would have seriously jeopardised their attempts to enter Tibet, for the fears of being invaded by the British had lain at the root of Tibetan opposition to the British getting an entry into their country. Apart from using Sikkim as the base from where to conduct trade negotiations with the Tibetans, the British had also counted upon the goodwill of the Sikkim ruler in smoothing out things with his northern neighbours. Before we proceed to recount the burdens Sikkim had to bear on account of its having been made the base for penetration of Tibet by the British, the relations then existing between Sikkim and Tibet, and between Tibet and China, need to be understood.

Sikkim had always looked upon itself as a dependency, a vassal, of Tibet, not because of any compulsion but because of a sort of voluntary submission springing from the Sikkimese Bhutiyas' origin, religion, and, above all, the proximity of the two territories. Tibet looked upon China as its suzerain, the Chinese influence in Lhasa fluctuating with the rise and fall in the power and prestige of the Celestial Emperor. The Sikkim

ruler had the same respect for the Chinese Emperor as a servant has for his master's master. While the Sikkim ruler's subservience to Tibet was total, the Tibetans' attitude towards China was largely determined by their own self-interest and was regulated by a careful appraisal of the Emperor's powers at any given point of time. While Sikkim could not imagine herself countering any of Tibet's mandates, Tibet could, and would if her interests demanded, devise means to defy Chinese orders. It was into this complex oriental world that the British were seeking ingress.

The British hold over Sikkim and their manifest zeal in extending their trade northwards produced only hostile reactions in both Tibet and China. The Tibetan ruling clique viewed the British endeavour with the greatest alarm since it posed a direct threat to the vested interest the clique had in the Tibet-China trade, and also to Tibet's anachronistic theocracy; China was alarmed because of the threat to its monopoly of trade with Tibet and also because whatever hold it had over Tibet would very likely vanish once the superiority of the British over the Chinese were demonstrated to the Tibetans. It is not strange, therefore, to find that the more the British enthusiasm waxed at the prospect of finding their way to their ultima Thule, the more fearful the Tibetans and Chinese became. Their efforts to keep the British at bay were correspondingly increased. It was the misfortune of tiny Sikkim to be trapped between these two forces. The misfortune was all the more accentuated by the fact that, pathetically ignorant of the might of the British Empire, the Sikkim ruler and most of his councillors were not only subservient to Tibet and China but also regarded them as capable of successfully warding off the British. The Sikkimese understood and feared the Tibetans and the Chinese. They did not understand the British and regarded them with fear and mistrust.

The British quest for the road to Tibet had started towards the last quarter of the 18th century when, following an exchange of cordial letters, Warren Hastings, the then Governor-General of the territories of the East India Company, had sent George Bogle on a friendly mission to the Tashi Lama at Tashilhunpo in Tibet. The cordial relations established by Bogle could not

be exploited on account of the Tashi Lama's death shortly thereafter. Bogle had also died soon after. Warren Hastings had found another young man, Samuel Turner, to lead a second mission to Tashilhunpo in the year 1783. For diverse reasons this mission had been a failure. Matters had been further complicated by the Chinese invasion of Nepal in 1792, via Tibet. The Chinese victory over the Gorkhas had raised their stock high in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. Their influence had tangibly increased to the detriment of British interests. The Bhutan road to Tashilhunpo, used by Bogle and Turner, had been closed to the British. And there the matter had rested for long years.

With Darjeeling in their hands, and Sikkim under the obligations of the 1861 Treaty, the British had sought to establish, a link with Tibet through Sikkim. The British had also learnt that the shortest route to Tibet lay through Sikkim. While Tsugphud Namgyal, under the baneful influence of Dewan Namgyal, had incurred the wrath of the British, and suffered some inconveniences, not the least of which had been the stoppage of the Darjeeling subvention, his successor, Sidkeong Namgyal, had been shrewd enough to befriend the British and regain much of the lost ground. In the year 1873, Sidkeong Namgyal had called on the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal at Darjeeling. At his request, the British had increased the Darjeeling subvention to Rupees 12,000 per annum. In return, Sidkeong Namgyal had promised to render all possible help to the British in establishing proper contacts with the Tibetans.

In the autumn of 1873, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, J.W. Edgar, had visited Sikkim and gone right up to the border with Tibet. There he had come against Tibetan opposition to his onward advance. The Tibetans had been dead set against the British entry into Tibet. Edgar had to turn back after some rounds of fruitless talks with the Tibetan jongpen (district officer) at Phari in Chumbi.

In the last chapter we have seen that Thutob Namgyal had been asked by the British to stay on in Chumbi until the arrival of Colman Macaulay from Darjeeling. Colman Macaulay had earlier gone right up to Khambajong, a small Tibetan town not

far from the northern border of Sikkim, where he had met the jongpen. He had returned with the impression that more than the Tibetans it was the Chinese who objected to the opening of Tibet for trade with the British. Among the Tibetans a section of the monks opposed the British entry, but this opposition, according to Macaulay, could be removed by suitable bribes and presents.

Thanks to the long arm of British power, and their improved relations with China, the Emperor of China had, at long last, agreed to the British sending a trade mission to Lhasa. Colman Macaulay, who had taken a leading role in bringing about this happy prospect, had been chosen to lead the mission.

The mission was assembled at Darjeeling in 1885-86. But then hitches began to develop. Despite the Chinese approval, the Tibetans were openly hostile to the mission's proposed entry into Tibet.

On learning from the Chinese Amban that the Emperor had granted the British permission at the Chefoo Convention to conduct a trade mission between "China and India, via Tibet," the Tsongdu (Tibetan Parliament) "held an emergency meeting and declared that Tibet was being harassed by the British from all directions and that the Emperor of China had no authority to give anyone permission to pass through Tibet. The Tsongdu members took an oath never to allow the British to enter Tibetan territory and put their seals to it".*

That was what was happening at Lhasa when the British were assembling the 'mission to Tibet' at Darjeeling. "The District Officer at Phari asked the Sikkim ruler not to allow the British Expedition to enter Tibet through Sikkim. The Sikkimese ruler informed the Phari official that he was fully aware of the situation and had already written to Lhasa about the British intention of building a rest house at the Dzalep-la (Jelep-la) Pass on the Tibetan border, in spite of the fact that they had been informed that the Tibetan Government might protest it. The Tibetan Government was surprised at the Sikkimese report and sent two representatives, Khenche Drugyal and Tsepon Tsarong, to the border to confirm the actual

**Tibet: A Political History*, by Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, p. 198.

demarcation of the Sikkimese-Tibetan boundary. An old resident of the area recalled that the original boundary was at Rhenock, which was now in Sikkimese territory."[1]

After months of cooling heels at Darjeeling, the Macaulay Mission was abandoned in 1886. The Tibetans, who had been fortifying themselves at the border, naturally took the dispersal of the mission as resulting from their hostility to it, and especially to their warlike preparations. Flushed by the success of their enterprise, they advanced into Sikkim across the Jelep-la Pass and fortified the hilltop at Lingtu at an elevation of 12,617 feet above sea level. While the British thought Lingtu to be sixteen miles within Sikkimese territory, the Tibetans "decided to establish a check-post at Lungthur (Lingtu), which was a little deeper in Tibetan territory than Rhenock. In spite of discouragement from the Sikkimese, who anticipated British displeasure, the fortified check-post was set up in 1887 and manned by an officer with 20 soldiers."[2]

When the British wrote to the Dalai Lama, through the Sikkimese ruler, asking him to remove the check-post, the Tibetan Kashag (Cabinet) replied: "There was no harm in protecting one's own territory and that the Tibetans were prepared to resist a British attack. Two Tibetan Generals, Dapon Ngabo and Dapon Surkhang, with nine hundred troops under the overall command of the Council Minister, Kalon Lhalu, were dispatched to the border."[3]

Maharaja Thutob Namgyal further complicated the matter when he tried to explain away Tibetan intrusion into Sikkim by saying that Lingtu was actually a part of Tibet and that the Tibetans had been graciously pleased to allow him to treat it as his own territory. The Tibetans began to demonstrate stronger signs of their possession of the territory by levying taxes on the people inhabiting the surrounding areas. The Sikkim Maharaja having contributed to the confusion by stating that Lingtu fell within Tibetan territory, the British decided upon thrashing out the matter of boundary, and also Sikkim-Tibet

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.
2. *Loc. cit.*
3. *Loc. cit.*

relations, with him. The Maharaja was summoned to Darjeeling in May, 1887. Nobody was more surprised than the British authorities when Thutob Namgyal refused to budge from his capital. The British held out the threat of stopping the payment of Darjeeling subvention—a substantial amount in 1887—and Thutob, with a lofty disdain, continued to defy the British from his safe haven. He further told the British that he and his people had, in 1886, signed a treaty declaring that Sikkim was subject only to China and Tibet; that he was therefore unable to come to Darjeeling without the express permission of the Tibetan Government.

This was a curious development and came as a total surprise to the British. It appears that in 1886, coinciding with the apparently waning British influence, the Maharaja had signed at Galing, in Tibet, a formal treaty on behalf of the "people of Sikkim, priests and laymen." The treaty, "which is couched in the form of a petition to the two Chinese Residents, set forth that some Europeans, after petitioning the great officers of China, have, to the detriment of religion, got an order to enter Tibet for trade. 'From the time of Chogyal Phuntso Namgyal (the first Raja of Sikkim) all our Rajas and other subjects have obeyed the orders of China...You have ordered us by strategy or force to stop the passage of the Rishi river between Sikkim and British territory, but we are small and the Sarkar (British Government) is great, and we may not succeed, and may then fall into the mouth of the tiger-lion. In such a crisis, if you, as our old friends, can make some arrangements, even then in good and evil we will not leave the shelter of the feet of China and Tibet.....We all, king and subjects, priests and laymen, honestly promise to prevent persons from crossing the boundary.'"*

The Chinese were as interested as the British in seeing the Tibetan soldiers vacate Lingtu, if only for the satisfaction of having their orders complied with. Much to the chagrin of the Chinese, the Tibetans paid little heed to their repeated orders asking them to vacate Lingtu. The earlier British expectations that "the mob of archers, slingers, and matchlockmen, collected on a barren, windswept ridge at a height which even Tibetans

*Introduction to Sikkim Gazetteer (1894 ed.), p. viii.

find trying, would speedily fall away under stress of cold and starvation", had been belied. The phlegmatic British lion, 'tiger-lion' to the Tibetans, would perhaps have gone on ignoring the Lingtu fortifications but the undermining of British prestige had some very unwholesome repercussions in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Darjeeling, where there was a sizable European population, and where these Europeans had invested considerable capitial in the growing tea industry, was panicky. In Sikkim, the ardent friends of the British, the Nepalese, had "begun to ask themselves seriously whether it might not be necessary for their ultimate safety to cast in their lot with the Tibetan party. These men, although as anxious as ever to keep up their former relations, and fully hostile to Tibetan encroachment, had begun to doubt our (British) desire or our ability to assist them, and openly expressed their fear of being 'drowned,' as they worded it, if they persisted in trying to swim against the current now running in favour of Tibet."*

With no alternative left, the British sent an ultimatum to the garrison at Lingtu that unless they withdrew by the 15th of March, 1888, they would be expelled by force. Ultimately, the British had to send a 2,000-strong force under Brigadier-General Graham, who expelled the Tibetans from Lingtu on 20th March, 1888, after a short fight. There were other isolated skirmishes which led to the temporary British occupation of Chumbi. The British advance into Chumbi complicated the matter by widening the issue. The Chinese Amban came rushing down to Chumbi for talks with the British. The British were at first represented by A. W. Paul, who had accompanied the expedition as the Political Officer. Later, the Foreign Secretary, H. M. Durand, conducted the talks with the Amban.

The talks were unduly prolonged, especially as the Chinese Amban was intent upon finding some means which, while being realistic in taking cognizance of the British interests in Sikkim, yet retained something of Chinese suzerainty at least as a face-saving device. In January, 1889, the talks came to an end without any satisfactory solution acceptable to both sides. But

*Introduction to Sikkim Gazetteer (1894 ed.) p. x.

this situation was not desirable in view of the larger British Imperial interests, which demanded sound and healthy relations with the Chinese Empire. So negotiations were again revived and they culminated in the Anglo-Chinese Convention, signed by the British and the Chinese on 17th March, 1890.[1]

The Convention fixed the Sikkim-Tibet boundary as the crest of the mountain range forming the watershed between the river systems of the two countries. Article 2 defined the status of Sikkim vis-a-vis China and the British, thereby putting an end to whatever tenuous hold China had had on Sikkim. It read : "It is admitted that the British Government, whose protectorate over 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."

The Convention left some matters for discussion between the officials of the High Contracting Parties. These related to trade, communication, and pasturage. A Protocol to the Convention was signed in 1893[2] and appended to it.

The 1890 Anglo-Chinese Convention completed the British hold over Sikkim that had begun with the 1861 Treaty. The Treaty was the result of a clash between Sikkim and the British. The Convention had followed the Tibetan occupation of Lingtu and the resultant clash between the Tibetans and the British. The Tibetans had not only been worsted in the field but also completely brushed aside during the negotiations by their suzerain, China. Sikkim was sacrificed at the altar of Anglo-Chinese relations. Thutob Namgyal was thoroughly disillusioned, but it was too late for him to mend matters. His ordeals had begun before the Convention was signed.

Claude White, the Assistant Political Officer with the British Expeditionary Force, was appointed the Political Officer in

1. For full text of the Convention see Appendix 'C'.
2. For full text of the Protocol see Appendix 'D'.

charge of administration in Sikkim in June, 1889. The ruler's powers were curtailed to a minimum, all powers being exercised by the Political Officer. Thutob was allowed a small retinue and an allowance of Rs. 500/- per month. The British had been sorely displeased by Thutob's antics during the Tibetan occupation of Lingtu, and now they were determined to teach him a lesson or two.

Among the Sikkim notables, Claude White had been struck by the abilities of the Khangsa Dewan and his brother, Phodang Lama. While Claude White greatly favoured them for their progressive outlook, Thutob disliked them for this very quality. Claude White formed a Council with the Khangsa Brothers, Sheo Dewan, the Gangtok, Tashiding, Enchey, and Rhenock Kazis, and, as a sop to Thutob, Lari Pema of the Pemiongchi Monastery, as members, and himself as the President. The Council had a minority of Thutob's supporters. Worse still, soon after the formation of the Council, the British ordered Maharaja Thutob Namgyal to remove himself to Kalimpong. While Thutob Namgyal pined away at Kalimpong, with Rani Yishey Dolma as his sole companion, Claude White addressed himself to the administrative task that faced him. On the condition of Sikkim he observed :—

"Chaos reigned everywhere ; there was no revenue system, the Raja taking what he required from the people, those nearest the capital having to contribute the largest share, while those more remote had toll taken from them by the local officials in the name of the Raja, though little found its way to him ; no court of justice, no police, no public works, no education for the younger generation. The task before me was a difficult one, but very fascinating ; the country was a new one and everything was in my hands."

Claude White had spent a year in Nepal before being appointed the Political Officer in Sikkim. He had studied the Gorkhas and their industrious habits. He encouraged the settlement of Gorkhas with a view to opening up Sikkim and strengthening its economic base. He also created a number of lessee landlords in his bid to ensure regular collection of land revenue.

When Thutob Namgyal was allowed to return to Sikkim, he found the administrative change not much to his liking. Supported by his strong-minded Rani, he tried to oppose Claude White, but to little avail.

The Raja and Rani were living at Nabey, some distance from Gangtok, the Political Officer's seat, when news reached them that one of the two sons of Thutob by his first wife had fallen ill in Chumbi. The Rani hastened to Chumbi on getting the news. Claude White thought that the Raja and Rani were plotting to flee to Tibet. He had the Raja arrested before he could move to join the Rani, and brought to Gangtok. The Sikkim Chronicle notes :

"Raja Thutob Namgyal was kept in solitary confinement, like an ordinary prisoner, for 13 days, when even food and water could be had only after repeated requests."

The Rani and the second prince, Sidkeong Tulku, came to Gangtok post haste. The elder prince, the heir-apparent, however, stayed away, only to lose his right to ascend the Sikkim Gaddi. Sorely tried by an unabating succession of unkind events, and tired of an existence reduced to penury, Maharaja Thutob Namgyal, accompanied by the Maharani, undertook a pilgrimage of the monasteries of Sikkim. Misfortune dogged him even there. While at Rabdantse, the old capital abandoned after the Gorkha invasion, Claude White confronted the Maharaja with the accusation that he had used forced labour. He was asked to return to Gangtok. But Thutob had other plans. He wanted to flee to Tibet via Nepal. He proceeded to Walong, intending to cross over into Tibet. The Nepalese were, by then, firm friends of the British. Thutob was thwarted in his designs. After a long and weary journey under the escort of Nepalese troops, who treated him nicely, he was handed over to the British at the border.

Once again Thutob was kept in solitary confinement for sometime at Ging, below Darjeeling, and then removed to Kurseong. There he stayed for two years under strict surveillance. Only the Maharani and some carefully screened retainers were allowed to stay with him. There, in 1893, Tashi Namgyal, a future ruler of Sikkim, was born.

In 1894 Thutob Namgyal met Commissioner Nolan, White's immediate superior, and apprised him of his difficulties and blamed White for his excessive harshness towards him. Nolan told the Maharaja that he had to act according to the advice of the Political Officer if he wanted the British Government to consider his case favourably. Thutob thereupon sent an apology to the British Government for his past conduct, with promises to mend his behaviour. In 1895, Thutob and Maharani Yishey Dolma were removed to Darjeeling, where their lot greatly improved. They were allowed far greater freedom of movement and association. After some months at Darjeeling, and equipped with a first-hand knowledge of British administration, the Maharaja and Maharani returned to Sikkim. The capital was also shifted to Gangtok, which was not only the Political Officer's seat but also far more centrally located.

Greatly chastened, the Maharaja and the Maharani thereafter hearkened to White's counsels and found the result highly satisfactory. Claude White, while blaming the Maharani for Thutob Namgyal's initial faux pas had this to say about her :

"Born intriguer and diplomat, her energies were unfortunately, but naturally, owing to her Tibetan origin, misdirected for many years, until, finding out her mistake, she frankly confessed that she had been wrong, and turned her thoughts and attention to matters which should lead to the welfare of her husband's state."

Pursuant to the Regulations relating to Trade, Communications, and Pasturage of 1893, a trade-mart was opened at Yatung. The British, if they thought that the 1890 Convention and the subsequent Trade Regulations would give them the keys to the gates of Lhasa, were to realise before long that they were as far from the goal as they had been before. They had not reckoned with the Tibetans' infinite capacity to stick to their chosen course, their suzerain's ratification of the Anglo-Chinese Convention being paid little heed to. The Tibetans had no intention of honouring the Chinese pledge, for the simple reason that they were not a party to it. Tibet was not Sikkim. And China lacked the means to compel the

Tibetans to honour the terms. Very probably the Chinese were secretly abetting the Tibetans, for thus their own interests were also safeguarded. While this setback was causing some headache to the British, the Tibetans went a step further in their calculated move to irritate the British by establishing a military post at Giagong, in North Sikkim, a few miles south of the watershed.

The British wrote to the Chinese Amban at Lhasa, bringing to his notice the violation of the 1890 Convention by the Tibetans. It was finally agreed that the boundary should be demarcated under the joint supervision of the British and Chinese Commissioners, the Tibetans also participating. The Tibetans not only failed to put in an appearance but also hindered the Chinese representative by refusing to provide him with transport. Under instructions from his government, Claude White began to demarcate the boundary unilaterally, only to find the boundary pillars knocked down after some time.

It speaks volumes for the great patience exercised by the British in their dealings with the Tibetans that the Giagong affair hanged fire for years. At the same time it reflects the vacillating border policy pursued by Lord Elgin, the Viceroy. In 1899, Lord Elgin was replaced by Lord Curzon, who, apart from his dynamism, had very fixed notions about the British policy to be pursued in such matters.

The Russians had begun to take an active interest in Tibet, or so the British thought. This was enough to set the whole British Imperial machinery rolling. The Giagong affair had lasted too long. A small force of about a hundred men pushed back the Tibetans from Giagong in 1902.

Tibetan obstinacy, Chinese weakness, and the growing fear in British minds of Russian penetration, culminated in the famous Younghusband Mission to Tibet, which passed through Sikkim, making heavy demands on its not very large labour resources, and took British bayonets right up to the forbidden city of Lhasa.

In the year 1906, the first modern type of school was started at Gangtok. Education, apart from religious instruction at the monasteries, was unknown before then. Among the first students at the school was Tashi Namgyal.

Rani Yishey Dolma died in the year 1910. Four years later Maharaja Thutob Namgyal also passed away.

CHAPTER X

Pax Britannica

LONG before Sikkim entered the 20th century, British paramountcy over the entire territory of India and the adjoining states had been established. Small states like Sikkim were effectively protected by Pax Britannica from the depredations of stronger and more ambitious neighbours. Sikkim had had the advantage of being administered by the first British Political Officer, who did his best to give some sort of shape to the chaotic conditions that had greeted his arrival. Needless to say, the Political Officer's role was a temporary expediency and was actuated more by the British Government's desire to punish Thutob Namgyal than by any policy of modernising Sikkim's administration. The basic feudal fabric remained intact. If anything, it was stregthened under British protection and systematization of revenue collection. British imperialistic and trade interests were better served by this limited function than if they had applied themselves to the welfare of the common people. Before long the administration reverted to the ruler and his Council, the Political Offier only keeping a watchful eye on them. His very presence had the desired effect of keeping the Maharaja and his councillors within bounds and earning from them a wholesome respect for, and fear of, the British power.

Thutob Namgyal was succeeded by Sidkeong Tulku, his son by the first wife. Tulku had had the benefit of sound modern education. He had also been to Oxford. Back from Oxford

in 1908, he had been given charge of some departments in the administration. During the last years of Thutob's reign, Sidkeong Tulku had already been influencing many of his father's decisions. His modern education had thoroughly changed his outlook. He made it obvious that he was determined to sound the knell of feudalism in Sikkim. The monks were alarmed when Tulku talked of the monasteries' discharging their social responsibilities. This was a revolutionary heterodoxy coming from a man who was supposed to safeguard the interests of the privileged few.

The promise of the shape of things to come seriously perturbed the all-powerful feudal elements, the kazis and the monks. In December, 1914, Sidkeong Tulku was taken ill. The British physician who was treating him "administered a heavy transfusion of brandy and put him under a number of blankets ; at the same time a fire was kept beneath the bed. Death came in the hour. Thus ended prematurely a promising career in most suspicious circumstances".

Sidkeong Tulku, by his reformist zeal, had displeased not only the feudal landlords but also Claude White's successor in the Political Office, Charles Bell. His death was as much a relief to the Political Officer as it was to the kazis and monks.

Sidkeong Tulku was succeeded by his half-brother, Tashi Namgyal, in December, 1914, at the age of 21. He had been among the first batch of students at Sikkim's first school. He had also attended the St. Paul's School at Darjeeling and the Mayo College for Indian Princes at Ajmer. Tashi Namgyal began his reign under the tutelage of Charles Bell.

Despite Claude White's zeal and his reforms in many directions, the feudal landlords had continued to exercise judicial powers, in addition to their executive powers, with all their wonted crudity. In 1916 a judicial court, the first in Sikkim's history, was set up under an independent and legally qualified judge. The lower courts of the landlords came under the supervision of the new court, called the Chief Court. This was an important landmark in the history of Sikkim. Two years later, in 1918, Tashi Namgyal was invested with full ruling authority and he became entitled to the formal title of Maharaja.

The same year he was married to Kunzang Dechen, a Tibetan General's daughter, in consonance with the Sikkim rulers' practice of marrying Tibetan brides and also marrying their sons and daughters in Tibetan noble families.

While the 20th century moved on at a pace unprecedented in history, time almost stood still in Sikkim for the common man. His lot, always hard, continued very much as before, a bad feudal landlord making life a little harder, and a good one allowing him some respite. Removed far away from the main-stream of human progress, the Sikkim peasant plodded along bearing the yoke of feudal tyranny.

The decades rolled on. Tashi Namgyal's private life was blighted soon after the last of his six children was born. It so happened that Tharing, Tashi Namgyal's half-brother, had been ordained a lama. Consistent with his birth, he had been declared a Rimpoche or reincarnation. Tharing Rimpoche had gradually risen higher and higher in the lamaist hierarchy of Sikkim. He was tipped to be placed at the apex of the whole monastic system of Sikkim. Among his champions was Maharani Kunzang Dechen. Soon after the birth of her sixth child, the Maharani had shown an increasing interest in religion and had applied herself to the study of Mahayana Buddhism under the guidance of Tharing Rimpoche. Her espousal of Tharing Rimpoche's cause carried great weight and the Rimpoche was very near achieving his ambition.

Unfortunately, Tharing Rimpoche's secretary poisoned the ears of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal against his master. What is worse, the Maharani was also implicated with having illicit connections with the Rimpoche. There appears to have been enough evidence for Tashi Namgyal to order the Rimpoche to quit Sikkim. Tharing Rimpoche went to Tibet. Not long after the Maharani also followed him thither ; she stayed in Tibet for a couple of years, nursing her grievances against her husband. If the Maharani had been the victim of vile calumny, her virtue, temporarily under cloud, would have been restored by time the healer. But she, perhaps, had no desire to vindicate her chastity.

The rulers of Sikkim are of Tibetan origin. Until recently they had kept the Tibetan strain more or less pure by marrying in Tibet. Polyandry was the accepted norm in Tibetan society. How far this could go is best illustrated by the joint marriage of Thutob Namgyal and Thinley with Yishey Dolma. As such, Rani Kunzang Dechen was acting within her rights upheld by the custom and usage of her society.

At home the kazis and the monks were, by and large, for condoning the Maharani's lapses, which were no lapses at all according to their custom. The Nepalese lessee landlords, however, told the Maharaja that if he took the Maharani back, such an act would lower him in their estimation. Here was apparently a clash of cultures. While Maharaja Tashi Namgyal was still vacillating, the Maharani gave birth to a daughter, so obviously the fruit of her Tibetan sojourn, and this took the decision out of the Maharaja's hands.

A palace was built at Takchi, near Pellong, some five miles from Gangtok. And there the Maharani was destined to pass her days, comforted by the presence of her daughter. The Maharaja's palace was placed out of bounds for her. She was totally cut off from all State functions. The Maharani was, however, fortunate in continuing to enjoy the love and devotion of her children. And this was not a small consolation.

After this estrangement with his wife, Tashi Namgyal began to gradually keep himself aloof, attending to only essential matters of State. He took to painting and devoted as much time to it as remained to him after meditation, wine, and the company of some specially privileged men and women. Tragedy further struck him when his eldest son, Prince Paljor Namgyal, who had earned a commission in the Royal Indian Air Force, died in an air crash in 1941.

The bitter strife that had marked the early days of the immigration of the Nepalese into Sikkim had long ceased. Quite a few among the Bhutiya landlords still discriminated against the Nepalese, who now formed the overwhelming majority of the population. But, with the passage of time, the Nepalese peasant had carved for himself a safe niche in the village, where he lived and cultivated his acre in the greatest of amity with the

Bhutiya and Lepcha peasants. His labour had changed the very face of Sikkim, and had ensured a substantial revenue for the State coffers. The Bhutiyas and Lepchas had learnt terrace cultivation from the Nepalese immigrants.

A great majority of the Lepchas had, willy-nilly, been brought into the lamaist fold. Even these Lepchas retained, in common with their animist brethren, many rites and rituals of their pagan ancestors. The Nepalese practised a healthy form of Hinduism which, while being free from the orthodoxy and bigotry of the plainsmen, was freely laced with animism. The absence of Hindu temples served to reduce the burden of religion to a minimum on the Nepalese.

The peasants, whether Bhutiyas, Lepchas, or Nepalese, groaned under feudal oppression. Sufferers under the same yoke, there was a vague consciousness among them of their common interests.

The landlords were a class apart. Though, in course of time, some Nepalese had also become lessee landlords, the Bhutiya element predominated both as feudal and lessee landlords. In the early days of Bhutiya-Lepcha contact, and for many decades thereafter, there had been inter-marriages between the Bhutiyas and the Lepchas of the upper strata of society, from among whom developed the later aristocracy. For much of the time, the Lepcha aristocrats held their own. But time, the Lepcha common folk's inherent sense of inferiority, and Bhutiya predominance, eroded the Lepcha aristocracy's confidence. They gradually lost contact with the Lepcha masses and began to identify themselves with the Bhutiya aristocrats, called kazis. The word Lepcha-kazi came to have a derogatory meaning. Before long the Lepcha-kazis were wholly absorbed by the kazi class, and they chose to forget their Lepcha ancestry lest the stigma of supposed inferior origins should cling to their names. This, while being a great gain to the Bhutiyas, was the Lepchas' greatest loss. The Lepchas lost their very protecting arm. With the Lepcha kazis gone into the Bhutiya fold, the condition of the Lepcha peasants plummetted, as it were, into an abyss.

The Lepchas had come to be bracketed with the Bhutiyas. While the Government showed an awareness for the need of protecting the Bhutiya-Lepcha peasants from the Nepalese peasants, the exploitation of the simple Lepcha peasant by the wily, rich Bhutiya peasant and feudal landlords continued unabated. The rich and privileged Bhutiyas made full use of the monopoly in the exploitation of the Lepchas. A large number of Lepchas migrated to the surrounding hill areas of Darjeeling, where most of them came under the influence of Christian Missionaries, who introduced them to the modern world by giving them education and looking after them in other ways. At home, too, the Lepchas in considerable numbers embraced Christianity and got rid of many hadicaps that had been their lot while tied to the apron-strings of the Bhutiyas. Unfortunately, this element acquired the status of a separate entity, closer to the mixed Christian community than to the Lepcha peasant of the old stock. This further removed from among the Lepchas the cleverer members. No wonder many people thought that the Lepchas were a dying race.

Things were thus when, in August, 1947, the British left India, and their paramountcy over Sikkim, as over the Princely Indian States, lapsed. Sikkim suddenly discovered that the 20th century had arrived.

PART II

THE PRESENT

(15 August 1947 to 31 May 1973)

CHAPTER XI

Birth of Political Parties

WHILE the peasants of Sikkim were plodding along under the feudal yoke with the resignation born of oriental fatalism—nurtured by ignorance of the outside world—, very much as their forefathers had done before them, momentous changes were taking place not very far. The mighty British Empire was crumbling. The once all-powerful British had had to give in to the demands of the Indian National Congress led by the naked fakir, Gandhi. The independence of India, achieved through a non-violent struggle, was an epoch-making event in the history of mankind : it tolled the knell of colonialism and ushered in an era of freedom and self-rule for a host of Afro-Asian countries that had for long groaned under the boots of European colonialists ; and it marked the opening of a new chapter in the inter-relations among different races of mankind.

The momentous changes heralded by the independence of India on 15th August, 1947, sent shock waves into Sikkim as well. The intelligent among the peasants read in the Indian independence a message of hope for a better deal for them, too. But the ruling clique seemed to be little prepared for the changes that were inexorably knocking at the gates. While India, in the wake of her newly-won freedom, began to grapple with the problems at home and widen her contacts abroad, the people of Sikkim, under the leadership of some enlightened members of the peasantry, taking inspiration from the lofty

ideals proclaimed by the Indian leaders, sought to free themselves from the feudal bondage. It is necessary, at this stage, to examine, in some detail, the conditions obtaining in Sikkim in 1947, in order to be better able to grasp the significance of the birth of political parties in Sikkim, their struggle against feudalism, and subsequent developments. And one could not do that better than by referring to the document entitled "A few facts about Sikkim," prepared by Tashi Tshering—the foremost leader of the people's movement in Sikkim—, in 1947. The salient features of the document are reproduced below :

"Sikkim is a small Indian State tucked away in a corner of the Himalayas. Its ruler, Maharaja Sir Tashi Namgyal, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., is of Tibetan descent and so are his personal adherents called 'Kazis', who form the majority of the landlords of Sikkim. His Highness has a State Council consisting entirely of landlords and a Secretariat which is largely controlled by the landlords.....The subject people or ryots* have no voice in the administration and they have long groaned under the pernicious yoke of landlordism.

"The Kazis, who are the landlords, claim to belong to the old nobility and compare themselves with the barons of the feudal system. By long usage they have been accustomed to oppress the people and to expect the utmost subservience from them. They form the exclusive and influential coterie around the ruling family and are able to impose their will on all and sundry. The rest of the landlords, called 'Thikadars', are content to play second fiddle to the Kazis and thus share in the loaves and fishes of office and other privileges.....Bound by a common policy to oppress the ryots, the 'Thikadars', especially the more influential among them, have proved as bad as any of the Kazis. Landlordism, as obtaining in Sikkim, has proved the curse of the ryots. It has enabled the landlords, through coercion and intimidation, to acquire for themselves the best holdings of the ryots. The landlords pay no taxes, which, consequently, fall with greater severity upon the ryots. On the other hand, the landlords receive large unearned com-

*Peasants.

missions from the State as reward for carrying on a thoroughly corrupt system of government.

"The landlords are vested with magisterial powers in both civil and criminal matters. They are also empowered to register documents for the sale or transfer of landed properties. There are no effective checks on these powers and the landlords are free to abuse them for their own gains. The more fine a landlord can impose, the larger his share of spoils, for he receives one-half of the collection as his fees and the other half goes to the State. When, as has happened many times, a landlord 'forgets' to enter a fine in his books, nobody is wiser, and he appropriates the whole amount to himself. A grabbing landlord has no difficulty in dispossessing an uncompromising ryot of his cherished possession, be it a paddy field or a herd of cattle. The slightest delay in the payment of taxes, a matter of common occurrence, enables a landlord to seize the very property he has set his eye upon, to the exclusion of any other, and thus the transfer is effected speedily and very profitably to the landlord. Numerous ryots have thus been reduced to penury and practical slavery. Landlords are invested with different classes of legal powers with due regard to their merits and qualifications. But most of the landlords live away from their estates and their powers are exercised by ignorant and rapacious underlings who have no scruples about filling their own pockets besides extracting as much as they can for their masters."

The document then goes on to list the most hated form of all oppression, forced labour :

"There are various forms of forced labour to which the ryots are subjected. About twenty years ago a notification was said to have been issued, based on International Conventions, announcing the abolition of forced labour. This notification was never explained to the ryots and the practice was never stopped, let alone abolished. It is carried on to this day.....Forced labour with minimum, often without any, compensation is usually exacted by the landlords when cultivating their extensive, mostly ill-gotten, private fields and when

harvesting their crops. So far the ryots have grudgingly submitted to this kind of exaction through fear of punishment. But such exactions of late have become manifold on account of the ever-increasing farming and gardening interests of the landlords, which allow the ryots scarcely any time to attend to their own affairs. Most of the influential landlords, who hold important posts in the administration, live at Gangtok. Their estates may be two or three days' journey away. From there the ryots have to come all the way to Gangtok and serve their landlords in turn in various menial capacities. The ryots get no wages or compensations for such services, and they are lucky if they escape cruelties. The exaction of this kind of service at all times, often accompanied by cruelties, is peculiar to the Kazi landlord.

"Forced labour is often requisitioned on behalf of the State for carrying loads across the passes (over 15,000 feet) into Tibetan territory. To the ryot this means an absence of at least a week from home, besides having to provide himself with warm clothing at prohibitive cost. What he will earn as wages under the prescribed rates for forced labour would barely suffice to buy his meagre meal for the journey to and fro. No wonder the ryot would be only too glad to escape from this liability for a price. The landlord bleeds him to the limit before freeing him from his obligation, and sends his own private mules to carry the loads, for which he is doubly recompensed. A greedy landlord often seizes upon his chance of making further easy money and calls for double the number of men actually required. For instance, when only 20 men are requisitioned by the State, he would call for 40 men, thus doubling his own extortionate demand from the ignorant and unsuspecting ryots."

In every revolution some sign, some symbol, comes to occupy a pre-eminent position. And that particular sign or symbol becomes the watchword for the masses. In Sikkim the people's sufferings, their woes, trials, and tribulations came to be symbolized by Kalo Bhari*. The document continues :

*Black load.

"Kalo Bhari was the name given to a special consignment compactly packed in black tarpaulin, which gave the name. Huge quantities of these loads were transported overland to China via Tibet during the later part of the war (World War II). Such was the demand for transport for this purpose that the wages offered reached unprecedented heights. The cupidity of the landlords rose in unison and they stooped to swindling. They falsely requisitioned 'forced labour on the authority of the State' to carry these loads. A very large number of these loads belonged to private concerns which transported them to Tibet in collusion with the landlords. So high was the profit on these goods that these business concerns offered four or five times the wages prescribed for forced labour. The landlords charged the private concerns the highest rates, paid the ryots the prescribed rates, and pocketed the rest. Simultaneously went on the old game of requisitioning far more than the State's requirement, and pocketing the money that came in when the ryots could find enough to buy off their obligation to the State.....Such blatant deception could not, however, remain concealed for long. When they learnt about it, the victims of the swindle approached the powers-that-be for redress. As the culprits were all 'high-born' Kazis, the matter was hushed up, and the aggrieved ryots were sent away with a facile advice to 'let bygones be bygones and to forgive and forget'."

The foregoing clearly brings out the fact that there was enough revolutionary tinder to blow up the whole feudal fabric of Sikkim. During the British hegemony, imperial interests had overruled any probe under the surface. Now that revolutionary leaders had taken over in India, and Sikkim was, to all intents and purposes, a part of the new dispensation, the spark was provided. Yet events in Sikkim did not follow a revolutionary course. By themselves the Sikkimese peasants were too ignorant, too unorganized, to think of collective action to remove the curse of oppression and iniquity that had always been their lot.

The Maharaja and the coterie surrounding him had become aware of the changes imminent in India. In 1946 the State Council had been expanded to include three new members, 1 representative from each of the three communities of Sikkim, the Lepchas, the Bhutiyas, and the Nepalese. The three new

members were incapable of bringing about even the most insignificant change in the outlook of the administration.

People who could think in terms of the future of Sikkim were convinced that no improvement in the lot of the peasantry could be imagined so long as the curse of landlordism sat heavy on the body-politic of Sikkim. Abolition of landlordism, therefore, became one of the cardinal aims of the peasantry wherever articulate groups of peasants met and deliberated.

Soon after the independence of India three political parties sprang up in Sikkim with ill-defined programmes, no cohesive course of action, and no set goal. But their very presence was a great leap forward inasmuch as by the very fact of their being political parties they proclaimed a challenge to the old order, in itself a tremendous advance.

At Gangtok, the capital, the Praja Sudharak Samaj was formed with Tashi Tshering, Sonam Tshering and Kezang Tenzing as its leading lights. A second party, the Praja Sammelan, was formed at Temi Tarku, west of river Tista, under the leadership of Gobardhan Pradhan and Dhan Bahadur Tewari. Further west, at Chakhung, the Praja Mandal was formed by Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa, himself a member of the landlord family. The Praja Sudharak Samaj of Gangtok had the benefit of the seasoned counsels of Tashi Tshering, who alone of all the champions of change had good education, understood politics and administration, and had the gifts of being able to articulate his views. The Gangtok party decided to hold a public meeting at Gangtok football ground—then known as the polo ground—on the 7th of December, 1947. The other two parties from Temi Tarku and Chakhung were invited to participate. Tashi Tshering composed his "A few facts about Sikkim" in English, which was translated into Nepali by Chandra Das Rai, who also took it upon himself to cyclostyle enough copies for distribution among the masses.

On 7th December, 1947, all roads led to the polo ground, where the peasants of Sikkim were holding their first public meeting under the auspices of political parties. And on that day the people of Sikkim heard their first political speeches. And the speeches were no baby-talk. In strident voices the

speakers dealt with the past sufferings of the people, the iniquities heaped on them by the administration, and the cumulative sins of the landlords. And all of them talked of change, wholesale revolutionary change. And the people released their pent-up feelings by lustily cheering speaker after speaker.

The main speakers were Tashi Tshering, Sonam Tshering, Roy Choudhry, Mrs. Helen Lepcha, and Chandra Das Rai. Roy Choudhry was a Bengalee, who had first entered Sikkim in the saffron robes of a mendicant to carry out his self-imposed task of uniting the peasants to fight against feudal tyranny. Mrs. Helen Lepcha hailed from Darjeeling, where she was an active social worker. Sonam Tshering had already taken a leading part in exposing the fraud and swindling that went with 'Kalo Bhari'. Tashi Tshering was looked upon as the guiding spirit of the whole people's movement. He was held in respect not only by the people and his political colleagues but also by the highest in the land.

Appearing with these stalwarts was a young man, Chandra Das Rai, 24, from Namchi. He was asked to read the Nepali version of the paper, 'A few facts about Sikkim', which he did with gusto, lacing his reading with witty remarks. The crescendo of applause that followed his speech marked him as a budding hero in the inchoate politics of Sikkim. All the speeches were in the Nepali language, the language of an overwhelming majority of the population and the lingua franca of Sikkim.

Later that evening, the three parties formally merged together and formed a new party, called the Sikkim State Congress. Tashi Tshering was elected President of the party. It was decided that a five-member delegation should call on the Maharaja and present the 'three-fold' demand of the Sikkim State Congress. The three-fold demand read :

"(a) Abolition of landlordism ;

(b) formation of an interim government as a necessary precursor of a democratic and responsible government ; and

(c) accession of Sikkim to the Indian Union."

A very distinctive feature of the political upsurge in Sikkim was that there was no section of the population immune from the fever of politics. The peasants, members of the police,

government servants in the administration, and, to cap it all, even the landlords, were drawn into the vortex of politics.

The five-member delegation under the leadership of Tashi Tshering met the Maharaja on 9th December, 1947, and presented the three-fold demand formulated on the 7th December. The Maharaja could no longer afford to ignore the popular demand lest the mounting fury of the 'winds of change' should sweep away his shaky house, which stood on the supports provided by the crumbling structure of a society based on anachronistic feudal privileges and prerogatives. He promised to immediately curtail the powers of the landlords and assured the delegation of eventual abolition of landlordism. As for the second item of the demand, he agreed to accept three nominees of the State Congress to function as 'Secretaries to His Highness the Maharaja of Sikkim' as an interim arrangement until popular modes of sending representatives to the State Council were evolved after due deliberations. The third part of the demand, namely, Sikkim's accession to India, was allowed, by common consent, to hang fire.

The Congress party nominated three members, one each from the three communities, to function as secretaries to the Maharaja. The Maharaja, by acceding to the most urgent parts of the demand, at least in principle, was successful in buying time. And time in such a fluid situation was of paramount importance. The three secretaries soon completely indentified themselves with the administrative machinery ; so complete was their conversion that they forgot their origin or the source of their new-found powers and indulged in the exercise of power in a fashion that put to shame some of the hardiest of the kazis. Asked by the party High Command to quit their offices and come back to the party, the secretaries chose to stick to their offices. This attitude of Sikkim's first politicians was later to burgeon in a national proclivity and was symptomatic of a malaise that was to afflict Sikkim politics time and again.

The Maharaja and the kazi landlords had not remained passive spectators of the changing scene. Even if they had chosen to rest content with watching the tide of events, the British Political Officer would be failing in his imperial duties if he missed the opportunity to do his bit to create confusion, if

not trouble, in the wake of the departure of the British from India. While the highest British authorities in London had made up their minds about quitting the Indian sub-continent, a large number of the minions of the Empire had found it difficult to reconcile themselves to the liquidation of the Empire—which the independence of India signally heralded—, which, in other words, meant the reduction of British power among the nations of the world. It was, indeed, a bitter pill to swallow for a generation raised on the heady tunes of "Rule Britannia." So the smaller fry tried to put a spoke in the wheel of future free India whenever and wherever they could. In Sikkim, on the advice of the Political Officer, the Maharaja had taken steps, as early as January, 1947, to win back for himself what his ancestors had lost to the British over the past hundred and some odd years. Though the British themselves had converted Sikkim virtually into one of the princely Indian States, they wanted to give her as much freedom as possible from future Indian influence following upon the independence of that country.

In January, 1947, a Sikkimese delegation composed of the Maharajkumar, Palden Thondup Namgyal, and Rai Bahadur T.D. Densapa, Private Secretary to the Maharaja, had held a series of meetings with the Government of India and Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, then Vice-President in the Viceroy's Council. The delegates, thanks largely to the seasoned political counsels from the Political Officer, had been able to get the Constituent Assembly to recognise the special position of Sikkim (and Bhutan). This achievement was of no mean order inasmuch as Sikkim secured for herself a position outside the pale of the five hundred and odd princely states. This, as the future was to show, ensured her continued existence as a separate entity while the Indian States, many of them far larger in size, population, and revenue, than Sikkim, were absorbed in the Indian Union. Sikkim thus came within the range of subjects dealt with, in independent India, by Jawaharlal Nehru, the idealist, and escaped the fatal embraces of the iron-man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was the main architect of the integration of the princely states into the Indian Union.

Encouraged by the success of talks in Delhi, the Maharaja of Sikkim had also staked a claim for the retrocession of Darjeeling

on the day India was granted independence. The services of a Bengali Bar-at-Law had been secured to prepare Sikkim's case. The document prepared by the Barrister was entitled "Memorandum of the Government of Sikkim : Claims in respect of Darjeeling". It stated that Darjeeling had been presented to the British for a specific purpose and that sovereignty over the territory still remained with the Sikkim ruler. It contended that "the grant made by the Raja of Sikkim to the British Government was personal to the British Government, and must, therefore, cease to have any validity in the eye of the law on the termination of British authority in India." Quoting chapter and verse from International Law, the document stated "India was a new juristic person which could not claim to be subrogated to the rights and obligations of the British Government." The Memorandum also said :

"The Government of Sikkim would like to add that if the successive Government in India desire to come to an arrangement with the State of Sikkim in respect of the territories, they would be fully prepared to consider any reasonable proposals in this behalf but justice and equity demand that the legal rights of the ruler of Sikkim should be fully recognised."

This had come to the Indian leaders as a bombshell. Fortunately, the matter had been deferred to an indefinite future as much at the Indian leaders' instance as at Sikkim's when some Sikkimese had realised that, even if the British helped Sikkim get Darjeeling back, Sikkim was ill-prepared to assume control of the territory. Darjeeling, it had been realised, would be too big a mouthful to swallow and the problems the retrocession of Darjeeling was likely to engender were of such dimensions as might pose a threat to the very existence of the Sikkim establishment.

The simmering discontent of the people in Sikkim had given birth to the State Congress and its three-fold demand. One can only speculate what would have happened if the people of Darjeeling had lent their full weight to the demand for Sikkim's accession to India, should Darjeeling have been restored to Sikkim on 15 August, 1947.

At home the demands of the Sikkim State Congress backed by a great majority of the people, became more insistent, louder, and wider. The administrative machinery lacked the capability to meet the challenges, nor could it bring itself to make adjustments demanded by the changing times. On 27th February, 1948, a Standstill Agreement was signed between the Governments of Sikkim and India whereby "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 Durbar pending the conclusion of a new agreement or treaty*. Both sides needed time, the Indian Government to study and gauge the intrinsic strength of the Sikkim Durbar, and the latter to address itself to cope with the political storm that was slowly but surely brewing in the kingdom.

*Coelho, V.H. : *Sikkim and Bhutan.* New Delhi ; I.C.C.R., p. 26

CHAPTER XII

Agitations

THE signing of the 'Standstill Agreement' with India gave the Maharaja and his close associates the time to apply their energies towards the solution of problems created by the Sikkim State Congress. Not only did the Congress demand the removal of feudal privileges—which could have no other meaning than the weakening of the forces that formed the Maharaja's main prop—but also the accession of Sikkim to India. The last demand was the product of despair, for while it clearly showed that the Congress leadership lacked the confidence to run the affairs of the State, it also smacked of anti-national feelings inasmuch as the accession of Sikkim to India meant, in the ultimate analysis, the absorption of Sikkim by India.

The Maharajkumar and a group of landlords mobilised their considerable resources and mustered a number of Bhutiyas, Lepchas, and Nepalese, with a view to forming a new political party, the Sikkim National Party, to oppose the Sikkim State Congress. On 30th April, 1948, the S.N.P. adopted the following resolutions :

"Resolved that with regard to the question of abolition of landlordism in Sikkim, the party should approach His Highness the Maharaja in writing, praying for an early consideration. It has been unanimously agreed that a time-honoured institution, like the one in question, cannot be suddenly wiped out of

existence, root and branch, without giving rise to grave consequences....."

The first resolution was a direct challenge to the popular demand voiced by the State Congress. It also brought into focus the people whom the National Party sought to represent. The next resolution, understandably, went on to oppose the formation of a popular responsible government. The most important resolution, however, was the one that dealt with the question of Sikkim's accession to India :

"Resolved that Sikkim shall not, under any circumstances, accede to the Dominion of India. The arguments levelled against the accession of Sikkim (to India) have been found numerous, of which the weighty ones are :

"(*a*) Historically, socially, culturally, and linguistically, Sikkim has close affinities with Bhutan and Tibet.

"(*b*) From geographical and ethnic points of view, Sikkim is not a part of India. She has only political relation with India, which was more or less imposed on her.

"(*c*) The religion of Sikkim is 'Mahayana Buddhism', which is the established religion of Tibet and Bhutan. Hence from religious point of view also she is quite distinct from India....."

The resolution went on to record the party's determination to keep Sikkim out of the Indian Union and quoted the Chinese symbolism of the blending of five colours, *i.e.*, China, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan.....

The resolution further stated, "Taking into account the various vital points specified above, the party firmly resolves that necessary arrangements should forthwith be made to revise Sikkim's political relation with the Indian Union on the basis of equality....."

The emergence of the National Party, backed as it was by the most strongly entrenched elements of the Sikkimese society, enjoying the Maharaja's patronage—assured by the Maharajkumar's active part in organising the party and in defining its role—, posed a serious challenge to the incipient people's movement launched by the State Congress. It now

became clear that the citadel of feudalism was determined to make a stand against the onslaught of the people. The mettle of the Congress leadership was put to the test. Some of its leaders, like the three secretaries to the Maharaja, had amply demonstrated their weak resistance to the temptation of power and privilege and the opportunity for self-aggrandizement that went with it.

The State Congress had also developed a canker that was gnawing at its very vitals. Some unscrupulous elements had found in the movement a money spinner. Taking help from equally unscrupulous collaborators, they had formed sham branches of the Congress Party, posing themselves as the leaders appointed by the Party High Command, and collecting money for the 'party fund'. Such was the people's enthusiasm, and such their faith and trust in Tashi Tshering, the acknowledged Supremo of the State Congress, that the people contributed unstintingly to the 'party fund' of these frauds. Where people were niggardly, the self-appointed leaders levied 'voluntary' contributions. These frauds had a field day. When this state of affairs was brought to the notice of Tashi Tshering, he immediately launched a drive that sought to enlighten the people on the Congress programme, highlighting the role the people were expected to play in securing their emancipation from the clutches of feudal tyranny. Proper branch offices in different parts of Sikkim were opened with a view to broadening the party base. Accredited and popular leaders were sent in batches to spread the Congress gospel. To the Sikkimese peasants in remote villages, unused as they were to the functioning of any political party, the speeches of the visiting leaders came as a marvel, remarkable as much for their novelty as for their seditious content. Some of these visiting leaders fell foul of the 'fund-collecting' leaders and were beaten up. But, by and large, the drive was a success and the peasants of Sikkim were thoroughly aroused and motivated for the coming struggle against feudalism.

An Extraordinary General Meeting of the State Congress was held on 22nd October, 1948, at Namchi, West Sikkim, with a view to reviewing the achievements and failures of the

party and, more important, to devising ways and means to counter the threat to the democratic aspirations of the people posed by the National Party, which, as was generally known, had the active support of the Sikkim Durbar.

The National Party had also been busy trying to wean the masses away from the Congress fold by the numerous means at its disposal. The Congress was denigrated as the collection of the agents of India who were intent on selling their motherland.

Despite the National Party propaganda, the people's response to the Congress call at Namchi was tremendous, and thousands attended the open General Meeting. The Congress passed three main resolutions, among others. The first of these emphatically reiterated the party's demand for the abolition of landlordism and the establishment of a responsible government. The question of Sikkim's accession to India was subjected to a vigorous re-examination, especially in view of the charges levelled by the National Party. The overwhelming consensus was that Sikkim's salvation lay in her merger with India. The second resolution, therefore, reiterated the party's demand for Sikkim's accession to India. The third resolution authorised the President and the General Secretary of the party to visit Delhi at the earliest opportunity to hold talks with Indian leaders in the Government and in the Indian National Congress.

In December, 1948, Tashi Tshering and Chandra Das Rai visited Delhi and held talks with the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other leaders. They were assured by Prime Minister Nehru that the voice of the people would be regarded as the supreme authority in shaping the destiny of Sikkim.

More than a year had rolled by since the inception of the State Congress and the formulation of its demands. None of the demands had been met by the Maharaja. The partial accommodation of the people's demands for a responsible government by means of the appointment of the three secretaries to the Maharaja had been a costly experiment inasmuch as

the loyalty of the secretaries had visibly shifted from the people to the Establishment and one of them had gone over to the National Party. Despite the initial resistance of the secretaries, they had finally been prevailed upon to submit their resignations. The situation had reverted to status quo ante 7 December, 1947. After the formation of the National Party, the attitude of the Maharaja had been one of wait and see. Maharaja Tashi Namgyal, after the two bitter shocks of his wife's estrangement and his eldest son's death, took only superficial interest in the affairs of the State. Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal (born 1923) had increasingly become the de facto ruler. The National Party resolutions mirrored his outlook. He was in no haste to oblige the State Congress by acceding to its demands.

Back from Delhi with the assurances of Nehru, Tashi Tshering realised that there had to be some demonstration of the people's determination to fight for their legitimate rights, given expression in the party resolutions, in order to drive home to the ruler that he could not get away with it just by continuing to ignore the popular demands. So he decided upon holding the first Annual Conference of the Party at Rangpo, on the Indo-Sikkim border. It was widely publicised that the Annual Conference would determine the steps to be taken in order to compel the Government to take action on the popular demands.

Some five thousand people—a large number in view of Sikkim's population and the total absence of any other means of transportation than one's feet—gathered at Rangpo in February, 1949, for the Annual Conference of the State Congress. Tashi Tshering launched the 'No-Rent' campaign, asking the people not to pay the land revenue and other taxes until their demands were met by the Sikkim Durbar. The launching of the campaign had been done in open defiance of the Sikkim Government, which had, some days earlier, issued a notification banning the assembly of people for political purposes. The large attendance at the Rangpo Conference had itself been a defiance of the notification. The people were in a mood for confrontation with the Government. And the 'No-Rent' campaign was something the people understood with the awareness that the success or failure of the movement

depended entirely on the efforts. The movement, by its very nature, demanded the whole peasantry's participation.

The Annual Conference concluded on 6th February, 1949. Two days later Chandra Das Rai and five other Congress leaders were arrested for having defied the Government notification banning political assemblies, while the warrant of arrest against Tashi Tshering was not executed, for the brave old man had literally turned his home into his castle and had dared anybody to arrest him. And none took up the challenge. Fully armed, his courage and temper kept high by Scotch, the old man fumed and fretted in his room like a caged lion, while the arrest of the Congress leaders had acted like a signal for the people to converge on Gangtok. People began to stream in, in groups large and small.

The Sikkim Government, apprehensive of public disorder, clamped curfew on Gangtok town. On 9th February, a 5,000-strong procession defied the curfew. The Indian Political Officer in Sikkim, Harishwar Dayal, advised the Government to withdraw the warrant of arrest against Tashi Tshering, In the meanwhile people continued to arrive from all over Sikkim. On 11th February the number of demonstrators had swelled to 7,000, a number seen for the first time in Gangtok. In sympathy with the arrested leaders of the State Congress, the business community went on an indefinite strike. On 12th February, the arrested leaders were released unconditionally.

The first round of confrontation between the State Congress and the Sikkim Government ended in the victory of the people. This greatly stimulated the ardour of the people. It was, to the down-trodden people of Sikkim, like the first taste of the people's strength in a united action. They were now braced for a greater ordeal. However, the Congress movement was suspended at the instance of Harishwar Dayal, who assured the Congress leaders that he would help both parties, the Maharaja and the Congress, find a workable formula. As the Political Officer was the representative of India—whose leaders had unequivocally stood for the rights of the people—and hence in a position to dictate terms to the ruler if need be, the Congress leaders had full faith in the bona fides of Harishwar Dayal.

The negotiations that followed were not successful. The Congress Committee decided to resume the agitation. The time-honoured weapon of 'Satyagraha,'* perfected and used with such outstanding success in India by Gandhi, was adopted by the Sikkim State Congress as its sword and shield.

On 1st May, 1949, ten thousand people gathered at Gangtok to offer Satyagraha. Early in the morning a 3,000-strong procession went up to the palace, shouting slogans like "Down with the landlords", "Long live democracy", "People's rule is a must", etc. The Maharaja fled to the 'Residency'. The Maharajkumar came out in a jeep, only to find that the road leading to the palace gate was full of demonstrating squatters. Two Congress leaders barred the onward progress of the jeep by crossing Congress flags. The Maharajkumar was compelled to get down and traverse the distance to the gate on foot amidst ear-splitting slogans.

It had now become clear that the continued defiance of the popular will could only aggravate the situation. The Sikkim Durbar had to yield some ground if it did not want to face a worse situation. On the advice of the Political Officer, the Maharaja agreed to form a 'Popular Ministry' under the Chief Ministership of Tashi Tshering.

History was made in Sikkim when a five-member Council of Ministers, composed of three Congress nominees and two Durbar nominees, took oaths of office and secrecy on 9 May, 1949, heralding the beginning of a new chapter and closing the dark feudal chapter for ever.

*Satyagraha—struggle based on truth.

CHAPTER XIII

India Intervenes

THE formation of the 'Popular Ministry' in Sikkim on May 9, 1949, marked an important milestone in the people's march on the road to democracy. Within the brief span of a year and five months, the State Congress had scored a major victory over the ruling house and the coterie of vested interests and reactionaries who had formed the National Party. But the ministers had a far from smooth course. They realized that, in the absence of clearly defined powers, they were hamstrung by the Sikkim Durbar, which was as adamant as ever in maintaining the status quo. While the Congress nominees in the ministry felt that they had a clear mandate from the people to go ahead with the abolition of landlordism, forced labour, and house-tax, the Sikkim Durbar was equally committed to ensure their continuance. Both sides assumed uncompromising stances, and the experiment of co-operation between the Maharaja and the people's representatives appeared to be doomed right from the start.

As it became obvious to Tashi Tshering that the formation of the ministry had been agreed to by the Sikkim Durbar more with a view to discrediting the Congress leaders in the ministry than allowing them to carry out the people's mandate, he threatened to quit the ministry and resume Satyagraha. New Delhi sent Dr. B. V. Keskar, Deputy Minister for External Affairs, to mediate between the Maharaja and the State Congress. Dr. B. V. Keskar came to Gangtok towards the end of

May, 1949. He met the ministers on two occasions and had frank discussions with them.

He also met the Maharaja, the Maharajkumar, and the leaders of the National Party. During his four days' stay, the Sikkim Durbar went all out to dazzle Dr. Keskar with Sikkim's royal hospitality and loaded him with costly presents. On May 27 he left Gangtok without being successful in patching up the differences.

What Dr. Keskar had been up to came to light on 6th June, when the Political Officer, Harishwar Dayal, summoned peremptorily all the five ministers to his office in the 'Residency' and bluntly told them that he was dismissing the ministry in the name of the Government of India and taking over the administration of Sikkim himself. Stunned by the sudden turn of events, the ministers shuffled out of the Political Officer's office.

There was not a note of protest from any quarter. The Maharaja was rid of the ministers, who had shown themselves too radical for his taste. He was advised by the Government of India to appoint a Dewan, of course an Indian, to head the administration. This the Maharaja welcomed with a sense of gratitude to India. So implicit had been the faith, trust, and confidence of the State Congress, from the ordinary peasant to Tashi Tshering, in the leaders of the Indian National Congress, particularly Prime Minister Nehru—who was regarded as much a demi-god by the Sikkimese as by his own people—, that they accepted the rude dismissal of Sikkim's first people's ministry by the Government of India with perfect equanimity.

The State Congress, however, sent a delegation under Tashi Tshering to Delhi to ascertain the views and future policy of the Government of India *vis-a-vis* the people of Sikkim. 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 (in Sikkim). Towards achieving this goal of a stable government, the Indian Government intended to cooperate more closely in bringing about the increasing association of the Sikkimese

people with their government. The Indian Dewan was appointed with this in mind."*

The unmistakable change in the tenor of language used by members of the Government of India gave a jolt to Tashi Tshering. He was deeply hurt, and he returned from Delhi a shaken, thoroughly disillusioned man. It was as if the very fount of his faith had dried up. In an article entitled "Dewan's Rule in Sikkim", written some months later, he gave expression to his aggrieved feelings on the dismissal of the popular ministry in the following words :

"During the brief term of office of the popular ministry (May 9 to June 6, 1949) an attempt was made to introduce certain indispensable reforms with a view to rescuing the administration from the chaos into which it had fallen; but the well-meant efforts of the ministry were misconstrued and stoutly resisted by the Maharaja. All of a sudden, as a result of a secret understanding between the Maharaja and the Politieal Officer, the ministry was dissolved and the administration taken over by the Government of India. Since then the people have never ceased to clamour for the restoration of the ministry which, they probably rightly aver, was wrongly dismissed."

J.S. Lall, who belonged to the Indian Civil Service, took over the administration on 11 August, 1949, with unfettered powers that exceeded even the sweeping powers of the first British Political Officer; for while the British Political Officer had been appointed by the British, and against the wishes of the ruler, Lall had been appointed by the Maharaja of Sikkim on the advice of the Government of India.

Lall, on taking over the administration from Harishwar Dayal, found it in a mess. No land revenue had been collected because of the 'No-Rent' campaign. And land revenue constituted the prime source of the State's income. Lall mobilised the entire administration for the collection of land revenue.

The State Congress had not quite reconciled itself to the dismissal of the ministry. The 'No-Rent' campaign had not been called off by the Party, and the Party was a force to be

*V. H. Coelho : *Sikkim and Bhutan*, p. 28.

reckoned with in Sikkim. It took Lall some time to realize that, without the cooperation of the State Congress, revenue collection would be a difficult task. He got a first-hand experience of the people's mood when, during his visit to Namchi, he had to face a 3,000-strong crowd of demonstrators led by Chandra Das Rai and Nayan Tshering Lepcha. Lall was too experienced an administrator to miss the Congress influence over the people. He had also known the trust reposed by the Congress leaders in the Indian Government and its representatives. He took the opportunity to discuss frankly with the Congress leaders their terms for cooperation with the administration. The Congress wanted the immediate abolition of forced labour and house-tax before calling off the 'No-Rent' campaign. Lall, with one stroke of the pen, abolished forced labour and house-tax. The Congress cooperated, and, before long, land revenue was collected without any more difficulty.

While Lall applied himself to organising the administration along modern lines, the Government of India felt that it was time to give a definite formal shape to Indo-Sikkim relations, which were governed by the Standstill Agreement of 1948. Indo-Sikkim treaty negotiations started in the latter half of 1949.

In 1947-48 the Indian Government had signed Standstill Agreement with Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. The fact that the Standstill Agreement had bracketed Sikkim with Nepal and Bhutan, the first an independent country and the second nearly so, had greatly raised the status of Sikkim. But much water had flowed down the Tista since then. There was internal strife. The people's will and the ruler's had clashed. An Indian adiministrator was virtually ruling Sikkim following upon the failure of the ruler and the popular ministry to reach an understanding. Even as the treaty negotiations were proceeding, Peking radio announced in October, 1949, that Tibet was a part of China and that the People's Liberation Army would march into Tibet to liberate the Tibetans from foreign imperialists.

There were no foreign imperialists in Tibet with the exception of India, who had inherited from the British some special privileges. The radio announcement took Delhi by complete sur-

prise. India's relations with the cis-Himalayan States needed a new appraisal. Bhutan had already signed a treaty agreement with India, patterned after the Anglo-Bhutan Treaty. And now Sikkim, so tiny and weak, was negotiating for a treaty.

The treaty negotiations had almost reached final stages when, in March, 1950, representatives of the political parties were invited to Delhi for talks. As has been amply brought out, the Sikkim State Congress was wholly subservient to the leaders of the Indian National Congress, the rulers in Delhi—the very name of the party, its flag, and constitution had all come from the Indian National Congress ; the leaders donned the white Gandhi cap, and the Sikkimese Congressmen considered their party, in all practical matters, a branch of the parent Indian organisation—, and, as such, the Congress leaders were more or less bound to endorse everything the Government of India put forward. On the other hand, the National Party had no separate will or interest other than that of the ruler and the vested interests. There was one more political party, the Praja Sammelan, which, even after its merger into the State Congress, had somehow contrived to maintain itself as a distinct political entity; it had no following among the people and its few leaders, who were at once the leaders and the led, were not very sure what exactly the party stood for. If anything, this party shared with the State Congress some common principles.

On 20th March, 1950, a press release was issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, which is reproduced below :—

"The Government of India have had consultations with the Maharajkumar of Sikkim and the representatives of the political parties in Sikkim, who were invited recently to Delhi. 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 has been reached as regards the future relationship of Sikkim with India and decisions have also been taken regarding the administration.

"As regards the status of Sikkim it has been agreed that Sikkim will continue to be a protectorate of India. The Government of India will continue to be responsible for its external relations, defence, and communications. This is as much in the interests of the security of the State as of India and is dictated by the facts of geography. As regards internal government, the State will continue to enjoy autonomy subject to the ultimate responsiblity of the Government of India for the maintenance of good administration and law and order.

"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 progressive association of the people of the State with its Government, a 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 Maharajkumar 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. A formal treaty is expected to be signed between the Maharaja of Sikkim and the Government of India at an early date."

The Dewan of Sikkim set about to implement the promises in the press release by forming an Advisory Council with himself as the President.

Two Congress nominees and two National Party nominees joined the Council. The Praja Sammelan chose to remain aloof. The Advisory Council could not function smoothly owing to the diametrically opposite views of the two parties represented in it.

The "terms agreed upon" that the Maharajkumar brought back with him were found a bit too tough. It took many months before the Maharaja and his advisers realized that

they had no choice but to accept the treaty as it was. The Government of India also could not brook further delay. The Chinese were advancing towards East Tibet, and India could ill-afford to let Indo-Sikkim relations remain vague and ill-defined. On 5th December, 1950, the Indo-Sikkim Treaty was signed by the Indian Political Officer, Harishwar Dayal, and the Maharaja of Sikkim, Sir Tashi Namgyal, at a small ceremony held in the palace chapel.*

The Treaty of thirteen articles came into effect the very day it was signed. Sikkim's status as an Indian Protectorate was confirmed. Defence, External Affairs, Customs and Communications of Sikkim became India's responsibility. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty gave India far more sweeping powers over Sikkim than the 1861 Treaty had given the British. The Government of India agreed to pay Rs. 300,000 ($ 40,000) per annum to Sikkim so long as the terms of the Treaty were duly observed by the Government of Sikkim. The Supreme Court of India was to be the last arbiter in case of any dispute in the interpretation of the terms of the Treaty.

Nobody was more thoroughly disillusioned than the leaders of the Sikkim State Congress by the Treaty. The internal autonomy granted to Sikkim was, to all intents and purposes, granted to the Maharaja. The establishment of responsible government, people's participation in the administration, etc., were nowhere mentioned. The Treaty totally ignored the aspirations of the people. The Congress leaders were shocked once again. They boycotted the State Banquet given by the Maharaja to mark the occasion of the signing of the Indo-Sikkim Treaty.

The Working Committee of the Congress held an emergency meeting and passed a resolution reiterating their demand for the establishment of a representative government functioning in accordance with democratic principles. The Working Committee also decided to send a delegation to Delhi to voice their disappointment.

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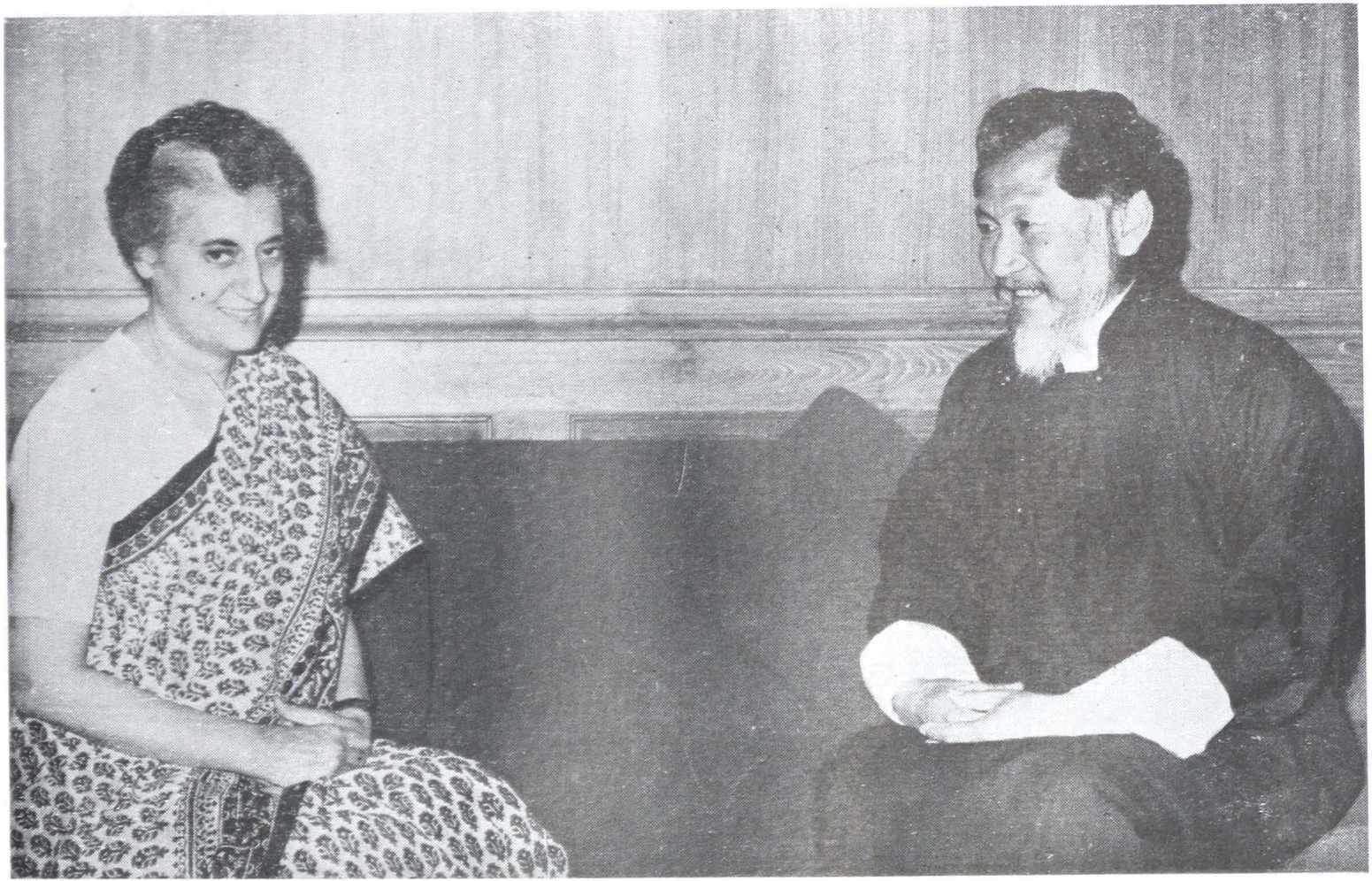
*For full text of the Treaty see Appendix 'E'.

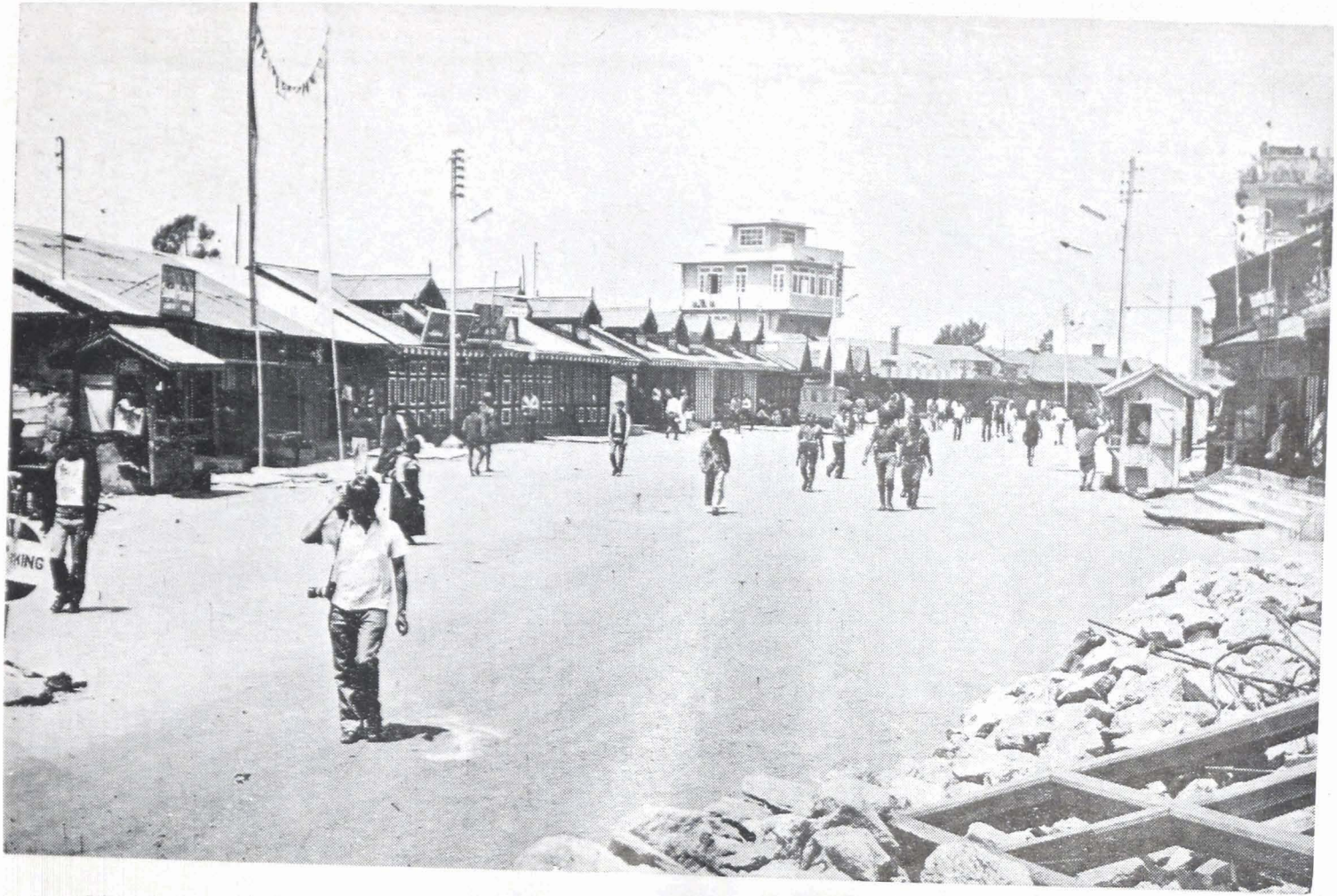
The 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty marks a shift in the policy of the Indian Government *vis-a-vis* Sikkim. Thereafter it became the concern of the Indian Government to maintain stability and status quo, and all high-sounding talks of associating the people with the Government were tempered by a policy of keeping the Maharaja happy.

The Sikkim State Congress leadership was too dazed by the unexpected turn of events, and that with such rapid succession, to take stock of the situation and reorient its policies by trying to strike roots in the native soil. The Indian patronage had been taken for granted, and now it was no longer available to them. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty had demolished their pet notions at one blast.

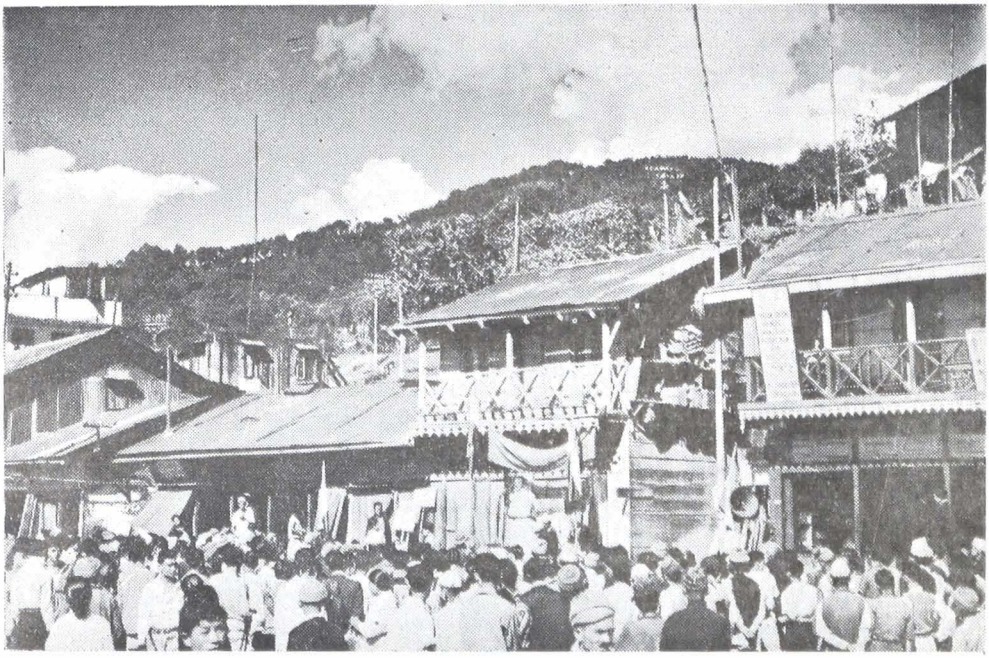
In the wake of the Treaty, the Government of Sikkim and the Government of India exchanged some secret correspondence that made deep inroads into the 'internal autonomy' granted to Sikkim. This correspondence, known as the 'Exchange of Letters', had come to have a sinister connotation in the minds of the Sikkimese people. It was widely known that should occasion demand, the Government of India could freely interfere in the internal administration of Sikkim.



The Chogyal of Sikkim with the Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi, at the Prime Minister's house in Delhi.



'After the revolt' Gangtok town wears a deserted look. Indian Army troops are seen patrolling the streets.

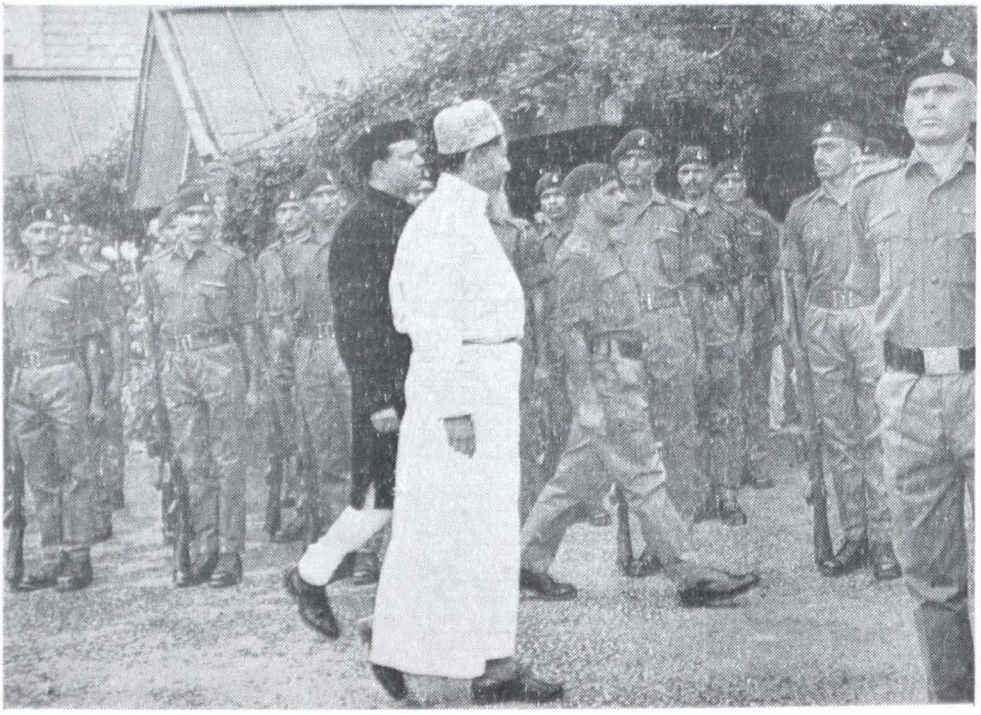


Kazi Lhendup Dorji addressing a meeting of the Sikkim National Congress at Gangtok

Brihaspati Parsai, a veteran State Congress leader, addressing his party meeting at Gangtok

Kazi Lhendup Dorji, President of the Sikkim National Congress, and his Belgian-born wife, Kazini Elisa Maria Dorji of Chakhung.

The Chogyal of Sikkim and the Indian Political officer, K. S. Bajpai, inspecting a Guard of Honour presented by Indian troops at an Independence Day Function at the India House, Gangtok.



CHAPTER XIV

First Elections

THE clamour of the Sikkim State Congress for a popular representative government gradually receded into the background. The main factors responsible for this had been the Indo-Sikkim Treaty, the Dewan's administration—which in fact meant that the Government of India itself had taken over the administration —,and the party's subservient allegiance to India and the Indian National Congress. The party had been inundated by a host of new leaders. Chandra Das Rai, the young firebrand, had been removed from the political scene by the Dewan, who had sent him to complete his education at the Benaras Hindu University. Of the leaders who had fostered the growth of the State Congress since its inception, only old Tashi Tshering remained on the stage. A great majority of the new leaders had been attracted by the promise of vast opportunities that had seemed so easy and so within reach in the first flush of apparent Congress victories over the established order. The new-comers were unhampered by any idealistic foibles. Unsettled by the trend set by the Indo-Sikkim Treaty, this group was on the lookout for opportunities under the new dispensation. And it was into the hands of this group that the reins of Congress leadership were fast slipping.

Panchayat elections were held in December, 1950. These elections were boycotted by the National Party on the grounds that the interests of the "indigenous population" had not been safeguarded. By indigenous population the National Party

meant the Bhutiyas and Lepchas. The Nepalese, it was argued by the leaders of the National Party, were later immigrants, while the Bhutiyas and the Lepchas, by virtue of their having already settled in Sikkim when the Nepalese were unknown, were classified as indigenous population. The Lepchas, as arbitrarily, were bracketed with the Bhutiyas. At that time, as even now, the Nepalese formed more than 75% of the population and the Bhutiyas and Lepchas together formed the remaining 25%. The National Party now openly shed its nationalistic pretensions and emerged as the proclaimed champion of the Bhutiya-Lepcha 'community'. Enjoying as it did official patronage, the National Party's boycott of the Panchayat elections was played up as the expression of dissatisfaction by the indigenous population with the system of Panchayat elections.

In a country with low literacy and extreme all-round backwardness, the combined forces of the National Party, the ruling house, the landlords, and the lamas succeeded, within a short time, in convincing a great majority of the Bhutiyas and Lepchas that the State Congress sought the domination of their communities by the Nepalese, and that the National Party, as the champion of the two communities, was dedicated to prevent this. As a result the ranks of the State Congress lost the support of an increasing number of Bhutiyas and Lepchas. Only enlightened Bhutiyas and Lepchas who believed in the unity of the Sikkimese people and in the ideals of democracy remained in the Congress. Their number, naturally, was small. The State Congress, even though it did not overtly take up sectarian interests, came, by virtue of drawing its support mainly from the Nepalese population, to be regarded as the party representing Nepalese interests. Though Tashi Tshering, himself a Bhutiya, was still the venerated leader of the State Congress, the popular mind was too abased to appreciate this.

As the Indian Government did not want the Dewan to function in Sikkim under a system that had not even the least semblance of the people's participation in the Government—it would have presented too damaging a picture of India's practice when she was preaching democracy, self-determination, and self-rule to an enthralled world audience—,it became a matter of paramount importance to decide the question of representa-

tion in some political apparatus that would function with the participation of the people's representatives.

Whereas previously Sikkim had two conflicting interests, the Maharaja with his feudal train, and the Sikkimese peasants, now that the peasants had apparently split into two communal groups, Sikkim had three different interests—the Maharaja, the Bhutiya-Lepcha group, and the Nepalese. The reader should bear in mind that being of Tibetan origin, the Namgyal House belonged to the Bhutiya community.

In May, 1951, the matter of communal representation was discussed by representatives of the three parties : Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal represented the Maharaja ; Sonam Tshering represented the Bhutiya-Lepcha interests as projected by the National Party ; the State Congress was represented by Dimik Singh Lepcha and Kashi Raj Pradhan, a Lepcha and a Nepalese. The Congress representatives had been deputed by Tashi Tshering with clear instructions that they were to discuss things from a nationalistic angle and they were not, on any account, to take any decision, which was to be left to the Party High Command.

The representatives sat the whole night through, drinking expensive liquors from the Maharaja's cellar. And next day the 'Parity Formula' was signed by the four whereby the elected seats in the future State Council were to be divided equally among the Bhutiya-Lepcha and the Nepalese communities, and the Maharaja was to appoint five nominees.

Tashi Tshering refused to ratify the agreement signed by the two Congress representatives. The Sikkim Durbar, however, gave out that Dimik Singh Lepcha had signed as the representative of the Lepchas while Kashi Raj Pradhan had signed as the representative of the Nepalese. All Tashi Tshering's protests were of no avail, especially as the new leaders of the State Congress, Dimik Singh and Kashi Raj foremost among them, were eager to fight elections on any basis.

In January, 1952, the Maharaja issued a Proclamation laying down the mode of election to the proposed Sikkim Council. The qualifying age for a voter was fixed at 21. The minimum

age for a candidate was to be 30. Apart from the distribution of seats based on the parity formula and nomination by the Maharaja, there was another outstanding feature in the Proclamation. Whereas each of the Nepalese seats was to be returned by the whole electorate of the constituency concerned, the Bhutiya-Lepcha candidates were first to be elected by Bhutiya-Lepcha voters only of the constituency concerned and thereafter to be voted again by the whole electorate of the constituency.

On 23rd March, 1953, the Maharaja issued another Proclamation, called the "Constitutional Proclamation". This Proclamation laid down the rules governing the formation of the State Council, and the Executive Council, their powers, and their functions, as follows :—

The State Council was to consist of a President, "to be nominated and appointed by the Maharaja", twelve elected members, "of whom six shall be either Sikkim Bhutiyas or Lepchas and the remaining six shall be Sikkim Nepalese" and "five members nominated by His Highness the Maharaja at his discretion". (Clause 3)

The powers of the State Council were defined thus :

"Subject to the assent of the Maharaja, the State Council shall have power to enact law for peace, good order, and good government of Sikkim. Provided that the State Council shall not, without the previous sanction of the Maharaja, make or take into consideration any law affecting any matter hereinafter defined as a reserved subject". (Clause 13)

A system of diarchy was introduced by the proclamation whereby the reserved subjects were to be the private preserve of the Maharaja and the transferred subjects were to be administered by the people's representatives. The following were placed under Reserved Subjects :—

1. Ecclesiastical Affairs.
2. External Affairs.
3. State Enterprises.
4. Home and Police
5. Finance.

6. Land Revenue.
7. Rationing.
8. Establishment.

The State Council was debarred from discussing or asking questions about the following :—

1. The Maharaja and the members of the ruling family.
2. The External Relations of the State, including relations with the Government of India.
3. The appointment of the Dewan and the members of the Judiciary.
4. Any matter pending before a court of law. (Clause 15)

The Council was given the right to vote upon the Budget subject to the proviso that "in the event of any demands in the Budget being rejected by the State Council, the Maharaja shall have the power to certify it, and thereupon such demand shall become part of the sanctioned estimate. (Clause 16)

The State Council was to have no voting rights on the following expenditures :—

1. The Civil List, including expenditure on the household departments of the Maharaja.
2. Pay and allowances of the Dewan, the Judiciary, and officers on deputation from the Government of India.
3. Secret and discretionary expenditure. (Clause 17)

An Executive Council consisting of the Dewan, "by virtue of the office which he holds under the Maharaja," and "such numbers of elected members of the State Council as may be appointed by the Maharaja from time to time" was to be constituted for the State, and the members of the Executive Council were to hold office "during the Maharaja's pleasure" and were to be "responsible to him for the executive and administrative functions of the Government". (Clauses 19 and 20)

The following departments were placed under "Transferred Subjects", hence under the Executive Council :—

1. Education.
2. Public Health.

3. Excise.
4. Press and Publicity.
5. Transport.
6. Bazaars.
7. Forests.
8. Public Works. (Clause 21)

The functions of the Executive Council were further clarified by : "The Dewan and other members of the Executive Council shall exercise such powers as may be delegated to them from time to time by the Maharaja". (Clause 22)

Clause 26 conferred on the Maharaja the right to veto "any decision made by the Executive Council and substitute his own decision therefor".

The State Congress called the forthcoming elections to the Sikkim Council a farce and threatened to boycott them. But the Congress leaders were bound by their very party constitution, which defined the party's objectives as : "The well-being and advancement of the people of Sikkim ; the achievement of political, economic, and social development of Sikkim under the aegis of Bharat (India)". And the Constitutional Proclamation was India's gift to the people of Sikkim !

Sikkim went to the polls in mid-1953, the Sikkim State Congress and the National Party entering the field. The voters list showed 50,000 eligible voters. Less than 30% voters cast their votes. The communal infection had penetrated deep into the body-politic of Sikkim. The National Party won all the six Bhutiya-Lepcha seats and was thus confirmed by the electorate as the champion of Bhutiya-Lepcha community. The State Congress won all the six Nepali seats and was confirmed as representing Nepalese interests, its democratic pretensions notwithstanding. The great majority of the Bhutiya-Lepcha voters as surely rejected the State Congress as the Nepalese voters rejected the National Party. The voice of the 75% Nepalese population was hopelessly reduced by virtue of Kashi Raj's having

signed the parity formula and also by the two Congress representatives having agreed to the number of nominated seats. The State Congress leaders realised with a shock that despite all their past records, they had been brought down ostensibly to the level of the National Party but actually far below it; for the National Party, along with the nominated members and the Council President, effectively reduced the State Congress representatives into a despicable minority. The State Congress had virtually fallen headlong into a political morass.

CHAPTER XV

Diarchy

A SEVENTEEN-member State Council was formed on 7th August, 1953, with the Dewan as its President, who had the right to a casting vote in the very unlikely event of there being a tie. The first elected councillors of Sikkim suffered from a serious handicap inasmuch as they were more the representatives of their communities than of the Sikkimese people as a whole. They had, therefore, to function within the limitations imposed by their respective communal interests. While the Nepalese councillors found the Council too constricting to be even a pale shadow of a legislative organ, the Bhutiya-Lepcha councillors, by virtue of their having been elected on National Party tickets and, as such, their interests being identical with those of the ruler and the vested interests, had only nominal interest in the powers and functions of the State Council.

The State Council settled down to the functions of a question-asking body, ready to endorse whatever the Government wanted it to—and this was not much for the simple reason that the Government took it for granted that whatever it did had the automatic sanction of the State Council in view of the overwhelming weight of numbers on the Government's side. The inactivity of the State Council went unnoticed, since there was something to please everybody—the people were happy that the State Council had come into being; nothing pleased the Maharaja and his close associates more than the inactivity of the Council; and the Government of India held it as an exhibit of their efforts

"to progressively associate the people of the State with its Government".

As a corollary to the formation of the State Council, a two-member Executive Council was also formed and the transferred subjects put under its charge. Sonam Tshering, the leader of the National Party in Council, was given charge of Public Health, Press and Publicity, Forests, and Bazaars. Kashi Raj Pradhan, the Sikkim State Congress leader in the Council, was given charge of Education, Excise, Transport, and Public Works.

The State Congress having joined the Government, there was no "opposition" in the State Council. The Party had, apparently, reconciled itself to the Constitutional Proclamation. Tashi Tshering's lone protesting voice was scotched by some Congress leaders when they, at a secret meeting, voted him out of office and elected Kazi Lhendup Dorji as the Congress President. Tashi Tshering was shocked and taken ill ; before long the old man died, discarded by an ungrateful people and the traitorous leaders who now ran the State Congress.

The powers and functions of the Executive Councillors had not been defined. The only guide in this respect was the Constitutional Proclamation, which was vague and highly restrictive. To make matters worse, Finance being a reserved subject, the Executive Councillors were virtually held on a leash by the Dewan, who, with the Maharaja, was the master of the purse. In actual practice, therefore, the Executive Councillors came to occupy a position between the secretaries in charge of departments and the Dewan. The difference between the administration of the transferred subjects and the reserved subjects lay in the fact that while the former were graced by the presence of the E.Cs., who formed a cog in the bureaucratic wheel, the latter were free from the presence of the so-called people's representatives. The diarchical form of government envisaged by the Proclamation was more apparent than real, for the Executive Councillors, while being in charge of the transferred subjects, could not function with any degree of independence.

The two Executive Councillors settled down to learn their first lessons in administration under the Dewan. The Executive Councillors had very limited powers and, therefore, only modest

functions ; they were very much aware that they could not serve the interests of the masses ; they, therefore, applied their energies to make the best use of the opportunity by serving their own interests and those of their kith and kin.

The Executive Councillors realized before long that their real powers and functions, even within the confines of the transferred subjects, were what the Dewan permitted them. So when the Gangtok High School was removed from the charge of Kashi Raj Pradhan, he mumbled a few words of protest before the Dewan to salve his loss of self-respect, only to be brushed aside with a lofty disdain by the Dewan. Similar encroachments were carried out in the Bazaar, Forest, and other departments. The two E.Cs. had no choice but to learn to live with these pin-pricks.

Lall left Sikkim in 1954, and N.K. Rustomji took over as the new Dewan of Sikkim. Superficially it might seem that it was a mere change of Dewans, especially as Lall had already been in Sikkim for about five years, but the choice of Rustomji had a far deeper significance.

Lall had come to Sikkim when the stock of the Maharaja had sunk very low. Coming from a democratic country whose Prime Minister was functioning like a veritable keeper of the world's conscience, Lall had taken the Government of India's professed views, *viz.*, the progressive association of the people of Sikkim with its Government, seriously. He had, therefore, carried out his duties with a definite democratic bias. His attitude had been very much resented by the Maharajkumar, who was the de facto ruler. The Government of India's policy had undergone a change in the wake of China's occupation of Tibet, and Indian interests in Sikkim seemed to be safe if the ruler was progressively strengthened. That the Maharaja would always be under the Government of India's thumb was taken for granted. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty was the product of this outlook. The Maharajkumar, who had taken a leading role in the treaty negotiations, had also succeeded in very favourably impressing Prime Minister Nehru.

The 1953 Proclamation gave back to the Maharaja whatever little he had lost earlier. The changes brought about by the

Proclamation had made Lall a misfit for the job unless he changed his former attitude of playing the boss, paying little or no heed to the Sikkim Durbar's wishes. Lall had carried on merrily as if, for him, the 1953 Proclamation had no meaning. But such a situation could not be allowed to continue in the interest of the relations between the Government of India and the Sikkim Durbar. A new man was needed to run the Dewan's office in Sikkim under the changed conditions.

Nari Kaikhosru Rustomji was tailor-made for the job. A gifted Parsi, wholly educated in England, he had his first lessons in Hindustani on board the ship that had brought him to India to join the Indian Civil Service. During his training period at Dehra Dun, where the Maharajkumar also happened to be a trainee, the two had struck up a friendship. Rustomji had visited Sikkim with the Maharajkumar, where he had been accepted as a member of the family by the ruler's household. The friendship had ripened with the passing of the years.

The Government of India, consistent with the new policy, had asked the Sikkim Durbar to choose the next Dewan from among the I.C.S. officers, and the Durbar's choice had fallen on N.K. Rustomji. How admirably the new Dewan was equipped for his role is reflected by what he himself observed many years later :

"My difficulty in writing is that my relations with the actors in the drama have, more often than not, been on a personal as much as on an official basis. We have shared confidences which we hold as sacrosanct. My embarrassment is that I know too much ! And I value my friendships too dearly to be prepared to abuse them."*

In 1954, soon after Rustomji assumed the office of the Dewan, the Seven-Year Plan of Sikkim, the first of its type in the history of Sikkim, was launched with an outlay of Rs. 32·369 million (4·315 million dollars), wholly contributed by India. The accent of development was on roads and bridges, education, medical services, fostering of cottage industries, and the building of some micro-hydel projects.

*Nari Rustomji : *Enchanted Frontiers* (p. 2).

The State Council, according to the provisions of the Constitutional Proclamation, had been elected for a period of three years. In 1956 the term of the Council was extended to December, 1957, by a Proclamation issued by the Maharaja. The period would, perhaps, have been further extended—the first State Council and the first Executive Councillors had been found admirably pliant—but for the fact that there arose some rift within the National Party, and the Maharajkumar was antagonised by Sonam Tshering.

Charges of corruption were laid against Sonam Tshering and investigations were carried out by the Central Bureau of Investigation, Government of India, Delhi. Sonam Tshering eventually managed to escape unscathed, but the further extension of the term of the State Council was ruled out.

Sonam Tshering, who had some time back been elected President of the National Party, was also ousted from the presidentship. In his place Martam Topden, a confidant of the Sikkim Durbar, was elected President.

The State Congress had also had its share of trouble. Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa had become a helpless spectator of the erosion of the powers of the Executive Councillors, largely because the State Congress leader in Council, Kashi Raj Pradhan, lacked the courage and conviction to oppose the Dewan's encroachments. Kashi Raj, with the passage of time, had found his subservience to the Dewan and the Maharajkumar highly rewarding to himself and his relatives, and thus made a poor Congress representative. His own men occupied most of the party's highest executive posts. Angered and frustrated, Kazi Lhendup Dorji resigned from the State Congress and formed a new party, the Swatantra Dal. Kashi Raj was elevated to the President's pedestal in the State Congress.

The composition of the State Council was changed by the Maharaja's Proclamation, dated 17th March, 1958, which stated :—

"Whereas it is considered desirable in the public interest to modify the arrangements for reservation of seats in the

Sikkim Council, it is hereby ordered that the distribution of seats shall hereafter be as follows :

(1) Seats reserved for Bhutiyas and Lepchas	6
(2) Seats reserved for Nepalese	6
(3) General Seat	1
(4) Seat reserved for the Sangha (Monastery)	1
(5) Nominations by His Highness	6
	20

The number of councillors was raised from 17 to 20. The Proclamation, while laying down the mode of election, left out the 'primary election' of the Bhutiya Lepcha candidates first by the electorate of their community only. They General seat was to be elected by the whole of the electorate of Sikkim. Since the seat was considered 'unsafe', as it was very likely to go to the State Congress by virtue of the following it had among the Nepalese, the overwhelming majority of the population, the Sangha (Monastery) seat, which was as certainly to go to the National Party, was introduced to balance it. The addition of one more nominated seat further tilted the balance in favour of the Maharaja and the National Party. A novel mode of election, the brain-child of N.K. Rustomji, was laid down by Clause 2(i)(b) of the Proclamation, which read :

"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."

The highly complicated system of election, which necessarily complicated the actual casting of votes and subsequent counting, was very confusing to the simple Sikkimese electorate. But, apparently, the peculiar mode was calculated to blunt the edge of criticism that India, who had always opposed communalism and championed secularism in her own caste-and-community-conscious society, had introduced communal system of voting in her protectorate. In the words of an Indian Political Officer in Sikkim, the revision in the voting system of 1953 "was made with the objective of facilitating the political integration of the Nepali and the Lepcha-Bhutiya communities."* The Second General Elections of Sikkim were held soon after the issue of the Proclamation of March 17.

The State Congress won all the 6 Nepali seats, one Bhutiya-Lepcha seat and the General seat. The National Party won 5 Bhutiya-Lepcha seats and the Sangha seat. Once again Kashi Raj Pradhan and Sonam Tshering were elected. The voting system had greatly baffled the electorate. The actual working of the system of voting is illustrated by the following figures taken from the 1958 elections in two constituencies :

Name of candidate	*Bhutiya/ Lepcha votes*	*Nepali votes*	*Others*	*Total*
1. Gaden Tashi	181	431	11	623
2. Gompu Bhutiya	106	1232	10	1348
3. Lhendup Dorji	169	1062	31	1262
1. Norbu Wangdi	263	218	14	495
2. Dubo Bhutiya	175	2037	24	2236
3. Nayen Tshering Lepcha	145	611	13	769

Gaden Tashi in the first and Norbu Wangdi in the second constituency were declared elected. The votes cast by Nepali and other voters in favour of Gompu Bhutiya, Lhendup Dorji, and Dubo Bhutiya, were clearly wasted.

Even though the National Party was very much the Maharaja's own party, Sonam Tshering had become an eyesore to the Maharajkumar. He, however, was popular among the Bhutiya-

**Sikkim and Bhuttan* (p. 31) by V.H. Coelho.

Lepcha electorate and the party members of the National Party. On the other hand, the State Congress, under the Presidentship of Kashi Raj Pradhan, had come to completely indentify itself with the interests of the Maharaja. In other words, the State Congress had taken on the character of the National Party, though it continued to talk of democracy and responsible government and pass pious resolutions to that effect as a sop to the masses.

Sonam Tshering was the lone Executive Councillor appointed from among the National Party councillors. From the State Congress, Kashi Raj Pradhan and his nephew, Nahkul Pradhan, were appointed Executive Councillors. The formation of the Executive Council in the wake of the 1958 elections has some peculiar features. The State Congress had won a clear majority—out of 14 elected seats—and had two Bhutiya-Lepcha members among its elected councillors; apart from the one Bhutiya-Lepcha seat that the Congress had won, its victorious candidate in the general seat contest was also a Bhutiya. Thus it admirably fulfilled all the conditions needed to form a one-party Executive Council. Yet no voice was raised in this behalf. Kashi Raj was, apparently, highly satisfied by the fact that he and his nephew were two State Congress ECs. while the National Party had only one. The larger issues either never occurred to Kashi Raj or he thought such a course would displease the Dewan and the Maharajkumar.

But other forces were also active. Kashi Raj, Sonam Tshering, and Nahkul, were all involved in an election petition that charged them with having adopted corrupt practices in the elections. The Maharaja issued a Notification on 27th December, 1958, which was published as a Gazette in January 1959, stating, inter alia :—

"(5) Election petitions shall be decided by the Tribunal set up under para 6 of this Notification, which Tribunal shall exercise all the powers of a Civil Court. The decision of the Tribunal shall be final and no appeal shall lie in any court against the decision.

"(6) The Tribunal shall consist of the Chief Justice of Sikkim,

who will be assisted by Kazi Dorji Dahdul and Shri Dakman Lama."

The Election Tribunal delivered its judgement on 25 May, 1959, declaring the election of Sonam Tshering, Kashi Raj, and Nahkul Pradhan void. In addition, all the three of them were "disqualified for membership of the Sikkim State Council for a period of 6 years with effect from the date that the finding of this Election Tribunal takes effect".

The Tribunal's award threw the three affected leaders into great disarray. Uncertain of the future, they started parleys among themselves and some other leaders with democratic leanings so as to adopt some common programme for improving the political climate of Sikkim. While these talks were going on, the Sikkim Durbar issued a Gazette Extraordinary, on 4 September, 1959, announcing that His Highness was pleased to order that (1) Kashi Raj Pradhan and Nahkul Pradhan were to be disqualified from seeking the membership of the Sikkim Council for a period of six months with effect from 15.5.59 and (2) Sonam Tshering was to be disqualified for seeking the membership of the Sikkim Council for a period of three years with effect from 28.5.59.

The Gazette greatly tempered the zeal of Kashi Raj and Nahkul in continuing the parleys, but as they could not abruptly break away without seriously jeopardising their chances in the inevitable by-elections, they participated in the 'Joint Convention' held at Melli on 24 September, 1959. The parties represented were the Swatantra Dal, the Sikkim National Party (Sonam Tshering faction), the State Congress, and the Sikkim Scheduled Castes League, the last an incipient socio-political organisation of the so-called backward classes. Among the participants, the most prominent were : Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa, the ex-Congress President who had fought the elections on Swatantra Dal ticket and lost; Sonam Tshering, who had been ousted from the presidentship of the National Party and was now leading a faction within it, nursing grievances against the Sikkim Durbar for the gross discrimination displayed by it by so reducing his period of disqualification as to effectively bar him from contesting the by-election ; Kashi Raj Pradhan and Nahkul Pradhan, who were more eager to contest the forthcoming by-elections, made

possible by the Sikkim Durbar's favourable fiat, than to be involved in some programme of action that was bound to displease the Sikkim Durbar.

The 'Joint Convention' reiterated the old Congress demand for responsible government, introduced a new element, *viz.*, the drafting of a democratic constitution for Sikkim, and included some other inanities, wholly oblivious of the hard realities existing then. To cap it all, a resolution was passed threatening to boycott all elections if the demands of the Convention were not met by the Sikkim Durbar.

On 22 October, 1959, a' 'Joint Meeting' of the same elements, with the notable exception of Nahkul Pradhan, was held at Singtam. The 'Joint meeting' went a step further and passed resolutions demanding that the constitution—nobody knew whether the constitution would ever be drafted—should incorporate 'Fundamental Rights' and 'Directive Principles'—inspired by the Indian Constitution and the contents bodily lifted from it—, and laid down how the formation of the legislative, executive, and judicial organs of the State were to be governed.

The resolutions were contemptuously disregarded by the Sikkim Durbar. Any 'Joint Action' was ruled out when Kashi Raj and Nahkul declared their intention to contest the by-elections, their signatures to the 'Joint Convention' notwithstanding.

Nari Kaikhosru Rustomji left Sikkim, having admirably fulfilled the task of consolidating the powers of the Sikkim Durbar, and throwing the political parties in disarray by means of the unfettered and unprincipled exercise of authority by him and the Maharajkumar. The new incumbent, though allowed to retain the title of Dewan, was a comparatively junior member of the Indian Administrative Service, one Baleshwar Prasad, a mediocre Bihari, admirably suited to serve the Sikkim Durbar as its obedient administrative officer.

Dates for holding by-elections for the seats vacated by the three E.Cs. were announced. Hectic political activities began. It so happened that soon after the Tribunal's award had been published, political parties and party candidates had begun to warm up for the inevitable by-elections. The Congress had lost two stalwarts, and both of them E.Cs. As there had seemed

none among the party members who could replace Kashi Raj, the party choice had fallen on Chandra Das Rai, the young firebrand of 47-49, who had done his M.A. from the Benaras Hindu University and joined the Sikkim Government as a magistrate. Urged by his former political colleagues, Congress President Kashi Raj foremost among them, Chandra Das had resigned from service after repaying the Government the expenses it had incurred in his education.

Now that the Sikkim Durbar had reduced the period of disqualification of Kashi Raj, which made him eligible to contest the by-election for the seat he himself had vacated, Kashi Raj forgot all his promises to Chandra Das Rai and placed himself as the State Congress candidate from Namchi Constituency. As for the candidature of Nahkul Pradhan, the party consensus was in his favour. Chandra Das, who had given up his secure job just to fight the by-election, could not yield to the demand of Kashi Raj Pradhan. And there were many who preferred him to Kashi Raj. Kashi Raj finally exercised the powers of the President of the State Congress by refusing to allow Chandra Das Rai to use the election symbol of the Congress. Chandra Das Rai chose a fresh election symbol, while Kashi Raj retained the party symbol, and the two 'Congress' candidates fought for the Namchi seat.

The Namchi election became a focal point of struggle. The fight was not only between Kashi Raj Pradhan and Chandra Das Rai but also between the Congress policy of subservience to the Sikkim Durbar, shaped and followed by Kashi Raj, and the disgruntled votaries of democracy in and out of the State Congress. Namchi had the reputation of being the most politically conscious of all constituencies. Chandra Das hailed from this constituency, which had been the field of his political activities in 1947-49. Kashi Raj was staking his all—his 10 years' political career, the prestige of the Congress President, and his record as an Executive Councillor for five years.

Kashi Raj lost the fight, and lost it so badly as to forfeit his deposit. He polled 634 votes to the 3013 polled by Chandra Das.

Nahkul Pradhan also won his election fight. He was promptly appointed an Executive Councillor, but Chandra Das was not.

The chair vacated by Kashi Raj should have gone to Chandra Das, who, despite a separate election symbol, was very much a State Congress councillor. The post had obviously been meant for Kashi Raj, the individual, rather than for the State Congress.

Chandra Das Rai's past marked him out as a staunch democrat and the Sikkim Durbar did not trust him to meekly tread on the footprints of Kashi Raj. The Sikkim Durbar, by ignoring Chandra Das Rai's claim to the executive councillorship, exposed its own policies as clearly as it exposed what Kashi Raj's real role in Sikkim politics had been.

The mantle of Kashi Raj fell on his nephew, Nahkul. The other Executive Councillor with Nahkul was Martam Topden. Two Bhutiyas and one Nepali were appointed Deputy Executive Councillors.

But there were too many politicians in the field, politicians who had reasons to be aggrieved by the Sikkim Durbar's policies of discrimination, by the want of justice and fairplay in its dealings, and by its open defiance of all democratic norms. They could not remain idle, passively witnessing the erosion of whatever little democratic process there was, without seriously jeopardising their very careers in politics.

CHAPTER XVI

Birth of an Opposition Party

KASHI Raj Pradhan had been beaten fair and square in the by-election. His party, under his nephew, Nahkul Pradhan, was well-represented in the State Council and also in the Executive Council. If he allied himself with disgruntled elements, he would be forfeiting the Sikkim Durbar's grace in future, and Kashi Raj was not cut out for that sort of role. So he slunk away from the field to bide his time till the next elections. It was left to his victor, Chandra Das Rai, to join forces with Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa and Sonan Tshering to wage a struggle against the rising tide of undemocratic practices of the Sikkim Durbar.

In May, 1960, at a sizable rally held at Singtam, the three leaders formed a new party, the Sikkim National Congress, wherein were merged the Swatantra Dal, the Praja Sammelan, the dissenting wing of the State Congress, and the Sonam Tshering faction of the National Party. The Sikkim National Congress, which later developed into a full-blooded opposition party and posed a tough challenge to the Sikkim Durbar, gave its raison d'etre as :

"The legitimate demands of the people of Sikkim, such as the establishment of responsible government, a written constitution, universal adult franchise based on joint electorate, etc., are not yet fulfilled. The main reason for non-fulfilment of these demands enumerated above lies in the weakness of the people of

Sikkim. The weakness of the people lies in the existence of small political parties holding divergent and often conflicting views. Keeping in view the futility of the existence of small political parties, and bearing in mind the larger interests of the people of Sikkim, the parties concerned decide to merge into one compact body known as the Sikkim National Congress."

Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa was elected President. Sonam Tshering and D.B. Tewari were elected Vice-Presidents, and Bhim Bahadur Gurung was elected the General Secretary.

Even though the Sikkim National Congress had yet to fight its first election, it had 4 councillors in the Sikkim State Council as a result of the merger of the 4 groups. The party-position in the Council was :

1. The National Party —6 (with 1 Sangha seat)
2. Sikkim National Congress —4
3. Sikkim State Congress —3
4. Vacant —1

The formation of the Sikkim National Congress did not affect the National Party with the exception of Sonam Tshering's permanent rupture with it. It rather gained, for while formerly, as a result of the 1958 elections, it had been an unimpressive second to the State Congress, it now occupied the top position in the Council. On the other hand, the Sikkim State Congress was pulled down from the top to the very bottom among the political parties. Apparently, the influence of Kashi Raj Pradhan and his relatives was on the wane. The National Party appealed to the section of the population which cared little for democracy and much more for the maintenance of the old order and, as such, its following, largely composed of vested interests and illiterate Bhutiya-Lepcha electorate, was immune from the call of democracy given by the S.N.C. making any appeal to them. Since the State Congress also swore by democracy, and almost ritualistically passed the old Congress resolutions every year, the real battle was between the Sikkim National Congress and the State Congress, for they both addressed themselves to the same electorate. Without the slightest effort other than organising a rally and bringing together some leaders,

the Sikkim National Congress had already dealt a crippling blow to the State Congress.

The Sikkim National Congress was naturally critical of the whole system of elections, the functions and powers of the Executive Council, and the working of the State Council, among other things. Having learnt from experience that merely passing resolutions and submitting them to the Sikkim Durbar—as the State Congress had been doing with great consistency—was unlikely to bring about the basic changes the party sought in the body-politic, the party threatened to launch a Satyagraha with a view to compelling the Sikkim Durbar to yield to its demands. The leaders were, however, advised by the Political Officer that Prime Minister Nehru was prepared to meet them and hear their grievances, and that, therefore, there was no point in launching a Satyagraha.

In August, 1960, the leaders of the Sikkim National Congress went to Delhi, where they submitted a Memorandum of their grievances and demands to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. After a series of talks with Nehru and other leaders, the Sikkim National Congress leaders returned to Sikkim. Whereas no visible changes were introduced in the framework of the Sikkim Government in the wake of the Delhi talks, Satyagraha was dropped from the party programme, and the Sikkim National Congress settled down to the role of a 'paper-opposition' party by launching a relentless propaganda campaign in the press and by means of pamphlets and party resolutions against the Sikkim Durbar's actions and policies.

The struggle of the Sikkim National Congress towards the achievement of the lofty aims enshrined in the party constitution was carried out, in the main, not in the field among the masses, but at Kazi Lhendup Dorji's cosy bungalow at Kalimpong, where the publicity wing of the Sikkim National Congress functioned with efficiency and an enviable measure of success in the person of the Kazi's second wife, Kazini Elisa Maria Dorji of Chakhung. No account of the Sikkim National Congress, hence of the 'opposition' in Sikkim politics, would be complete without adverting to this indomitable daughter of the Occident, who,

like many of her sisters before her, had been afflicted with the 'lure of the East.'

Born of Belgian parents, Kazini Elisa Maria had had her education in Scotland. Married to a police officer in the Imperial Colonial Service, she had travelled widely in the East with her husband, her itinerary having taken her from Istanbul to Peking. Having been separated from her husband, she had come to Delhi, where she had come in contact with hillmen and had been drawn increasingly towards them and their welfare. During one of his visits to Delhi, Kazi Dorji had met Mme. Elisa Maria Langford-Rae, as the future Kazini was then known, and the two had taken a fancy to each other. It was not long before the two were married at a Delhi Magistrate's Court.

Kazi Lhendup Dorji, a shrewd politician, had weighed the enormous advantage of having an educated Western woman as his wife and helper in his public life, especially as his own lamaistic education and training—the Kazi had been ordained a lama before falling out with the Sikkim Durbar and shedding his frock—gave him a feeling of grave shortcomings.

Kazini Elisa Maria Dorji took over the charge of the publicity wing of the Sikkim National Congress and began producing a stream of written words that began to expose, for the first time, the Sikkim political landscape to public view. Simultaneously she began to build up the image of her husband as the leader of the Sikkim National Congress, the party that, in the fullness of time and because of the publicity boost, matured into the 'opposition'. If the activities of the party lacked colour, it was amply supplied by the fertile imagination of the Kazini ; and where the party leaders failed to exhibit courage and determination, the Kazini's vigorous language lent all the fire needed.

It wasn't long before the publicity wing stole a march over the party's field work, and it became the usual practice for the S.N.C. party leaders to proudly display, in proof of what they were supposed to have done but had failed to do, newspaper cuttings, the end-product of the Kazini's toil. The Sikkim National Congress was kept alive and kicking, its image shining, almost wholly by the efforts of the indefatigable Kazini.

In July, 1961, the Sikkim Durbar published the Sikkim Subjects' Regulations, laying down conditions that governed the subjecthood of Sikkim nationals. It was highly discriminatory and unfavourable to the Nepalese. The Sikkim State Congress and the Sikkim National Congress, both of whom relied on the Nepalese for their support, found in this sufficient grounds to become active and raise a clamour for changes in the Regulations. The Government of India had finally to intervene and bring about a reconciliation in the form of a much more reasonable Subjects' Regulations.

The Dalai Lama had fled from Lhasa followed by some 60,000 Tibetan refugees, some of whom the Sikkim ruler volunteered to rehabilitate in Sikkim. Sikkim was in far from a sound economic position to take any effective measures to promote the welfare of its own people, and relied heavily on India even for such elementary things as the construction and maintenance of roads. The Maharaja's high-sounding undertaking to rehabilitate 5,000 or so Tibetan refugees in Sikkim had come on the promise of adequate financial assistance from India. Besides, being of Tibetan origin, the ruling family saw in this a nice opportunity of strengthening the Bhutiya-Lepcha numbers, even though the indigenous Bhutiya-Lepcha population was far from sympathetic to the rehabilitation programme.

Sikkim, on account of its proximity to Tibet, had suddenly become a sensitive area. As the Chinese began with a vengeance to weed out the lamaist dross from Tibet and introduce socio-economic-political changes based on socialism, India became alive to the paramount importance of keeping Sikkim immune from the northern influence. The most effective way to achieve it was, according to Indian policy-makers, by strengthening the ruling house. The ruler, by now, had a free hand in running the internal administration. He was allowed to form the Sikkim Guards and expand it over the protests of political parties.

The Seven-Year Plan having come to an end, India gave a further aid of Rs. 81·33 million (10·844 million dollars) for the Second (Five-Year) Plan. Almost one-third of the amount was earmarked for roads and bridges. The rest was apportioned to agriculture, minor irrigation, and other projects.

In 1961, when it was time, according to the Constitutional Proclamation, to hold elections, the Sikkim Durbar indicated its intentions to hold them in early 1962. When the Government showed no signs of holding elections in 1962, the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim State Congress passed resolutions demanding the holding of elections. The Government paid little heed to these resolutions.

India held its third general elections, by far the most massive elections in the whole world, in February 1962. Once again the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru was voted to power.

In October, 1962, India and China clashed on the north-eastern and noth-western borders. India declared an emergency. Even though China had clearly stated that her border problems were with India and that she had no problems with Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim, the Maharaja of Sikkim also declared a 'State of Emergency' in Sikkim. The trade across the Sikkim-Tibet border came to an abrupt end and Indian Army troops were rushed to the Sikkim-Tibet border, where they dug themselves in defensive position. Overnight the peaceful border was turned into a live frontier manned, on opposite sides, by belligerents. The Sikkim-Tibet border remained calm throughout the brief clash between China and India in far away regions.

The short and swift clash was over. Normalcy returned to Sikkim, but the State of Emergency remained. The border with Tibet was sealed off in January, 1963. Elections were held in abeyance for an indefinite period. The State Council was dissolved, but the Executive Council continued to function ! A Consultative Committee was formed with a view to mobilising popular participation in "National Defence." Long after the last lingering echoes of the bullets fired far away had died down even in those regions, Sikkim's defence preparedness went on with Quixotic effect, and the squad of ten or so civil defence volunteers, composed mostly of the members of the Indian business community, perhaps the least martial of India's teeming millions, continued to drill twice or thrice a week. This provided the population of Gangtok with endless mirth and, before long, even this drill, the sole remainder of Sikkim's defence preparedness against future Chinese invasions, was dropped.

CHAPTER XVII

The American Gyalmo

BARELY thirteen years had passed since the day when the Sikkimese people had surrounded the Maharaja's palace and compelled him to meet some of their demands. Now, towards the close of the year 1962, the Maharaja had not only regained much of his lost powers but also been able to substantially add to them. The protecting power, India, looked more to the ruler than to the people and their so-called representatives, chosen by means of a complicated hotch-potch of communal and sectarian voting system, for maintaining stability in Sikkim and ensuring the safeguarding of her "special interests". The political parties, by their passive acquiescence, could be said to have endorsed the political changes or the lack of changes that had brought about the situation as it obtained at the end of 1962. A very important role in bringing about these changes had been played by Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal.

Maharajkumar Palden Thondup Namgyal was the second son of Maharaja Tashi Namgyal. Born in 1923, he had been trained to enter the monastery from his childhood. His elder brother's death in 1941 had brought him back to his temporal duties as the heir to the throne. After Maharaja Tashi Namgyal's estrangement with Maharani Kunzang Dechen, Maharajkumar Palden had been called upon to increasingly attend to the matters of the State on behalf of his father, whose interest in official as well as other mundane matters had steadily declined. During all the crucial days when the political parties had posed a direct threat to the Namgyal House, the brunt had

fallen on the young and immature shoulders of the Prince. The rapid succession of ordeals had tempered him. He had been singularly fortunate in being able to favourably impress Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India. Under Nehru's patronage and with the co-operation of his friend, Dewan N. K. Rustomji, he had been able to turn the tables on the politicians and thoroughly expose what they were really worth. Maharajkumar Palden Thondup had married Sangey Deki, a Tibetan beauty from one of the noble families of Tibet, in August 1950. The lady had died in 1957, leaving behind two sons and a daughter.

After six years as a widower the Maharajkumar married Miss Hope Cooke, an American, in March, 1963. On 2nd December, 1963, Maharaja Tashi Namgyal died after a brief illness.

Palden Thondup Namgyal and his American bride were crowned the King and Queen of Sikkim at a colourful ceremony at the Palace Chapel, on 4th April, 1965, his 42nd birthday.

The coronation was a sumptuous affair by Sikkimese standard. For the second time in Sikkim's history—the first having been the occasion of Maharajkumar Palden Thondup's marriage 2 years before—foreigners in sizable numbers crowded the tiny capital of Gangtok. The second occasion was a special one not only for the new ruler and his consort but also for the Dowager Maharani (Gyalum in Sikkimese), who, for the first time in more than two decades, made a public appearance by occupying her proper place in the Chapel. During Tashi Namgyal's life, the Maharani, ever since she had been refused admission to the palace years ago, had been kept aloof from all ceremonies. Now that Tashi Namgyal was no more, the new ruler, a devoted son to his mother, restored her to her rightful station.

As a gesture of goodwill, the Government of India announced their recognition of the title Chogyal and Gyalmo (King and Queen) adopted on the coronation day by the new ruler and his consort.

The coronation year marks the beginning of a new chapter in Sikkim, especially as the Gyalmo began to exert her influence in the tiny kingdom. Born and brought up in America, this

daughter of liberty and democracy found the Indian yoke in Sikkim too jarring, too out of tune with modern notions. She rallied around her educated young Sikkimese, and it was not long before it began to dawn upon her that the preponderance of Indian officials in all high positions in Sikkim had outlived its utility since there were educated Sikkimese capable of taking over. The ever-present tug of Indian hegemony also irked her free spirit. While her husband still carried with him the traumatic memories of 1947-49, aggravated by the atavistic dread of the Nepalese, which left him apparently happy under the protective leash of India, Gyalmo Hope Namgyal was free from such inhibitions. And she set herself with a will to bring her husband round to her way of thinking.

India had not been faring very well in her external relations. The 1962 debacle in the short Sino-Indian War had not only lowered India's international image but also encouraged its arch-enemy, Pakistan, to spoil for a fight. Since India had refused to negotiate with China on the border issue except on the fulfilment of certain pre-conditions, on the plea that India was the wronged party, India and China continued to be at loggerheads with each other. The China-Pakistan axis posed a constant threat to India. Pandit Nehru's stock in the country as well as outside had gone down. It was not long before the old leader died.

In September, 1965, India and Pakistan fought a short war. The war was brought to an end by the mediation of outside powers. The obvious Indian upperhand in war did much to boost the sagging morale of the Indian people. But the Chinese threat once again loomed large, and that with particular reference to Sikkim.

At a press conference given on 29th September, 1965, Marshal Chen Yi, Foreign Minister of China, "asserted that the Sikkim-Tibet border did not come within the scope of the Sino-Indian border question.....The Chinese were determined to undermine close friendship between Sikkim and India. But neither India nor Sikkim were taken in by China's provocative statements and postures. Today life continues in Sikkim a little tense but essentially unruffled."*

**Sikkim and Bhutan* (p. 34) by V.H. Coelho.

But things were not as good as the author of the above would have us believe. Sikkim's Chogyal and Gyalmo were out to exert themselves and wrest some concessions from India. The Sikkim Guards, formed with India's blessings, had become a sore point. The Chogyal wanted to double its strength while India wanted it to remain at the one company strength with which it had started. Finally, India had to give in, particularly in view of developments outside, which demanded that there should be no kink in Indo-Sikkim relations.

At about this time Indian eyebrows were raised when Sikkim started playing its "National Anthem". The annual presentation of Colours to the Sikkim Guards by the Chogyal was looked upon with suspicion and disfavour by the Political Officer when it was announced that the National Anthem of Sikkim would be played on that occasion. The Political Officer boycotted the function in 1965 and advised other Indians against attending the ceremony. The ceremony went off admirably, the Political Officer's discomfiture lending zest to the Sikkimese participants.

The Gyalmo had 'tasted blood'. She could not help becoming aware that Indo-Sikkim relations, based on the 1950 Treaty, rested, at best, on shaky foundations. She felt that India had taken undue advantage of her powers and the Sikkim Durbar's plight in imposing a very unjust treaty on Sikkim. Apparently, even the leaders were aware of the anachronistic tenor of the treaty in view of international developments, and especially because India had never given up preaching to others to refrain from what the treaty showed her as practising. Morally, the treaty was India's raw wound that brooked no poking.

The Gyalmo let alone the treaty for the time being but hit elsewhere. She opened the question of Darjeeling through an article published in the Institute of Tibetology bulletin. In this article she claimed that the transfer of Darjeeling to the British had been illegal and, as such, Sikkim still retained her sovereignty over the territory. This was going far beyond the treaty. The article raised a hue and cry in India. Members of Parliament asked indignant questions. The Indian Press took up the cudgels on behalf of the Indian Government and published a spate of chauvinistic writings that berated the Chogyal and the Gyalmo.

There were talks between the Chogyal and the Indian Government as a result of which the issue was allowed to die a natural death when both parties tacitly agreed not to say or do anything about it. But the point went home that the issue of Darjeeling was not quite dead.

It became obvious to the Sikkimese how the Gyalmo's probe had unsettled people in India, especially the press and the ruling circles. It became of paramount importance to many Sikkimese to wrest increasing concessions from an unwilling India and thus pave the way to the eventual independence of the kingdom.

India gave Rs. 90 million* aid for Sikkim's third plan (1966-71). This figure included a special provision of Rs. 21 million ($2.8 m.) for industrial development by means of loans to local entrepreneurs. The loan was made use of by the National Party leaders and their close supporters and also by State Congress supporters. With the connivance of the Indian officials, the loan was made an instrument of politics.

The year 1966 also saw the formation of a group called the 'Study Forum', whose members were drawn from among the seniormost government officials. Known also as the 'Young Turks', this group was ostensibly formed to remove the many ills that beset the administration, but actually to disseminate anti-Indian sentiment and propaganda. The politicians being allowed only a low profile role by the 1953 Constitutional Proclamation, in both internal and external matters, the officials of the 'Study Forum' assumed the role of a supra-political organisation. The members of this group began to denigrate politics and political parties in Sikkim and also to clamour for more concessions from India. At first they pleaded for the revision of the Indo-Sikkim Treaty, then began to demand the independence of Sikkim. It became obvious that the organ was a creation of the Chogyal and Gyalmo, and since it not only lacked the people's mandate but also that whatever voice it had was limited by the pleasure of Chogyal, the Indian Government humoured these so-called 'Young Turks' by pretending to lend an attentive ear to their repetitive

*Rs. 90 million = $12 million.

raucous clamour, but ignoring their loud claims. The 'Young Turks', however, were quick to realize their own inherent weakness and applied themselves to inventing more effective measures to weaken India's stand. The brains of the 'Study Forum' were to be behind every anti-Indian move in the years that followed.

The Executive Councillors had had seven long years of unbroken stewardship. The State Council had been defunct for four years. While India herself, despite being the one vitally concerned with China and the border problems, had held elections in 1962, and was now, in 1966, planning to hold the next general elections the following year, Sikkim had evaded the elections right from 1961. Though nobody had bothered to declare the State of Emergency over, it would have been too much for the Chogyal of Sikkim to further postpone elections while talking of Sikkim being a democracy patterned after the United Kingdom. The political picture at home was not very bright. An increasing number of Bhutiya-Lepcha peasants had, at long last, realized the negative role the National Party played in Sikkim politics. They also came to realize that the real leadership of the National Party was in the hands of the old feudal aristocrats and the vested interests, who were not the least bothered by the needs and aspirations of the common man. They had also seen that the large amount the Government of India had allotted in the third plan for loans to the people had gone mainly to these very leaders and their relatives. The followers of the State Congress had also been similarly disillusioned.

The Sikkim National Congress had been able to present before the Sikkimese people a clearer picture of the real role of the different political parties. Inasmuch as the National Party and the State Congress had always been at the helms of affairs—such as it was under the Constitutional Proclamation of 1953, and the conditions under which the Executive Councillors had to function in actual practice—, these two parties were very vulnerable to the attacks of the Sikkim National Congress propaganda machine. The Sikkim National Congress itself was not much active in the field. Indeed, so little did

the top leaders believe in political activism that Chandra Das Rai, disgusted with marking time along with his senile colleagues, had thought it better to quit politics and rejoin the Sikkim Government as the Director of Publicity.

The Sikkimese people had, however, come to look upon the Sikkim National Congress leaders as the only votaries of democracy left in the political field of Sikkim, thanks largely to an effective propaganda machine. But even this was enough to make the National Party, the State Congress, and the Chogyal panicky. The elections could no longer be procrastinated; the prospects of the National Party and the State Congress did not appear to be bright. There were still many backward areas, marked as reserved areas, the estates under the monasteries, and the private estates of the Chogyal and his family, where the combined efforts of the Chogyal, the monks, and the leaders of the National Party, could ensure, thanks to the peculiar voting system of Sikkim, the return of a majority of National Party Bhutiya-Lepcha candidates. But the State Congress did not have this facility. If anything, the Nepalese, who had all along been the mainstay of the State Congress, were comparatively more politically conscious than their Bhutiya-Lepcha brethren, and their urge for a greater manifestation of democracy in operation was also more pronounced.

Even though the dice were heavily loaded in favour of the Sikkim Durbar, it was deemed prudent not to take any chances. So a Proclamation was issued granting representation to the Tsongs and the Scheduled Castes and also increasing the Bhutiya-Lepcha and Nepali seats. The Sikkim State Council was to have the following representation :—

(1)	Bhutiya-Lepcha seats	7
(2)	Nepalese seats	7
(3)	General seat	1
(4)	Sangha seat	1
(5)	Scheduled Castes seat	1
(6)	Tsongs seat	1
(7)	Nominated seats	6
	Total	24

Tsongs, known as Limbus, were an integral part of the Nepalese community, as were the Scheduled Castes. In 1966, the leaders of these groups were close to the National Party and, by all appearances, the seats had been granted to them on their reliability as props to the National Party. As usual the Sikkim National Congress made some noise, particularly as it was aware that the introduction of the new seats had been done not so much as a gesture to the two groups as to strengthen the National Party against the Sikkim National Congress. And as usual the Sikkim Durbar paid little heed to the Sikkim National Congress note of protest.

The Sikkim National Congress could not let the issue cool down, especially as the prospects of elections loomed large over the horizon. Meetings were held to apprise party members of the implications of the Durbar's new move. The propaganda machinery of the party began to function with added zeal.

On 10th September, 1966, the Sikkim National Congress held a meeting of the party executive at Gangtok. In the afternoon, the Joint Secretary of the Party, Lal Bahadur Basnet, was arrested on a non-bailable warrant of arrest on the complaint of the Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim, "for having committed offences of sedition under section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, as applicable to Sikkim." The arrest had been occasioned by a series of three articles entitled "Democracy in Sikkim", published in "Now", a Calcutta Weekly, and a letter written to the Editor, "Hindustan Standard," a Calcutta Daily, on the sensitive subject of Sikkim's National Anthem. Some of the matter in the articles cited as "exciting disaffection towards the Government of Sikkim," is reproduced below as much as an example of what the accused wrote as representing what constituted sedition in Sikkim :—

"Now, the ruling house—the Sikkim Durbar—had no intentions to part with its powers and prerogatives which a democratic government would necessarily entail. It resorted to the time-honoured political weapon of divide and rule..... The Sikkim Durbar assiduously applied itself to sowing the seeds of discord among the three communities by playing up

the probability of the tyranny of the majority over the minority communities.[1]

"The Sikkim Durbar has almost reached the point where its absolute rule has become a glaring fact.....So, with absolutism in the saddle, Sikkim continues on the dizzy path of eventual chaos."[2]

On 12 September, 1966, having spent 48 hours in police custody, Lal Bahadur Basnet was produced before the Chief Magistrate of Sikkim. The Court was crowded. The Chief Magistrate released Lal Bahadur Basnet on bail of Rs. 100,000 (13333·33 dollars), an unprecedented amount in Sikkim's legal history. The Sikkim National Congress was galvanised into unprecedented activity. Old leaders like Kazi Lhendup Dorji and Sonam Tshering were reinvigorated and they began to exert themselves as in their younger days.

Before the trial began, a second charge, of sedition again, was brought against Lal Bahadur Basnet. This time the charge was based on a press release, issued on behalf of the Sikkim National Congress, which included, among other things, the following :—

"Whereas the Chogyal never tires of making stultifying remarks that Sikkim is a Welfare State, and has the fallacious notion to compare the total absence of even the rudiments of a constitution in Sikkim with the highly successful democratic constitution of the United Kingdom, which, from 1215 (when King John was compelled by the English people to sign the Magna Carta) to the present day, has spanned more than seven centuries of democratic evolution, while the Sikkimese people continue to groan under an anachronistic feudal regime.

"Whereas the Chogyal of Sikkim has turned a deaf ear to the repeated demands of the people and has trampled rough-shod upon their most legitimate aspirations, he has taken up the issue of a reserved seat for the Scheduled Castes, and has been persistently trying to show that, since this was one of the demands of the Singtam Convention, he was, by granting a

1. Democracy in Sikkim I (*Now*, Dated April 29, 1966, p. 10).
2. Democracy in Sikkim II (*Now*, dated May 20, 1966, p. 9).

reserved seat to the Scheduled Castes, meeting the demands contained in the said Singtam Convention Resolutions.

"The Chogyal has strange notions of democracy. He never tires of cynically stating that he is 'prepared to grant electoral reforms, and other much-needed reforms, if all the political parties come out with an agreed formula.' This is the height of absurdity and, indeed, the Chogyal is talking with his tongue in his check inasmuch as, among the political parties in Sikkim, some are wedded to democracy, while others, supported and financed by the forces of reaction, have personal interests that are inimical to democracy.

"No sane person, and certainly no sane Sikkimese, could for a moment accept the fact that the present Executive Councillors are the people's representatives in any sense of the term. It is generally accepted in Sikkim, and elsewhere, that they are, in effect, the agents of the Sikkim Durbar and no more. Their continuance in office without a fresh mandate from the people constitutes the greatest possible affront to democracy and is possible only in a country like Sikkim, where autocracy blandly poses as democracy. What the Chogyal practises runs counter to not only what he preaches but also to the much-vaunted Proclamation as published in the Gazette Extraordinary, dated 23rd March, 1953. But then, apparently, such self-contradictions abound in the 'Welfare State' of Sikkim."*

Even though the Sikkim Durbar had been shocked into disbelief by the trend of events following upon the arrest of Lal Bahadur Basnet, the press release, signed as it was by the Joint Secretary, could not be allowed to pass without something being done about it. If anything, it was far more hard-hitting than the articles and the letter to the editor that had led to Basnet's arrest in the first instance. If nothing was done about the press release, it could be held up as the Sikkim Durbar's having wilted before popular forces spearheaded by the Sikkim National Congress. So a second charge of sedition

*Sikkim National Congress Press Release of 10 September, 1966.

against Lal Bahadur Basnet had to come, and it did. But this time the amount of bail was only Rs. 15,000 ($ 2,000).

The trial of Lal Bahadur Basnet was deferred for a long time. And then the dates for the third elections were announced. The election campaign started in Sikkim with unusual fervour since the popular, democratic Sikkim National Congress was contesting elections for the first time as a political party under its own banners—and no political party in Sikkim had faced the electorate riding on the crest of a popular wave as the Sikkim National Congress did in 1967.

CHAPTER XVIII

Triumph and Tragedy

THE third general elections of Sikkim approached fast. Ranged on one side were the Sikkim National Party and its close ally, the Sikkim State Congress, both enjoying the patronage and active support of the Sikkim Durbar. The State Congress was, to all intents and purposes, a junior partner of the National Party. Against this formidable array stood the Sikkim National Congress, all alone except for an unknown number of supporters among the electorate. Long before the votes were cast, it had become abundantly clear that the people of Sikkim would be voting for one of two distinct issues ; those who voted for the National Party or the State Congress would be voting for the status quo, while those who voted for the Sikkim National Congress would be voting for changes ; those voting for the National Party or the State Congress would be voting for the policies pursued by the Sikkim Durbar, while every vote cast in favour of the Sikkim National Congress would be cast against the policies of the Sikkim Durbar. These issues were clear before the electorate.

The election campaign conducted by the political parties indicated which way the wind was blowing. It seemed that the Sikkim National Congress was poised to sweep the polls. A whole new generation listened with rapt attention to the vitriolic attacks of the Sikkim National Congress against the wrongs perpetrated by the Sikkim Durbar on the simple, law-abiding people of Sikkim.

During one of his election speeches, Lal Bahadur Basnet made a scathing attack on the judiciary of Sikkim. Since his case was still sub judice, a Contempt of Court case was promptly registered against him.

In March, 1967, the Sikkim electorate went to the polls. For the purpose of this election Sikkim was divided into 5 territorial constituencies with distribution of seats as follows :—

TABLE 1

'A' Constituency	*Bhutiya/Lepcha seats*	*Nepalese seats*	*Total*
Gangtok town	1	1	2
East	2	1	3
South	1	2	3
West	1	2	3
North	2	1	3
Total	7	7	14

There were, besides, four special constituencies as below :—

TABLE 1 Contd.

'B' Constituency	*No. of seats*	*Description of Constituency*
General	1	The whole electorate, irrespective of community, in the five constituencies given in 'A' above cast one vote each to elect one general seat.
Tsong	1	The Tsongs of all the five constituencies cast one vote each to elect the Tsong candidate.
Scheduled Castes	1	The Scheduled Castes members of the five constituencies cast one vote each to elect one candidate.
Sangha (Monastery)	1	The monks of all the five constituencies cast one vote each to elect one candidate.
	4	Total elected seats 14+4=18

Election in Sikkim would seem to be deliberately designed to confound the electorate as well as the uninitiated outsider. Since the 1967 elections were the perfected model of the previous experiments, and since they gave rise to a host of complications of far-reaching significance, it would be expedient to treat the system of elections in Sikkim, with 1967 elections as the model, at

some length. To understand the manner of casting votes, it was essential to understand the rule laid down for counting the votes. Section 4 (*i*) (*b*) of the Proclamation of the Chogyal of Sikkim, 1966, ran as follows :—

"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 rest of the electors to entitle him to be returned. If, however, he fails to secure 15% of the votes of the rest of the electors, the candidate securing the next highest votes of his own community and who has also succeeded in securing 15% of the votes of the aforesaid rest will be eligible to be returned, provided the difference between the number of votes of his own community secured by him and the highest candidate does not exceed 15% of the total votes secured by the latter. If the difference is in excess of 15% the latter will be regarded as returned, notwithstanding that he shall not have secured 15% of the votes of the aforesaid rest".

The application of the above rule is illustrated by the following tables showing voting in the West Constituency, which, in 1967, elected 2 Nepalese candidates and 1 Bhutiya-Lepcha candidate, and also formed one of the five constituencies for the election of the four special seats :—

TABLE 2

(Method of casting votes)

No. of tickets each voter got	*Number of tickets to be cast in favour of candidates*					
	Nepali	*B/L*	*Tsong*	*Sch/C*	*General*	*Sangha*
Each B/L voter had 6 tickets of blue colour	2	1	1	1	1	—
Each Nepali voter had 6 tickets of chocolate colour	2	1	1	1	1	—
Each Tsong voter had 6 tickets of pink colour	2	1	1	1	1	—
Each Scheduled Castes voter had 6 green tickets	2	1	1	1	1	—
Each monk voter had 7 Saffron coloured tickets	2	1	1	1	1	1

TABLE 3

(Counting and calculating Method)

N.B. Votes in the table refer to the tickets above. Figures are hypothetical.

Candidates (Nepalese only)	*No. of Nepali votes*	*Votes of the rest of the electors*				*Total votes of the rest*	*Total votes*
		B/L	*Tsong*	*S/Castes*	*Sangha*		
Candidate X	1,500	45	10	10	10	75	1,575
Candidate Y	1,350	265	50	40	45	400	1,750
Candidate Z	1,250	80	15	10	20	125	1,375
	4,100	390	75	60	75	600	4,700

Applying the words of para 4 (*i*) (*b*) we have candidate X as securing the highest number of his own community votes, but he fails to secure the 15% votes of the rest of the electors (15% of 600=90) by a margin of 15 votes (90−75=15). The second highest is Y, who has also secured more than 15% votes of the rest of the electors. The difference of their own community votes secured by X and Y is less than 15% (15% of 1,500 =225 ; the actual difference is 150 only). Hence candidate Y is returned.

Now candidate Z has also secured 15% votes of the rest of the electors. But the difference of their own community votes between X and Z is more than 15% (1,500−1,250=250). As such candidate X becomes the second person to be returned.

The method explained and worked out above was the one actually put into use in the 1967 elections.

On 8th April, 1967, the Election Committee announced the result of the elections as follows :—

Sikkim National Congress	—8 (including 1 general seat)
Sikkim National Party	—5
Sikkim State Congress	—2
Tsongs	—1
Scheduled Castes	—1
Sangha	—1

The Sikkim National Congress clearly emerged as the most popular political party in Sikkim. Out of the 13 seats it had

contested, it won 8. Among those elected on Sikkim National Congress tickets was Kazi Lhendup Dorji, the President of the party, who had, on previous occasions, failed to win on account of the complicated voting system. This time the S.N.C. steamroller pulled him through and he had the satisfaction of his first victory at the polls in a long political career that went back to the very beginning of political activities in Sikkim.

The Sikkim National Congress claimed two more seats, but this gave rise to complications that will be dealt with later. The Sikkim State Congress had hit the dust. One of the two seats that the S.N.C. claimed in addition to its 8 was the one where Nahkul Pradhan had been declared as returned on the interpretations of the Election Committee, who were members of the Sikkim Government. The National Party had won 4 clear seats, the fifth being impugned by the Sikkim National Congress. The Tsong, the Scheduled Castes and the Sangha successful candidates joined forces with the National Party, as was a foregone conclusion.

The Election Committee, while counting the Tsong and the Scheduled Castes votes cast in favour of Nepalese candidates, included these votes under the votes of the rest of the electors, even though these two communities were an integral part of the Nepalese community. Applying the same principle, the Sangha (Monastery) votes cast in favour of Bhutiya/Lepcha candidates should have been included under the votes of the rest of the electors. But this was not done, and the Sangha votes cast in favour of Bhutiya/Lepcha candidates were counted under own community votes. By this obviously arbitrary manner of counting, the National Party was given the fifth seat, which otherwise would have gone to Sonam Tshering, the Sikkim National Congress candidate. The S.N.C. protests were overruled by the Election Committee on the grounds that in the case of Sangha votes there was an established precedent of these votes being counted with Bhutiya-Lepcha own community votes, and that was that. The Sikkim National Congress finally gave in, partly because it had no other choice and partly because the other impugned seat appeared to be theirs because of the wordings of the famous para 4 (*i*) (*b*), and the party was determined to fight

it out as a test case. And this related to the election of Nahkul Pradhan from the East Constituency Nepalese seat, one of the two seats the State Congress had been able to secure.

The proviso in para 4 (*i*) (*b*) in the 1966 Proclamation stated, "provided the difference between the number of votes of his own community secured by him and the highest candidate does not exceed 15% of the *Total* votes secured by the latter". The word total (italicised above) was construed by the Election Committee as meaning total votes of his own community (vide table 3 supra). The Sikkim National Congress contended that the word total votes clearly meant the total votes polled by the candidate and not only the total votes of his own community. The contention of the Sikkim National Congress is illustrated below by the aid of actual figures submitted to, and accepted by, the Election Tribunal instituted to go into the matter :—

TABLE 4

Candidates	*Own community' votes*	*Rest of the electors' votes*	*Total*
1. Nahkul Pradhan (S.S.C.)	1,575	197	1,772
2. Chandra Lal Sharma (S.N.C.)	1,325	707	2,032
3. Man Bahadur Basnet (N.P.)	297	744	1,041

Though Nahkul Pradhan failed to secure 15% of the votes of the rest of electors, he was declared elected as the difference between the total votes of his own community secured by him and those secured by Chandra Lal Sharma exceeded 15%. According to the S.N.C. contention, the word total, since it was not qualified by 'votes of his own community', could only mean the total votes polled by a candidate, viz., the figure under the last column in Table 4 above. If the word total were to have this meaning, the difference did not exceed 15%. And that precisely formed the issue.

While the Election Tribunal got busy with the election case, other things of great moment were taking place.

On 10th April, 1967, the Government of Sikkim withdrew the charges of sedition against Lal Bahadur Basnet, who had by now become the General Secretary of the Sikkim National Congress. Negotiations were held on the formation of the Executive Council. It was a testing time for the leaders of the Sikkim State Congress, for during their election campaign they had reiterated their democratic stand. If the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim State Congress coalesced, together they would enjoy an absolute majority among the elected members of the Sikkim State Council and hence be entitled to form the Executive Council by themselves, effectively barring the way of the professedly undemocratic National Party.

The Sikkim State Congress, however, chose to cast its lot with the National Party, flinging aside its democratic pretensions. Since, at that time, the fate of Nahkul Pradhan hung in the balance, as it were, there was hectic horse-trading behind the scene. The result was a severe blow to the Sikkim National Congress : B.B. Gurung, who had been the General Secretary of the party right from its inception, in 1960, until October, 1966, and had been elected on the party ticket from the West Constituency, joined the National Party-State Congress alliance along with another Nepali elected member of the S.N.C. B.B. Gurung's betrayal came as the first stunning blow to the leaders of the S.N.C. at the very hour of their triumph. The S.N.C. was now faced with a serious challenge, for it had become obvious that the Sikkim Durbar had played an active role in bringing about B.B. Gurung's political apostasy.

On 31st May, 1967, the Executive Councillors were sworn in. Netuk Lama of the National Party, Nahkul Pradhan of the State Congress, and B.B. Gurung of the Sikkim National Congress, were sworn in as Executive Councillors ; Nima Tenzing and Nayan Tshering Lepcha from the National Party, and Thakursing Rai from the Sikkim National Congress, were sworn in as Deputy Executive Councillors. Though the Sikkim Durbar had, apparently, caused serious discomfiture to the S.N.C., reducing its triumph at the polls to naught, the day of the clash of wills was yet to come. It had, as a matter of fact, come. The 4th of June, only four days after the swearing in ceremony of the Executive Councillors, would mark the

watershed of Sikkim National Congress' career as a political party, according as it succeeded or failed in the confrontation with the Sikkim Durbar. The 4th of June had been fixed by the Sikkim National Congress as the day the party would launch a country-wide agitation, starting from Gangtok, if the Government did not reduce the price of rice before then.

The high price of rice had been one of the main charges of the S.N.C. against the Sikkim Government. The party had alleged that the Sikkim Government had been charging a too high price for the rice that the Government of India allotted to the people of Sikkim as a special quota at a subsidized rate. The party s clamour had resulted in the Government's reducing the price of one of the two varieties of rice that were being supplied to the consumers.

The Food Department reduced the price of one of the two varieties coinciding with the birthday of the Chogyal and took care to drive the point home to the people by issuing a notification which stated that the Chogyal had been pleased to order the reduction of the price on the occasion of his birthday. This was done, perhaps, to preclude the Sikkim National Congress from claiming any credit for the price reduction.

Only a few days later the Food Department increased the price of the second variety, which had been pretty low on account the Indian Government's subsidy, by a bigger margin than the reduction of the first variety. No reasons were assigned for this increase. The Sikkim National Congress raised an angry voice of protest demanding that if the price of the first variety had been reduced on account of the Chogyal's birthday, what baneful occasion had caused the increase in the price of the second variety ? The Food Department's explanations failed to convince the Sikkim National Congress, and the party served the Government with an ultimatum to remove the price rise from the second variety of rice by a certain date, failing which it would launch an agitation.

The Sikkim National Congress held meetings all over Sikkim, passing resolutions in support of the party's demand. The proposed agitation, coming as it did in the wake of the elections, which had been a signal victory for the Sikkim National

Congress, had the support of a large number of the populace. The younger members of the party had been spoiling for a show-down with the Sikkim Durbar. They held the Durbar primarily responsible for the Election Committee's stand with regard to the inclusion of Sangha votes in the Bhutia-Lepcha own community votes. The Durbar's part in Bhim Bahadur Gurung's betrayal had also irked them.

The Sikkim Government was put in an uncomfortable position. It could not order the reduction of the price of the second variety of rice to the previous level, for doing so would be tantamount to accepting the truth of all the allegations levelled against it by the Sikkim National Congress. Besides, doing so would leave it no way to meet the loss sustained by the Government as a result of the reduction of the price of the first variety "on the occasion of the Chogyal's birthday". Some sycophant had, apparently, tried to be too clever by reducing the price, without being able to afford to do so, and linking it to the Chogyal's birthday. And the Government thought it beneath its dignity to own that it was not in a position to sustain the loss occasioned by the birthday reduction of price. So the Sikkim Government looked upon the proposed agitation with increasing alarm and tried to curb it by using its powers.

A Notification was issued to the effect that anybody who indulged in 'false propaganda' with regard to the price of rice would be liable to be sentenced to six months' jail or a fine of Rs. 1,000, or both. This apart, the police began to make full preparations to meet the coming challenge. For the first time, the Sikkim police began to practise the use of tear-gas and lathi-charges.

The Sikkim National Congress was also making full preparations. Unfortunately for the party, the Notification prescribing jail and fine for those indulging in false propaganda with regard to the price of rice had two opposite effects on the leadership of the S. N. C. While the younger element was spurred on to greater activity and looked forward to 4th June, the date the agitation was to be launched, the old guard was seized with the fear of consequences that hung over their heads in the shape of the Notification. Without the knowledge of the young leaders, the Party President went round the kingdom telling the people not to come in large numbers and to send only token representatives.

As the 4th of June drew near, the Sikkim Government also sent officials requesting the peasants not to take part in the agitation and assuring them that the Government would redress all their grievances.

The 4th of June came. The police was ready with sticks and tear-gas. Slightly more than a hundred people turned up at Gangtok. Soon it became obvious to the young leaders that the President had played a dirty trick, for group after group told them the same story, namely, that the President himself had told them not to come in large numbers and to only send token representatives. Shocked into disbelief, the young leaders bluntly asked the President, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, if what the people told them was true. The Kazi answered: "I am not in politics to go to jail".

The rice agitation ended in a total fiasco. The Sikkim Durbar had already hit hard by bringing about B.B. Gurung's betrayal. Now the Sikkim National Congress leaders had, obviously, shown the white feather. The Sikkim Durbar could play with the S.N.C. as the cat played with the mouse.

The young leaders realized the stuff the old guard was made of. They also realized why Sikkim politics had been so muddled. They knew that to continue in the Sikkim National Congress was to accept the ignominy brought upon it by the cowardice of the old guard. It was not long before, one by one, the young leaders quit its ranks.

The Election Tribunal came out with a queer decision. It held that the word total was capable of being interpreted in both ways, *viz.*, the S.N.C.'s and the Election Committee's, and in yet one more way. It therefore held, "It is, in all fairness, not considered fair and proper to dislodge the respondent No. 1, Mr. Nahkul Pradhan, from the present position of his being a duly elected candidate".*

And once again the Sikkim National Congress reverted to its former role of a 'paper-opposition' party. Its triumph had lasted only a little while and tragedy overtook it before it had the time to savour the fruits of victory. The tragedy was all the more accentuated by the loss of some courageous and gifted young men who had adorned the ranks of the party.

*Judgement of the Election Tribunal on Election Petition No. 3 of 1967, delivered on 2.4.68.

CHAPTER XIX

Confrontation

THE rise of the Sikkim National Congress had posed a serious challenge to the power of the Sikkim Durbar. Now that, like a bubble, the party had come up and gone down, the Sikkim Durbar felt internally secure and ready to confront the paramount power, India. The three Excutive Councillors were made to sign a press release wherein it was claimed that the peculiar type of 'democracy' that Sikkim enjoyed was best suited to her genius and that the time was not ripe for a widening of the 'democratic' process. The press release went on to demand the revision of the 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty and the abolition of the word 'protectorate' as applied to Sikkim.

The 1950 Treaty had come to be looked upon as the fetters that bound Sikkim. While the Chogyal had alluded to the matter in some press interviews, the Indian Government and the Indian Press had consoled themselves that the Chogyal had never formally demanded the revision of the Treaty. Apparently, they had been reassured by the inherent weakness of the Sikkim Durbar, which was propped up, in the main, by Indian money and Indian bayonets. The performance of the Sikkim National Congress at the polls in 1967 highlighted this. The Chogyal, keeping himself in the background, had used the three Executive Councillors, ready instruments in his hands, as the cat's paw.

The Indian Press took up the issue and finally the Chogyal was so cornered as either to admit his support to the Executive Councillors' demand or deny it. Nobody was more

surprised than the three Executive Councillors when the Chogyal gave a statement to the press saying that the revision of the treaty fell "outside the purview of the powers and functions of the Executive Councillors."

After the E.Cs. were thus snubbed by the Chogyal, the issue of treaty-revision once again receded in to the background. While Netuk Bhutiya, the National Party Executive Councillor, had, by signing the demand for the treaty-revision, done no more than endorse what his party had always stood for, Nahkul Pradhan of the State Congress and B. B. Gurung of the Sikkim National Congress had taken a stand their parties had consistenly been refusing to countenance.

The Sikkim National Congress took this opportunity to formally expel B. B. Gurung from the Party. The Party High Command issued a press release stating, *inter alia*, that "Shri Bhim Bahadur Gurung had been consistently taking anti-party stand by issuing statements which run counter to the Party's principles as enshrined in the Party manifesto.....The High Command of the Sikkim National Congress expelled Shri Bhim Bahadur Gurung, Executive Councillor, from the party with effect from 1st September, 1967."*

Bhim Bahadur Gurung retaliated by holding a meeting of some party members at Namchi on 10th September. At this meeting, Kazi Lhendup Dorji and Sonam Tshering were 'expelled' from the Party and new office bearers were elected in their stead. Thereafter B. B. Gurung's faction was known as the dissident wing of the Sikkim National Congress.

Nahkul Pradhan had also stirred a hornet's nest by signing the treaty-revision demand. This was still more aggravated by the fact that his relations with his uncle, Kashi Raj, the President of the State Congress, had been steadily deteriorating. It so happened that within the State Congress, the interests of the two had come to clash. This clash had come to a climax at about the time nomination papers for the 1967 elections were being filed. Owing to some changes in the election rules, and to allocation of party tickets, it had so come about that either

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*"Himalayan Observer" Weekly, Kalimpong, dated September, 5, 1967 (p. 1).

Kashi Raj or Nahkul could contest the Nepalese seat from the East Constituency. There was only one seat, so one of them had to make room for the other. Kashi Raj had contended that since Nahkul had been an Executive Councillor for a period of 8 years, he should take a rest and give him a chance. Nahkul had, ostensibly, agreed to do so, though both had filed their nomination papers. On the last day the nomination papers could be withdrawn, the party General Secretary, acting in collusion with Nahkul Pradhan, had withdrawn not Nahkul's papers but Kashi Raj's !

Now that Nahkul had committed a faux pas by lending his support to the demand for the treaty revision, Kashi Raj, as the party President, sought to take disciplinary action against his erring nephew. But the younger man had not remained idle. He had been consolidating his hold within the party. He arranged a general meeting of the party at Singtam, where the President was not invited. With the help of his staunch supporters, whose numbers were impressive, thanks to the patronage they had enjoyed during the 8 years of his Executive Councillorship, Nahkul Pradhan managed to have the absent President voted out of office. Nahkul himself was elected President. Kashi Raj Pradhan was thus unceremoniously bundled out of active politics. Nahkul had become a top Durbar favourite and there was nothing Kashi Raj could do to dislodge him. So Kashi Raj began to devote his whole time to his nail factory at Rangpo, which he had started in 1966 with a loan of Rs. 50,000 ($ 6,666·66) from the Sikkim Government.

The Chogyal had used the Executive Councillors only to hurriedly disown them. The 'Study Forum' now took up the battle cry once again. This time the Government of India was blamed for levying Excise Duty on Indian goods entering Sikkim. It was alleged, and with good reason, that the Government of India wrongly charged the Sikkimese people about Rs. 1 crore ($ 1·33 million) every year and gave back, with so much fanfare, about an equal amount as aid. Chagrined by such recurrent criticism, supported by concrete facts and figures, the Government of India invited the Chogyal and the Gyalmo for a 15-day State Visit to India with a view to having talks with the Chogyal.

The couple was feted and lionised and, during the talks in Delhi at the end of the visit, the Government of India promised to restore the Excise levy with retrospective effect. The Chogyal, beaming with satisfaction, said, among other things, at a press conference, "We are wedded to India."

"Almost with melodramatic effect the 'wedding bells' began to peal in the shape of the boom of guns across the Nathu-La and Chola passes before the Chogyal reached back home."[1] The artillery duel between the Chinese and Indians stopped as abruptly as it had started and, as usual, each side blamed the other for having started it. "The Chinese shells fell as much as four or five miles deep within the Sikkimese territory, hitting the road between Sherathang and Nathu-La. The police check-posts at Sherathang and Nathang were damaged."[2]

The fifteenth of August, 1968, brought a surprise to Gangtok, the capital. Every year this day, the people of Sikkim celebrated, along with the Indian people, the Indian Independence Day anniversary. Like preceding years, the Indian business community flew the Indian and Sikkimese flags from the top of their shops and houses. The Political Officer, like previous years, organised a small function at the India House—the old 'Residency' had been so named in deference to Sikkimese susceptibilities and in consonance with the changing times—, where the Indian flag was ceremonially unfurled and the Guard of Honour, as usual, inspected by the Chogyal and the Political Officer.

Just below the India House a procession of school boys and girls of ages ranging from 7 to 17 began a silent march carrying large placards bearing "Indians, Get Out of Sikkim," "We Want Independence," and the like. They began to shout anti-Indian slogans even as the Indian flag was unfurled on the green lawns of the India House to the tune of 'Jana Gana Mana', the Indian National Anthem. The programme went on, but the jarring effect of the young processionists' slogans and placards cast a pall on the function.

The demonstration against India was the first of its kind in Sikkim. The Indians suspected the 'Study Forum' and the

1. Himalayan Observer; editorial, 19 Sept., 1967.
2. Ibid. (p. 1).

Editor of "Sikkim", an English language fortnightly published from Gangtok, for having organised the demonstration. On 6 August, under the caption "21st Independence Day", the Editor had written :—

"We are confident that the day is not very far off when we too will be able to hold our heads high and find our rightful place in the comity of free nations of the world, and that we, too, will be celebrating our INDEPENDENCE DAY in the not-too-distant future, as has been done by India for the last twenty years.....Revision of 1950 Treaty there must be, and in keeping with the present-day trend, not only should our treaty be revised but it should also be registered with the United Nations Organisation. If our rights are not given to us gracefully, we are prepared to get it anyhow. But in doing so let us hope that we will not be driven to the extreme so that we are compelled to repeat the Underground Naga story."

The Government of India was impotent to take any action against the Editor or the Study Forum as this would have meant interference in the internal affairs of Sikkim. Besides, any action against the 'Study Forum' was ruled out since this body was composed entirely of high Sikkim Government officials. The Editor of "Sikkim", being a close friend of the Chogyal, was equally sacrosanct. But the Indian Government could not let such active demonstration of hostility go without taking steps to stop its recrudescence in an aggravated form. So a strong protest was lodged with the Government of Sikkim. The Sikkim Government apologised and punished two teachers as scapegoats by discharging them, only to rehabilitate them some months later.

An amusing corollary to the above was that the Principal Administrative Officer of Sikkim, Shri R.N. Haldipur, an Indian Administrative Service Officer, was summoned to Delhi and taken to task for allowing such anti-Indian demonstration to be held under his very nose. Shri Haldipur, who had replaced Baleshwar Prasad, and was placed much below the level of a Dewan, created a stir among the senior officers in Delhi when not only did he not make any excuses but went on to defend the demonstration under the plea that it did not in any way infringe the law of Sikkim.

The Foreign Secretary, T.N. Kaul, a friend of the Chogyal and the royal family of Sikkim, who had much to do with the shaping of the policy of India vis-a-vis Sikkim, rushed to Gangtok to talk things over. A month later the Deputy Prime Minister, Shri Morarji Desai, and on his heels the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, also visited Sikkim to gauge the temper of the people.

While the confrontation between the Chogyal and the Government of India was going on, a parallel confrontation was raging in Sikkim between the Sikkim Durbar and a rebel Lepcha woman. Ruth Karthak Lepchani, a Lepcha woman married to an Indian Muslim, had raised the banner of revolt against the Sikkim Durbar.

"Moved by the deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the Lepchas, Ruth Karthak Lepchani had launched her independent party, the Sikkim Independent Front in 1966. She had fielded six candidates—5 Lepchas and 1 Nepalese—for the 1967 elections to the Sikkim Council. The nomination papers were rejected on flimsy grounds. On March 23, 1967, she was arrested, along with her husband, A. Halim, under the Sikkim Security Act."*

Halim was deported on 3rd January, 1968, under the provisions of sub-rule (*i*) of Rule 10 of the Sikkim Public Security Rules, 1962, which read : "Mr. A Halim shall remove himself from Sikkim by the midnight of 3 January, 1968, and shall not thereafter return to Sikkim."

The charges under the Security Act of Sikkim against Ruth were never made public, nor was she tried under this Act. The Security Act was, apparently, used as a convenient tool to detain her in jail while the administration applied itself to finding sufficient evidence to prosecute her. In the meanwhile a Sikkim Government Proclamation was issued that said "A Sikkimese woman marrying a non-Sikkimese shall automatically lose her Sikkim subjecthood." This fiat, by one stroke of the pen, divested Ruth Karthak Lepchani of such rights of a citizen or subject as she would otherwise have been able to exercise.

*Himalayan Observer, dated 15 March, 1969 (p. 1).

Strangely enough not a voice of protest was raised against the blatantly iniquitous Proclamation. The President of the Sikkim National Congress, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, who was not only the leader of the 'opposition' in the Sikkim Council but also the President of the "Lepcha Association"—an organisation that enlisted members and raised funds for the protection of the rights of the Lepchas—, maintained as eloquent a silence as that of other parties. And Ruth Karthak was not only a Lepcha woman but also a subscribing member of the Lepcha Association !

In the complaint filed by the Chief Secretary against Ruth, she was alleged to have said :

"1. The present ruler of Sikkim is not its real ruler...The Chogyal is a Bhutiya, the real rulers of Sikkim were Lepchas.

"2. The present Chogyal, being a non-Lepcha, has no right to rule over Sikkim.

"3. The Lepchas are being suppressed in Sikkim. The Sikkim Durbar is intending to rehabilitate 5,000 Tibetan refugees in Sikkim. This move of the Sikkim Durbar is to harm the Lepchas."*

Ruth Karthak created another sensation when she escaped from jail custody and managed to reach the sanctuary of the India House. The Political Officer, N.B. Menon, had her handed over to the Sikkim authorities, who charged Ruth with an additional offence, namely, that she had attempted, succesfully, to run away from legal custody.

On 15th November, 1968, Ruth Karthak was sentenced to two years' Rigorous Imprisonment by the Chief Magistrate of Sikkim, a retired Indian Magistrate serving the Sikkim Government. The Judgement Order read (portion quoted is quoted verbatim et litteratim) :—

"From the evidence of these witnesses it is clear that the accused was attempting to induce the ideas that the Chogyal and his Government was (sic) a partisan one favouring one

*Himalayan Observer, dated 30 Nov., 1968 (p. 1).

community against another and was obviously asking them not to obey the Chogyal and his Government. And she fully knew that by her telling these (things) to the simple villagers like these witneses, a sense of discontentment would be created in them and stir up opposition to the Chogyal and the Government established by law in Sikkim and would incite them to insurrection and rebellion which is the object of sedition as contemplated in section 124A of the Indian Penal Code as applied to Sikkim. Further, from the evidence of these witnesses it is clear that the accused's criticism was not directed towards any individual officer of the governmental machinery but was directed towards the Chogyal and his government and as such towards the very foundation of the State".[1]

Concluding his judgment, the Chief Magistrate observed :—

"I find the accused, Ruth Karthak Lepchani, guilty of the offences committed by her on 17.2.67 and on 20.3.67 and convict her under section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code as applied to Sikkim, for the above offences...".[2]

The Government of Sikkim, however, released Ruth on 10 March, 1969, with orders to quit Sikkim. The order issued by the Chief Secretary to the Government of Sikkim read :—

"The Government of Sikkim does not see any reason to continue in custody of a Sikkim prisoner, Mrs. Ruth Karthak Halim, who is not a subject of Sikkim and who is now undergoing a sentence of imprisonment upon conviction by the Court of Sikkim in Criminal Case No. 9 of 1968.

"It is necessary that Ruth Halim shall leave Sikkim, and the Government hereby orders that the said Mrs. Halim shall remove herself from Sikkim and shall not thereafter enter Sikkim".[3]

Ruth Karthak hurriedly left Sikkim and crossed over to Kalimpong, leaving behind her landed property and house. The Indian Government was not of much help about the disposal of

1. Himalayan Observer, dated 30 Nov., 1968 (p. 1).
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, dated 15 March, 1969 (p. 1).

the property. Ruth, exposed to hardships, had no apparent hope of relief than to wait "for a change in the order of things in my land of birth so that I can go back and serve my people, the Lepchas of Sikkim".

In August, 1969, Bhim Bahadur Gurung was charged with misappropriation of money from a contractor's bill in a news item. This raised a furore in Sikkim, especially as the Sikkim National Congress leaders saw in this an opportunity to punish him for the betrayal of the party in 1967. So hot were things made for Bhim Bahadur Gurung that he had to resign his executive councillorship on 5 September, 1969, "to vindicate my honesty and integrity in the following session of the Sikkim Council".[1]

In the Sikkim Council, the Chief Secretary's report found Bhim Bahadur Gurung "guilty of technical irregularities".[2]

The members of the Sikkim Council, "feeling that Shri B.B. Gurung had been sufficiently punished for his grave misdeeds by his being relieved of his executive councillorship, made the magnanimous gesture of 'allowing' him to remain a member of the Sikkim Council".[3]

Bhim Bahadur Gurung would, perhaps, have found his way back to the Executive Council but for the fact that, for the first time since the institution of Dewanship, the Chogyal's own appointee, an Indian ex-diplomat, had recently taken over the charge of the administration from the Principal Administrative Officer with the imposing Tibetan title of Sidlon (Prime Minister), and the Sidlon did not want, so soon after taking over the administration, to be saddled with an executive councillor who had been found guilty of "technical irregularities".

So Bhim Bahadur Gurung had to cool his heels for some time before being taken back in the Executive Council. On 2nd January, 1970, he was again appointed an Executive Councillor by the Chogyal, but his previous portfolio was not allocated to him. This greatly bewildered the people ; for if Bhim Bahadur

1. Himalayan Observer, dated 6th September, 1969 (p. 1).
2. *Ibid.*, dated Sept. 20, 1969 (p. 4).
3. *Ibid.*, dated 20 September, 1969 (p. 4).

Gurung had been guilty, his reinstatement was an invidious act on the part of the Chogyal ; if he had not been guilty, the denial of his previous portfolio, and this over his protests, made little sense. But then the people of Sikkim were used to taking such things in their strides.

The National Party was also faced with problems. Netuk Bhutiya, the National Party Executive Councillor, and his two deputies had found that their offices were at best sinecures and they had no work except not to ask for more powers for themselves or for the people's representatives. This had led to a very false position on numerous occasions when the people had come to them for help. Since all the three belonged to the Bhutiya-Lepcha community, it dawned upon them that the National Party had been playing a negative role in the body-politic of Sikkim and they, as the leaders of the Bhutiya-Lepcha community, had done harm to the cause of these people. On more than one occasion Netuk and his two deputies approached the Chogyal with requests for wider and more effective powers. The Chogyal, for his part, was naturally alarmed by the change in the outlook of the three National Party leaders, for their demands sought to take away the powers vested in him and, as such, posed a threat to the very foundation of the National Party, whose raison d'etre had been to secure the maximum powers to the Chogyal. The Chogyal had to nip this tendency in the bud lest other members of the National Party should be similarly infected.

The National Party held a series of meetings towards the end of September, 1969. At one of these meetings, held at Norkhil Hotel, Gangtok, the party elected Shri Phurba Maila as President, the incumbent, Martam Topden, having submitted his resignation on grounds of ill-health. The meeting revealed its true nature when speaker after speaker rose to condemn Netuk Bhutiya and his two deputies. The meeting ended and a procession was taken out, shouting "Netuk Lama Murdabad !" (Down with Netuk) ; "Quit the Council !" ; "Denzong Chogyal Ki Jai !" (Victory to the Chogyal of Sikkim).

A split had come about in the National Party. All efforts to patch up the differences proved to be futile.

On December 18, 1969, a new political party was born in Sikkim. This party was founded by Lal Bahadur Basnet, who, years previously, had held the centre of the political stage as the General Secretary of the Sikkim National Congress. The new party was named the Sikkim Janata Party. "The Janata Party has adopted Socialism, Democracy, and the unity of the Sikkimese people as its basic creed. Like Socialists of all ages and climes, this party has also raised the slogan of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity."[1] Lal Bahadur Basnet was elected the party President and Krishna Chandra Pradhan was elected the General Secretary.

The Government of Sikkim issued a Proclamation fixing the 4th General Elections of Sikkim in April, 1970. There were no changes except that the impugned portion of the famous Section 4 (i) (b) was reconstituted to read "total votes of his own community". The stand of the Sikkim National Congress was vindicated, but too late in the day.

A new Election Committee was formed. The Himalayan Observer's comments were :—

"Elections (in Sikkim) are conducted by an Election Committee composed of two officials. Obviously it is not an autonomous body and has to perform tasks that run, at times, palpably counter to common sense.

"The previous Election Committee, thanks to a meddling Durbar, bungled so much and so often that a new Election Committee has been formed this time."[2]

1. Himalayan Observer, dated 27 December, 1969 (p. 6).
2. *Ibid.*, dated 21 February, 1970 (p. 5).

CHAPTER XX

Status Quo Politics

SIKKIM, in the days immediately preceding her fourth elections, was far from the goal of the Indian Government's professed policy of "progressive association of the people of the State with its Government." The onward march of democracy had been checked, and there seemed little hope of any change in the shape of things. Two comments illustrate the post-1967 situation. Writing soon after the 1967-elections, V.H. Coelho, who was then the Indian Political Officer in Sikkim, had observed :—

"The domestic political situation is, again, not very encouraging. Political life in Sikkim is almost stagnant. The political parties have failed to enthuse the people, and new currents hardly flow in the political stream. The younger generation seems to stand aloof and some of it takes shelter, somewhat sulkingly, behind slogans accusing India of a lack of sympathy or even of a new imperialism. This is not the truth. The simple fact is that the political structure needs change and revitalisation."*

Commenting on the approaching election of 1970, a Special Correspondent of the Himalayan Observer wrote :—

"The politics of Sikkim can best be described as the politics of status quo. A democratic facade is sought to be maintained, more as a window-dressing to the outside world than as a sop

*V.H. Coelho, "Sikkim and Bhutan" (p. 52).

to the people, by means of a highly intricate system of voting that has no parallel in the world.

"Though the Sikkim Durbar has, thanks to the ingenuity of some senior Indian officials serving in Sikkim on deputation or otherwise, regained all the lost ground and is now in an unassailably strong position, the trauma of post-1947 shakings it received still largely determines its policy, the keystone of which is to give as little power to the representatives of the people as possible. It is this ingrained fear that prompts the Sikkim Durbar to stoop from its lofty pedestal to meddle in politics by supporting a political party and suborning leaders of political parties that might raise dissident voices. Inevitably, the word 'opposition' in Sikkim politics does not carry the same meaning as it does in any healthy democracy. The right to differ is one of the cardinal virtues of democracy, and, as such, a healthy 'opposition' is regarded as a sine qua non for the smooth functioning of a real democratic form of government.

"But in Sikkim the very word 'opposition' carries an opprobrium, and to be identified as the 'opposition' is to incur the perpetual wrath of the Sikkim Durbar and face continual persecution at the hands of major and minor officials. All sorts of discrimination in granting service opportunities and even stipends to the children of near relatives of the members of the opposition parties are practised. It is against this background that the political parties in Sikkim function. The intelligent reader will realise that by the very nature of things, quite a few political leaders pursue policies that palpably run counter to their professed creed....."*

There were 30 candidates in the field for the 1970-elections. According to the Election Committee, there were 80,000 voters on the voters' list. Four political parties and two factions were contesting the elections :—

"The oldest political party in Sikkim, the Sikkim State Congress, ruled the roast for a brief period. Its initial achievements still form the stock-in-trade of many an opportunist who has found shelter under its flag. This party is professedly

*Himalayan Observer, dated 7 March, 1970 (p. 5).

wedded to democracy, but its performance has been so blatantly anti-democratic that it is now no more than a mere wing of the National Party. This party, which had once succeeded in securing an absolute majority in the Sikkim Council, was almost liquidated as a political body in the 1967 elections, when it secured only one seat. A second seat was secured for it by the prostitution of justice.

"Raised with the express purpose of thwarting the democratic aspirations of the people, the Sikkim National Party, a child of reaction and rank communalism, has progressively gained in power if not in prestige. It has no set policy apart from that of countering any semblance of the growth of democracy. Time and again, it has voiced its choice for an absolute rule by the Sikkim Durbar, untrammelled by the elected representatives of the people. Originally it had entered the political arena as the protector of the Bhutiyas and the Lepchas, who together form one-fourth of the total population of Sikkim. The present Chogyal was once actively associated with this party, and he still makes no bones about giving it all sorts of protection and guidance. Thanks to the cupidity of some top leaders of the Sikkim State Congress, the invaluable counsels of Indian officials, and the combined efforts of reactionaries and communalists, this party has by now so consolidated itself as to render innocuous all opposition."*

The career of the Sikkim National Cangress and the birth of the Janata Party have been dealt with in Chapters XVIII and XIX respectively. Because of the peculiar nature of Sikkim politics, the leader of each party or faction played, within the party or faction, a pre-eminent role, to the extent that the parties and factions were the mere projection of the respective leaders' personality. A brief sketch of each of the leaders of the parties and factions is reproduced below from the pages of the Himalayan Observer :—

"Kazi Lhendup Dorji—President, Sikkim National Congress : Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangsarpa comes from the famous Khangsarpa family of Sikkim. The Khangsarpas have been

*H.O., dated 7 March, 1970 (p. 5).

one of the most important Kazi families of Sikkim. Unfortunately, the feud between the Khangsarpa family and the ruling house has continued to this day, and the Chogyal of Sikkim deeply mistrusts the Kazi. Kazi Lhendup Dorji was ordained a Lama of the Rumtek Monastery. He had to vacate this position. Subsequently he took to politics and has been in the limelight for more than two decades. He can legitimately boast as having been the sole person who held the banner of democracy aloft when lesser people fell by the wayside under the glittering temptation of office and the resultant gain to themselves and their relations. At sixty-five Kazi is still very active, but the lone battle he has had to fight over the years, the frustration he has had to face because of the treachery of some of his colleagues, and the relentless hostility of the Sikkim Durbar, seem to have told even on his patience. Or has age really caught up with him ?

"B.B. Gurung : leader of the S.N.C. faction : Bhim Bahadur Gurung, 40, had been associated with the S.N.C. for years when, in 1967, it bagged eight seats in the Sikkim Council. Since Sri Nahkul Pradhan, with another State Congress councillor, had taken the treacherous step of joining forces with the National Party, Bhim Bahadur Gurung hastened to follow suit by betraying his party.....Bracketed with Nahkul Pradhan, whose example he has followed, Sri Gurung faces an electorate which considers him a political Judas. As if it were not enough, the infamous Pakkigaon affair[1] has driven further nails in the coffin of Sri Gurung's political career.

"Nahkul Pradhan—President, Sikkim State Congress : No other Nepali of Sikkim has been a favourite of the Sikkim Durbar for so long and so consistently as Nahkul Pradhan. Sri Nahkul Pradhan, 49, has been an Executive Councillor longer than anybody else. Where elsewhere it could be a thing to boast and brag about, in Sikkim this constitutes at once the cause and effect of Sri Nahkul's betrayal of his party, the people of Sikkim, and his professed creed of democracy.

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1. The misappropriation of funds and the subsequent developments described in the preceding chapter had their origin at the Pakkigaon School.

"A released Havildar Clerk of the Indian Army, Nahkul Pradhan joined politics under the tutelage of his uncle, Shri Kashi Raj Pradhan, soon after feudalism had been brought down on its knees by the first leaders of the Sikkim State Congress. While others fought and won the battle, the uncle and the nephew rushed forward to seize the gains. Shri Nahkul has not only not looked back but has also added to his triumphs by elbowing out his own uncle when events so conspired against the two that one of them had to make room for the other...

"Nahkul Pradhan has so completely identified himself with the National Party and its ideals, or the absence of ideals, that the State Congress was almost kicked into oblivion in 1967..... He may very well yet have the unenviable honour of presiding over the liquidation of the Sikkim State Congress, which, as Nahkul's tool, is already a moribund political organ.

"Martam Topden and Netuk Lama—leaders of the pro-Durbar and anti-Durbar groups in the National Party : There is nothing distinguished about these two non-entities except the fact that their mutual jealousies have assumed such proportions as to mark the beginning of the end of the National Party.

"Sri Martam Topden has travelled far since the day he joined the National Party as an ordinary peasant. He has made his pile, but the lure of office is so strong that he could hardly wait for his arch-rival, Netuk Lama, to complete his three-year term as the National Party Executive Councillor. Sri Martam Topden is contesting from the East Constituency, whither he has been pushed by Netuk from his comparatively safe constituency in the north.

"Sri Netuk has risen to his present position of wealth and rank from the humblest of beginnings. At one time a rank communalist, a favourite of the Sikkim Durbar, and a dedicated member of the National Party, Netuk has shed a little of all of his said qualities. With the Sikkim Durbar favouring Martam Topden, Netuk is out not only to draw Martam's blood but also to cleave the National Party in two opposing factions.

"Lal Bahadur Basnet—President, Sikkim Janata Party : Lal Bahadur Basnet, 43, is the President of the recently launched

socialist party called the Sikkim Janata Party. Educated at the King George's Royal Indian Military College, Jullundur, Sri Basnet was graduated from the Punjab University. He has had a chequered career as a soldier, teacher, sportsman, magistrate, journalist, businessman, and politician. He appears to understand the mood and aspirations of the educated elite of Sikkim who occupy the top positions in the Government....."*

The factional in-fighting between the Netuk and Martam groups was kept as muted as possible. In certain constituencies where one group had strong candidates, the other group withdrew its candidates. But even so in a number of constituencies both factions had parallel candidates. This clearly indicated the presence of a rift, and its natural result was to split the Bhutiya-Lepcha electorate into two distinct camps. Since the party as a whole still enjoyed the Durbar's patronage, Netuk's anti-Durbar postures notwithstanding, the differences were kept within control. Under the political situation obtaining in Sikkim, howsoever the bulk of Bhutiya-Lepcha voters voted, by and large, the National Party was bound to be the beneficiary, and that was a redeeming feature in so far as the Sikkim Durbar was concerned.

An overwhelming majority of the electorate, including a sizeable number of politically-conscious Bhutiya-Lepcha voters of the South and West constituencies, was faced with a hard choice. The State Congress, the Sikkim National Congress and its dissident wing, and the Janata Party, all of them addressed themselves to this electorate. Their programmes were superficially alike inasmuch as all of them presented themselves as the votaries of democracy and champions of the fuller participation of the people in the Government.

The Sikkim National Congress, by virtue of having Bhutiya leaders, had a greater appeal to the democratic-minded Bhutiya-Lepcha voters. The Nepalese electorate, however, had begun to suspect this party because of its acceptance of the 'parity formula',

*H.O., dated 14 March, 1970 (p. 5).

which had begun to gall and hurt the Nepalese. But then Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Nahkul Pradhan, and Bhim Bahadur Gurung, had all amply demonstrated their weaknesses in the wake of the 1967 elections. It was amidst such a situation that the Janata Party, despite a late start and poor financial resources, posed a threat to the two factions of the Sikkim National Congress and the State Congress. "The rising expectation of the masses is well matched by the professed radicalism of the Janata Party and its clarion call for socialism and democracy... These Social Democrats have no doubt created panic in the ranks of the Sikkim National Party, the National Congress and the Sikkim State Congress".[1]

Although the State Congress leaders and Bhim Bahadur Gurung talked about doing away with discrimination between different communities and the abolition of the 'parity formula', the people had learnt by experience to take their words with a pinch of salt. But when the Janata Party leaders said the same thing, not only did the people feel that, given the people's mandate, the party leadership was capable of removing the iniquities or actively fighting for their removal, but the establishment also quaked with apprehensions. The only drawback in the Janata Party was that, owing to poor finances, it had fielded few candidates.

On 9th and 14th April, 1970, the people of Sikkim went to the polls. Soon after, the counting of votes began at Gangtok. Owing to the complicated system of voting, and hence the counting, a large number of officials was drawn for this purpose from the administration, paralysing it for the duration of the counting period. It took fourteen days to count about 10,000 votes from all over Sikkim. The Sikkim Government figure of more than 50,000 votes was misleading inasmuch as each voter in Sikkim cast 6 or 7 tickets. The 50,000 tickets counted as votes could hardly represent more than 10,000 voters if not votes.[2] As such only about 12½ of the 80,000 or so persons said to have been listed as voters cast their votes.

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1. H.O. editorial, dated 28 March, 1970.

2. See the voting system in Chapter XVIII, page 135 Table 2.

The result announced on 10 May, 1970, showed :

Sikkim National Party (both factions)	—8
Sikkim National Congress (Kazi faction)	—5
Sikkim State Congress	—4
Scheduled Castes (no party affiliation)	—1
	18

Though the Janata Party failed to win a single seat, it had acted as a catalyst. The Sikkim National Congress came down to its pre-1967 level. At its expense, the State Congress managed to double its previous total. Within the National Party, Netuk faction had won four seats. In order to prevent the widening of the rift, Netuk Lama was elected the leader of the National Party in Council. Netuk took this opportunity to spring a surprise.

Netuk Lama not only renewed his plea for increased powers for the people's representatives but also began parleys with Kazi Lhendup Dorji with a view to forming a 'democratic coalition'. The proposed coalition had a membership of 13 and, as such, enjoyed an absolute majority not only among the elected members of the Council but also among its total membership, including seven Durbar nominees. The Sikkim Durbar was really discomfited when the two leaders gave out that they would put an end to the diarchy and form a ministry. Shocked into disbelief at the dramatic turn of events, whereby the National Party was being used as a weapon to destroy the very hands that had forged it, the Chogyal deferred the formation of the Executive Council on the pretext of the advent of the Tibetan "Black Month".

Hectic political activity and much horse-trading went on behind the scene. When the Black Month had run its course, the Chogyal had succeeded in totally discarding Netuk and his faction, and Martam Topden emerged as the leader of the National Party in Council. Before Netuk Lama could counter this blow, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, sensing the disaster that was about to overwhelm him, disengaged himself from the 'coalition'

and began to bargain with the Sikkim Durbar for the representation of his party in the Executive Council. The Chogyal had turned the tables on Netuk and Kazi Lhendup, and he was in no mood to accommodate the Kazi. So, once again, Martam Topden and Nahkul Pradhan headed the National Party and State Congress coalition. So insistent did Kazi Lhendup's entreaties to be included in the Government become that the Chogyal gave the party one seat in the Executive Council. The Chogyal killed two birds with one stone : while he gave inadequate representation to the Sikkim National Congress, he very effectively put an end to the so-called 'opposition' of this party. The Executive Council was enlarged to 6 with no deputies. The party position in the Executive Council was as follows :

National Party	—3
State Congress	—2
National Congress	—1
	6

Martam Topden was designated the Senior Executive Councillor. The other E.Cs. were :—Ashok Tshering Bhutiya and Harka Bahadur Basnet (both of N.P.) ; Nahkul Pradhan and Kalu Rai (both of State Congress) ; and Kazi Lhendup Dorji of the S.N.C.

The all-party Executive Council gave a semblance of superficial unity of all interests and the absence of any opposition. In fact, it was the reflection of the erosion of democratic principles, the unchallenged supremacy of the Sikkim Durbar in all matters, including party politics, and the buckling of the Sikkim National Congress and its leader, Kazi Lhendup Dorji.

Towards the middle of June, 1970, the President of India was scheduled to visit Sikkim. There were secret meetings of the Study Forum, which wanted a show-down with India by staging a 'black-flag' demonstration on the occasion of the President's visit. The visit was postponed owing to 'inclement weather'. The Indian authorities succeeded in averting an unpleasant situation, which would have created a stir in India and caused raised-eyebrows abroad, though for different reasons. In Sikkim anti-Indian

elements, having gauged the moral weakness of India, began to devise more effective methods to bully the wallowing giant.

The Sikkim United Front was launched in September, 1970. It heralded its birth by issuing a leaflet in which it criticised India for having foisted the 1950 Treaty on Sikkim, and demanded its revision as precursor to Sikkim's total independence. The most strident voice among the members of the United Front was that of Krishna Chandra Pradhan, the erstwhile General Secretary of the Janata Party, who had found his new affiliation highly lucrative.

If the brains behind the United Front had just wanted to probe the reactions of the Indian Government, this limited objective was more than achieved by a single demonstration that followed the propaganda tour of the United Front leaders all over Sikkim. One Sunday in October, 1970, the United Front held an open meeting at Gangtok bazaar. Prominent posters were displayed all over, asking Indians to quit Sikkim and grant full independence to her. The leaders spat venom on India and the Indian Government. Indians in Sikkim, soldiers, businessmen, diplomats, and officials, were greatly perturbed by the increasing anti-Indian sentiment of the United Front and other Sikkimese.

Alarmed by the Political Officer's report, Shri T. N. Kaul, the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, flew from Delhi to Bagdogra and hopped by helicopter from there to Gangtok to talk over things with the Chogyal. Unlike his visit following upon the 1968 children's demonstration, this time the Foreign Secretary was cold shouldered and had to beat a hasty retreat within 24 hours. Asked by pressmen about his sudden and short visit, Kaul answered that he had just come to pay his compliments to the Chogyal and the Gyalmo. Many people read in Kaul's remarks the plain message that the birds of the policy makers in Delhi had come home to roost.

In May, 1971, a high-powered delegation of Sikkimese officials went to Delhi for talks over Sikkim's Fourth Five-Year Plan. The Chogyal also visited Delhi from time to time to guide the Sikkimese delegation. The proposed plan outlay was as high as Rs. 26 crores ($ 34·66 million), which was Rs. 5·63

crores ($ 7·506 million) more than all the money spent for the previous three plans put together. Besides, the accent this time was on revenue earning projects so that Sikkim could develop a self-generating economy.

Delhi, at first, looked askance at the plan, its nature, and its ambitious size. After much hard bargaining, the plan was pruned down to Rs. 18½ crores ($ 24·66 million) and the revenue earning projects were mercilessly slashed. To cap it all, Sikkim was asked to contribute a part of the outlay so that it would have, according to the terminology used in Delhi, a sense of participation.

The mood of the Sikkimese officials and, perhaps, the Chogyal also was reflected by an editorial in "Sikkim" :—

"From the little news that has trickled down, we understand that Rupees eighteen and a half crores have been sanctioned as funds for the Fourth Five-Year Plan. The initial attempt on the part of the Indian Government to insist on Sikkim's contribution of one and a half crore of rupees has been withdrawn. What does this indicate ? Where are such schemes which have been approved (and) which would earn revenue after some years ? Do the Government of India realize that in spite of our repeated requests for having revenue earning schemes for initiating a self-generating economy, all (such schemes) have been turned down or ignored ?

"But let this be a warning for all of us that we are not dying for money and the amount given, which is being stressed upon times without number, be better refused if our larger interests are to be jeopardised. We must remember that Sikkim was here when the Plans were not, and (Sikkim) will continue to be here (even) if we decide to discontinue the Development Plans.

"If the amount for the revenue earning schemes is not sufficient, then it would be in the interest of Sikkim not to accept such aid....Does this not show the hypocrisy of the Government of India ?

"Is the Indian Government indicating that we should increase our taxes, because theirs are high, or is it that they want the

poor Sikkimese to stand up against the Chogyal and the administration should taxes be enhanced ?"*

The United Front also took up the issue. The net result of all this was that much of the pruning was removed. Eventually the outlay rose steeply and stopped a trifle short of the original Rs. 26 crores. The Sikkimese were satisfied, for they had their way, and so were the Indians, for the number of Indian officials in Sikkim had to increase in order to successfully implement the Fourth Five-Year Plan of Sikkim.

*"Sikkim" fortnightly, Gangtok, dated May 11, 1971, Editorial.

CHAPTER XXI

Khukri Versus Prayer Wheel

THE combined efforts of the Study Forum and the United Front, supplemented by the outspoken editorial and other comments of the "Sikkim Fortnightly" had, while succeeding in irritating the Government of India, failed to unduly perturb them. The authorities in Delhi knew, and drew their strength and confidence from, the fact that the dispensation they had contrived to give to Sikkim ensured that only the Chogyal, supported by a substantial majority of the Sikkimese people, could upset their apple cart by asking for the revision of the 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty or for any other significant political change. The 1953 Constitutional Proclamation had driven too deep a wedge between the two major communities as well as between the Chogyal and the great majority of the Sikkimese people for them to come together to an extent causing alarm to the Government of India. However, there were some fresh irritants.

I. S. Chopra, a retired Indian diplomat, had joined the Sikkim Administration with the high-sounding title of Sidlon on 4.6.69 with a salary of Rs. 3,000/- per month, an entertainment allowance of Rs. 48,000/- per annum, and a host of other perquisites and privileges not enjoyed by any other previous head of the administration. In addition, the unofficial title of "His Excellency" was appended to his name and freely bandied about in Sikkim. Shri Chopra, it gradually emerged, had given convincing assurances to the Chogyal that if he were appointed the head of the Sikkim Administration, he had sufficient pull in

the External Affairs Ministry of the Government of India to bring about the revision of the 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty to be followed up by the Chogyal's elevation to the status enjoyed by the ruler of Bhutan – a vertical jump from His Highness to His Majesty and all the concomitant benefits – and Sikkim's entry into the United Nations Organisation. Such was the confidence inspired by the Sidlon that the Chogyal went all out to humour every passing whim of this dignitary and loaded him and his wife with costly gifts, including an expensive foreign car—of course out of public funds.

Towards the middle of 1971, the Sidlon had already completed two years in Sikkim, yet the opportune moment for him to take up the issue of the treaty revision did not seem to have arrived. At about this time, the "Himalayan Observer", an English language weekly published from Kalimpong, exposed, through a series of articles, rank corruption in the Sikkim Administration, supported by irrefutable facts and figures, evidently furnished by persons working in the departments concerned. Since all of the high officials concerned were the confidants of the Chogyal, and members of the Study Forum into the bargain, the administration failed to institute any enquiry or take any other action despite the hue and cry raised, including questions and resolutions in the Sikkim Council. While the public mind was still agitated over the scandals, the Himalayan Observer came out with a real scoop divulging that the Sidlon had been granted a 'loan' of Rs. 2 lakhs by the Chogyal for constructing a house in Delhi. Though the Government of Sikkim tried to draw a red herring across the trail, the harm had been done sufficiently, and Indian intelligence agencies carried out secret investigations and found the allegations to be true. During the course of the investigations, some more skeletons in Shri Chopra's cupboard were discovered. It came to light that Shri Chopra, who had been entrusted with the task of ordering expensive foreign fittings and furnishings for the Sikkim House in Delhi, had been ordering extra quantities of these items for his own house too—of course the Government of Sikkim or the people of Sikkim was footing the bill. Shri Chopra's name had begun to stink in the corridors

of the Foreign Ministry in Delhi, of which the old man seems to have been wholly oblivious.

The Sikkim National Party submitted for discussion and adoption in the Sikkim Council, September 1971 session, a resolution demanding the removal of Clause 15 (*ii*) from the 1953 Proclamation, which debarred the Sikkim Council from "discussing, asking questions about and dealing in any manner with, the external relations of the State, including relations with the Government of India and any commitments entered into by the Maharaja with the Government of India". This resolution brought out a number of interesting details hitherto little known or not known at all. Whereas even fairly well-informed political leaders had believed that the 1953 Proclamation had been issued by the Sikkim Darbar with the consent of the Government of India, it was now revealed that the Proclamation had been drafted by Indians, approved by the Government of India, and the Chogyal had merely been asked to sign it. What is more, the slightest change in the Proclamation had to have the prior sanction of the Government of India. So, on the advice of the Sidlon, the resolution was withdrawn and, in its place, a petition was prepared requesting the Government of India to accord their sanction so that the resolution could be introduced in the Council. The signatures of all the councillors except Kazi Lhendup Dorji of the Sikkim National Congress, who bluntly refused to have anything to do with a matter that sought to undermine, in any degree, the Indian hold in Sikkim, were obtained.

The Sidlon could no longer avoid discharging the obligation he had undertaken at the time of being appointed to his highly remunerative job in Sikkim. Armed with the petition bearing the signatures of the councillors of Sikkim, Shri Chopra went to Delhi only to find that the other side was more than ready to meet him. Shri Chopra not only failed in his mission but came back with the threat that, if the 1953 Proclamation had to be changed at all, it had to be changed thoroughly in consonance with the times, and the people should have a proper say in this regard, clearly implying thereby that the councillors elected under the existing system were not the true representatives of the people. And that was enough to throw the Chogyal and the leaders of the National Party into total disarray, and the matter rested there for the time being.

After the Sidlon's fruitless mission to Delhi, even the leaders of the National Party began to comment on the waste of public money in the maintenance of a white elephant as the Sidlon of Sikkim. Since the Government of India had insisted upon the recovery of the 'loan' from Shri Chopra, there was no choice for the Chogyal but to let the Sidlon continue in office so that the money could be recovered from his emoluments. Such, however, was the force of public clamour that Shri Chopra was relieved of his executive functions on 27th July, 1972; but he went on receiving his full emoluments for the simple reason that a substantial portion of the 'loan' of Rs. 2 lakhs remained yet to be recovered.

During all this time the internal situation in Sikkim had been steadily deteriorating. Corruption, nepotism, favouritism, and rank communalism had begun to gnaw at the very vitals of the administration. As even the 'paper-opposition-party' of Kazi Lhendup Dorji had become a part of the administration, the people did not know where to turn for guidance and succour. Kazi Lhendup Dorji had, apparently, joined the Government against the wishes of his party colleagues, who never ceased to pester him with their persistent demands asking him to resign from the Executive Council—which, according to them, was a standing affront to the Kazi as a person and political leader, to the Sikkim National Congress as a democratic party, and to such democracy as was practised in Sikkim. The Kazi did not comply with the wishes of his colleagues, but, in protest against the excesses of the administration to which he had tenaciously clung for almost two years, he issued a succession of propaganda bulletins. On 26 January, 1972, the Sikkim National Congress issued its Bulletin No. 2, which carried a scathing criticism of the Chogyal and the Administration.

The Chogyal and the councillors belonging to the National Party and the Sikkim State Congress were greatly nettled by the bulletin, for the Sikkim National Congress leader, according to them, was trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds by at once functioning as a member of the all-party Government and as the leader of the opposition party. Kazi Lhendup Dorji was summoned by the Chogyal and asked to explain his conduct in the presence of witnesses. The Kazi pleaded that

the bulletin was issued by a majority vote of party delegates and, as such, he was helpless. He apologised to the Chogyal for his part in the meeting where the matter appearing in the bulletin had largely been thrashed out. The Kazi was asked to submit his apologies in writing, which he promised to do and asked for time. Subsequently the Kazi refused to commit himself in writing for fear that such a step would irreparably damage his image and ruin his future political career.

The Sikkim National Party introduced a resolution in the Sikkim Council Budget Session (28th March to 7th April, 1972) condemning the Sikkim National Congress bulletin and asking the Government to take legal action against the Party. That apart, a motion of no-confidence against the Executive Councillor, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, was also tabled on 3rd April and taken up for discussion on the 6th April.

On 6th April, the resolution against the Sikkim National Congress was passed by an overwhelming majority of the Sikkim Council. All eyes were, however, fixed on the motion of no-confidence against Kazi Lhendup Dorji. Member after member stood up to condemn the E.C.'s behaviour. Even his colleagues from the Executive Council joined the chorus. The voting on the issue was fixed for the following afternoon.

On 7th afternoon the motion was carried through by an overwhelming majority of the Sikkim Council, with not a single vote against it ; the Sikkim National Congress councillors had deemed it prudent to absent themselves from the Council with a view to evading the unedifying task of voting against their leader or the equally taxing one of voting for him.

As a sequel to the resolution adopted by the Sikkim Council, the Sikkim Government filed a complaint against the Publicity Secretary of the S.N.C., D. B. Gurung, under whose signature the bulletin had been published, charging him with sedition under section 124A of the Indian Penal Code. Before the warrant of arrest could be executed against D. B. Gurung, Lhendup Dorji Kazi whisked him away to Kalimpong. Since the Kazi had no intention to fight out the case in the court, D.B. Gurung was compelled to live in the servants' quarters of the Kazi's house at Kalimpong, more like the Kazi's prisoner than his party's Publicity Secretary.

On 28th May, 1972, Kazi Lhendup Dorji was dismissed from the Executive Council. The next day he set out for a visit to Europe with his wife, leaving D. B. Gurung under the watchful eye of Nar Bahadur Khatiwada, a young college student who, apart from functioning as the Assistant Publicity Secretary of the Sikkim National Congress, was a factotum in the Kazi's household.

The Sikkim Intelligence was fully informed of D.B. Gurung's plight, aggravated by the mounting tyranny of Nar Bahadur Khatiwada. Cautious approaches were made to D.B. Gurung assuring him that if he came to Sikkim, surrendered himself, and made a clean breast of everything, he would earn the Chogyal's clemency and eventual pardon. Gurung escaped one evening in June and, the following morning, surrendered himself in the Chief Magistrate's Court, where he pleaded that he did not know the English language, in which the original bulletin had been published, and that he had been used as the cat's paw by the Kazi, his foreign wife, and Nar Bahadur Khatiwada.

Following a Government complaint, the Chief Magistrate issued non-bailable warrants of arrest against Kazi Lhendup Dorji and Nar Bahadur Khatiwada under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code and Rule 12 of the Sikkim Public Security Rules, ordering the two accused to be produced before him on July 27, 1972.

Kazi Lhendup returned from Europe in August, but did not enter Sikkim. It appeared that the S.N.C. would fade away, for the Kazi appeared to have neither the courage to court arrest and face the charges in the court nor the popular support needed to start a mass movement.

The Government began, at about this time, to prepare the voters' list, indicating thereby that the next elections, due in March, 1973, would very probably be held much earlier. The S.N.C. seemed to be on the way out of the political stage of Sikkim, but some other forces were, at this time, busy consolidating themselves, and this proved a blessing, before long, to Kazi Lhendup Dorji and his party. And here we come to one of the vital weaknesses of the Chogyal, the Bhutiya leadership,

and the whole administrative set-up, *viz.*, communalism, or more explicitly, the anti-Nepali policies pursued by the Sikkim Darbar in the wake of the 1953 Proclamation. Anti-Nepalism was not a sudden or freak development. It was carefully planned and subtly executed over the years with the connivance of the Government of India.

The reader will have seen that over the centuries the Bhutiyas and the Lepchas had attained a symbiosis, with the Bhutiyas as the masters and the Lepchas as the followers. The Nepalis, the late-comers, who were also the harbingers of an alien culture, had entered Sikkim much against the wishes of the majority of the Bhutiya nobility, including the rulers of Sikkim. After the popular agitation for democratic reforms in Sikkim, in 1949, the Government of India had eventually introduced a system that not only ran counter to the basic principles of democracy but was so designed as to keep the Bhutiya-Lepcha and the Nepali communities perpetually divided. This was imperialism at its best and, as such, directly opposed to what India was preaching abroad right then ; the Government of India's policies, however, stemmed from the unpalatable fact that, east of Nepal, the whole hill areas, including Darjeeling and Sikkim, and the foothills extending to Bhutan and Assam had an overwhelming majority of Nepali population and, as such, in the minds of the framers of policy in Delhi, constituted a potential menace should the ideas of pan-Nepalism spread among these people. Whereas during the British rule, this very factor had been the source of confidence and strength to the rulers—such was the trust and faith of the British in the loyalty of the Nepalis—, their Indian successors in Delhi, assailed by fears of the rise of pan-Nepalism, chose a course that sought to keep the Nepalis in check. The Indian officers serving in Sikkim faithfully implemented this policy of their government and always sided with the Bhutiya-Lepchas whenever there was any clash of interests between them and the Nepalese.

As for the spread of the communal virus in Sikkim, one could not do better than start with the attitude of the Chogyal of Sikkim. Talking to a visiting foreign journalist, in 1960, the Chogyal (then the heir-apparent and de facto ruler of Sikkim) had observed that in the ultimate analysis the winner of the

struggle between the 'Khukri' and the 'Prayer Wheel' would be the arbiter of things in Sikkim. And therein lay the key to a mentality that charted a tragic course of collision between the Nepalese of Sikkim, the wielders of the 'Khukri', who formed 75% of the total population, and the Bhutiyas, the spinners of the 'Prayer Wheel', who formed 12% of the population, but who dragged along the supine Lepchas more with a view to increasing their numbers to 25% (the Lepchas formed 13% of the population) than to safeguarding the interests of this downtrodden community.

With the blessings of the Government of India, the instrument of 'parity' was introduced whereby the 25% Bhutiya-Lepcha population was given equal representation with the 75% Nepali population. Parity was extended to every conceivable field, like the award of stipends and scholarships, and eventually to employment. There were large areas where the Nepalese could not settle. Whereas the Bhutiya-Lepchas could buy land from the Nepalese, the Nepalese could not buy land from the Bhutiya-Lepchas. And over and above all these, the Chogyal, himself a Bhutiya, as the supreme authority in Sikkim, began to give shape to a policy of increasingly open discrimination against the Nepalese. A hate-Nepali campaign had been launched and sedulously nurtured among Bhutiyas, particularly the students. Nepalese were eased out of jobs wherever possible. The police force, particularly the officers corps, was progressively Bhutianised.

In a small country like Sikkim the cumulative effect of the anti-Nepali policies was that all the best land came to be concentrated in the hands of the Bhutiyas, the best jobs in the State became Bhutiya preserves, and a systematic exodus of the Nepalese from Sikkim began. So feeble had the voice of Nepali leaders become that the instrument of 'parity' was disregarded whenever the Bhutiyas gained by doing so at the expense of the Nepalese. The trend that the Nepalese were on the way out and that such numbers as finally remained in Sikkim would join the Lepchas under the Bhutiya heel, had become obvious to the Nepali intelligentsia as well as to the intelligent among the peasantry. And to cap it all, some highly placed Bhutiya

officials began, some time towards the middle of 1972, to talk in terms of hastening the ouster of the Nepalese by adopting measures perfected by General Amin of Uganda. There were widespread rumours that the Bhutiyas were busy collecting, for this purpose, a sizeable arsenal ; the Bhutanese in Bhutan were being contacted ; Khampas and other Tibetan refugees were being secretly armed; the Bhutiyas of Lachen and Lachung in North Sikkim, in whom communalism, nurtured by ignorance, isolation, and propaganda, had taken deep roots, were being armed with bows and arrows and some modern weapons ; in short all preparations for a tribal Armageddon were being made.

The Nepali exodus and the all-round decline in the position of the Nepalese in Sikkim had assumed such alarming proportions as to disturb the peace of mind of even those Nepalese who had gained the favours of the Sikkim Darbar and flourished either by becoming the faithful followers of the National Party or by making the Sikkim State Congress wholly subservient to that Party. The threat to their comfortable lives, the insecurity for themselves and for their children stared them in the face. So they began to think in terms of rejuvenating the Sikkim State Congress by incorporating in that moribund organisation the radicalism of the Janata Party, which the Nepali people of Sikkim had so utterly rejected in the 1970 elections.

On the 15th of August, 1972, seven representatives from the Sikkim State Congress met an equal number of the Janata Party representatives and drew up a tentative programme for the two parties' merger and the formation of a new party to be called the Sikkim Janata Congress. In their new-born enthusiasm, the leaders of the proposed new party undertook a whirlwind tour of Sikkim, addressing meetings and trying to rouse the enthusiasm of the Nepalese people by advocating a militant Nepali resurgence. Even before the new party was formally born, the impact of the propaganda was sufficiently strong and provocative for the Sikkim Darbar to sit up and take notice of the new wave. In a well-calculated bid to nip the new menace in the bud, some leaders of the Sikkim State Congress, who had thrived under the old dispensation but saw no place for themselves in the new organisation, were contacted and prevailed upon to form a dissenting group that sought to keep alive the Sikkim State

Congress or, in other words, to thwart the proposed merger. These dissidents sounded Kashi Raj Pradhan, who had, to all intents and purposes, become a living political fossil, to assume their leadership. The old man turned the opportunity thus thrown in his path to his profit by requesting the Government for a further loan of Rs. 100,000 (the nail factory started with the first loan of Rs. 50,000 had apparently gone to seed) so that he could devote his full time and energies to politics, free from business worries. The fresh loan was granted with an alacrity rarely shown by the Government of Sikkim in more genuine cases. And the confabulations of the dissidents under the unpublicised leadership of Kashi Raj began in order to devise ways and means designed to put a spoke in the wheel of the proposed merger of the State Congress and the Janata Party.

On 23rd September, 1972, the Government of Sikkim issued an Extraordinary Gazette Notification fixing the dates for the next elections for 10.1.73 and 23.1.73, the first date for polling in the South and the West Constituency, and the second date for the remaining three constituencies. The last date for the filing of nomination papers was fixed for 31.10.72.

The Government issued a Press Release on October 3, 1972, which was carried by the official news organ, the "Sikkim Herald," in its issue of even date (page 1), and which is reproduced below :—

"Sikkim is a land of peace and harmony and we are indeed proud that we have been able to score remarkable progress in every field through substantial participation by all sections of people irrespective of caste and creed. If we are to sustain the significant pace of advancement, it is absolutely imperative that the happy social equilibrium we have achieved so far must be maintained at all cost.

"Unfortunately some disgruntled and short sighted elements are reported to be sowing the seeds of communal discord in the country with possibilities of serious consequences. The Government of Sikkim takes a serious view of the communal preaching propagated by these misguided and self-seeking persons, calculated to create communal trouble and foment caste,

class, religious and racial differences. If there are any genuine grievances nurtured by any section or community they could bring these grievances to the notice of the Government in the usual form of petition, and the Government will certainly look into the matters and redress the legitimate grievances. The liberal and accommodative policies pursued by the Government should not be construed as weakness, but in any matter affecting the peace, tranquility and security of the country as a whole, the Government shall not tolerate any undesirable and subversive activities, and will take strong measures against such anti-social and anti-national elements."

The Press Release was, perhaps, meant as a morale booster to Kashi Raj Pradhan and his followers, and as a threat to the advocates of the merger. The Government had made it clear that the Sikkim Janata Congress was not wanted in Sikkim politics. But the Press Release was grist to the S.J.C. mill. The leaders began to read the Press Release during meetings and interpret it as meaning that the Sikkim Government wanted the Nepalese people of Sikkim to accept lying down the continuation of the iniquities heaped upon them.

The Sikkim Janata Congress came into being on 26th October, 1972, but at the cost of accommodating a number of unpopular candidates for the forthcoming elections on the express condition imposed by the dissidents, who, otherwise, would have wrecked the merger.

The birth of the Sikkim Janata Congress spelt danger not only to the Chogyal and the National Party but also to the Government of India and the 'special interests' of India in Sikkim. The new party was saturated with the ideals of the Sikkim Janata Party, which, during the brief period of its active political campaigning, had stridently castigated the Government of India for the "dirty role" it had played in deliberately introducing communalism in Sikkim politics and for "murdering" the incipient democracy in Sikkim. The Sikkim National Congress under the leadership of Kazi Lhendup Dorji had been the Government of India's greatest ally, for the Kazi, while professedly practising nationalism, was so blatantly pro-Indian that in Sikkim political circles he was known as the agent of the

Government of India. In the common interests of the Sikkim Darbar and the Government of India, there had to be some force to counter the political threat posed by the Sikkim Janata Congress. And no leader or party was better equipped than Kazi Lhendup or the Sikkim National Congress to pull away Nepali voters from the Sikkim Janata Congress.

Talks held between a senior Indian diplomat and Rai Bahadur T.D. Densapa, adviser to the Chogyal, eventually resulted in a compromise : the Indian diplomat prevailed upon Kazi Lhendup to submit a written apology, and the Chogyal was persuaded not to give publicity to the apology. Just before the last date fixed for the filing of nomination papers the cases against Kazi Lhendup Dorji and Nar Bahadur Khatiwada were withdrawn. On Kazi's request, the date for the filing of nomination papers was extended—in itself an unprecedented concession.

The Sikkim National Congress had reached its high water-mark in 1967. The overwhelming support of all communities it had enjoyed in 1967 had begun to decline after the rice agitation fiasco. After the issue of Bulletin No. 2, and the subsequent issue of warrant of arrest against Kazi Lhendup Dorji, Bhutiya-Lepcha support to the party had undergone a sudden change for worse. Thendup Tshering, the only other Bhutiya-Lepcha councillor of the S.N.C., had resigned from the party and joined the National Party. Sonam Tshering, the stalwart vice-president of the Sikkim National Congress, first resigned from the vice-presidentship and then from the party membership. This was a signal for such Bhutiya-Lepchas as remained with Kazi to quit en masse. The Kazi was thus left with only Nepali supporters, their number being a small fraction of what it was in 1967.

The three parties, the Sikkim National Party, the Sikkim Janata Congress, and the Sikkim National Congress, launched their election campaigns. A sizeable number of youths attached itself to the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim Janata Congress. These young men, almost all of them Nepalese, had been frustrated by the conditions in Sikkim. These frustrated and impatient young men lent their all-out support to the two

parties, both of which were pledged to the introduction of sound democratic principles in Sikkim. The one and only difference between the ideals of the two parties was the issue of 'parity'. The Sikkim Janata Congress wanted 'parity' to be scrapped lock, stock, and barrel ; the Sikkim National Congress had not changed its original stand wherein the maintenance of 'parity' was pledged, and therefore it was implied that this party still adhered to its continuance. But since 'parity' was anathema to the Nepalese, and since the S.N.C. drew its sustenance from the Nepalese as much as did the Sikkim Janata Congress, a total silence on this issue was maintained by Kazi Lhendup Dorji and the handful of Bhutiya-Lepcha party-men that still remained with the S.N.C.

The polling took place on due dates, and the laborious counting of 'tickets' began soon after.

CHAPTER XXII

The Revolt

THE counting of votes or tickets began on 29 January, 1973. On 2nd February, a small incident took place inside the White Hall—where the counting was in progress—which was to spark off a revolt that shook Sikkim. A member of the Sikkim National Congress, finding that some of the tickets polled at Rabong Polling Station in the South Constituency had not been separated at the perforated points, protested to the members of the Election Committee asking them to stop the counting and address themselves to the task of investigating the anomaly.*

This led to a heated exchange of words between the S.N.C. member, who happened to be a Nepali, and the candidate in whose box the impugned tickets were found, who happened to be a Bhutiya and a member of the Sikkim National Party. Their verbal exchanges took a communal turn. Partisans joined the respective sides. Eventually the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim Janata Congress representatives left the counting hall, boycotting the counting.

The next day the S.N.C. and the S.J.C. leaders submitted a written protest to the Chogyal alleging that the polling at Rabong had been rigged and demanding the arrest of the offcials involved in the rigging. Finding no immediate response to their protest

* The voting system has been dealt with in detail in chapter XVIII.

note, the S.N.C. and the S.J.C. youths joined together and held a meeting at Gangtok under the crossed banners of their parties, and formulated a list of demands. The demands were :—Full-fledged democracy in Sikkim; a written constitution ; fundamental rights ; one man one vote based on adult franchise ; and abolition of the 'parity' formula. The last demand severed whatever little difference there had remained between the ideals of the two parties.

The election results announced by the Election Committee on 15th February showed the following party-position in the new Sikkim Council :—

Party	*B/L*	*Nepali*	*Tsong*	*Sch./Castes*	*Sangha*	*General*	*Total*
S.N.P.	7	2	—	1	1	—	11
S.N.C.	—	3	1	—	—	1	5
S.J.C.	—	2	—	—	—	—	2
	7	7	1	1	1	1	18

The Sikkim National Party had come out with an absolute majority, while the Sikkim National Congress and the Sikkim Janata Congress trailed far behind, even their combined strength being a poor second to the S.N.P.'s brilliant first. On 8 March, the new councillors, including 6 members nominated by the Sikkim Durbar, were sworn in. The S.N.C. and S.J.C. councillors, despite earlier pledges before the people to boycott the oath taking ceremony, also took the oath.

The S.N.C. and S.J.C. leaders decried the election results as the product of rigging and a conspiracy between the S.N.P. and the Sikkim Administration, and heightened their criticism of the Government. So hot did the propaganda of the S.N.C. and S.J.C. leaders become that the Government arrested K.C. Pradhan, the former General Secretary of the Janata Party who, after flirting with the Sikkim United Front, had managed to become the President of the Sikkim Janata Congress. Pradhan's arrest was a signal to the impatient young men, who were already straining, as it were, at the leash, to break all restrictive bounds. Processions were taken out at Namchi and Geyzing, where the

Nepali population was preponderant. Under the direction of the youth leaders, people began to pour into Gangtok, the capital, for holding a demonstration.

About 2,000 people squatted on the Palace lawns for a couple of days. The new Council was inaugurated on 28th March by the Chogyal. The S.J.C. and S.N.C. councillors boycotted it. The Chogyal, once again, refused to take any immediate steps to meet the demands of the two parties. Two youth leaders went on hunger-strike on the Palace lawn and became instant-heroes.

The Chogyal appointed six Executive Councillors, four from the S.N.P. and one each from the S.N.C. and the S.J.C., in a clever move to further strengthen the S.N.P. in the Council and the Government and at the same time to cripple the S.N.C. and the S.J.C. by rending asunder their united front. The two Executive Councillors-designate from the S.N.C. and the S.J.C. had secretly consented to join the Executive Council against the express mandate of their parties, and party volunteers, including irate ladies, had to use physical force to restrain the two turn-coats from attending the oath-taking ceremony.

The 4th of April, 1973, the fiftieth birthday of the Chogyal was fast approaching. Lavish preparations were being made by the Sikkim Government to celebrate the "Golden Jubilee" in a befitting manner. The S.J.C. and the S.N.C. formed a Joint Action Council, with Kazi Lhendup Dorji as the Chairman, to fight for their joint demands. Finding the Chogyal's attitude unbending, the Joint Action Council issued an ultimatum that if their demands were not met before 4th April, they would prevent the birthday celebrations. The fat was in the fire.

On 3 April, 1973, the Nepalese of Sikkim began to converge on Gangtok in batches, carrying S.N.C. and S.J.C. flags and shouting slogans. Despite the Government's determination to go ahead with the preparations for the celebrations—owing to the importance of the event, the proposed celebrations had spilled over to the second day, *i.e.*, 5th April—, it began to appear that, unlike the previous threats of political leaders, which had invariably failed to materialise, this time the people seemed to be resolute on a show-down with the Government.

A last-minute bid by Sonam Tshering, the Chairman of the Birthday Celebrations Committee, to thrash out the matter across the table led to talks in the evening of 3 April between Government representatives and the J.A.C. leaders, which lasted till late in the night. They could not reach an agreement.

The 4th April, 1973, the fiftieth birthday of the Chogyal of Sikkim, began with early morning prayers in all the monasteries of Sikkim and the one church and one mosque at Gangtok. At about the same time, just outside the mosque at Gangtok, a full-throated chorus of 5,000 or more voices rent the morning air with anti-Chogyal slogans. The confrontation between the ruler and his subjects was about to begin in right earnest. About a hundred yards below the road-crossing that marked the starting point of the town proper, the police had raised a barrier beyond which the demonstrators were to be prevented from advancing. A strong contingent of the police, some armed with ·303 rifles, some with lathis, and some with tear-gas shells, had taken position. At 6.30 A.M. the demonstrators, after some pep-talk from their leaders, advanced towards the barrier. Tear-gas shells exploded. Undeterred, the demonstrators surged forward. The police lathi-charged. The mob still pressed forward. The barrier gave way. A Young Bhutiya Deputy Superintendent of Police lost his nerve and fired two shots from his revolver. This was a signal for some trigger-happy policemen who discharged a burst of rifle fire. Dozens of demonstrators were wounded. The mob ran helter-skelter.

The leaders rallied the demonstrators again. A second wave of demonstrators prepared to advance once again. In the meanwhile the number of the demonstrators continued to swell owing to the arrival of a constant stream of marchers.

In Gangtok town itself some policemen ran amock, beating innocent people just because they happened to be wearing the Nepali dress. A number of milkmen were the victims of police brutality. Anyone wearing the Nepali dress, or just the Nepali cap, or just carrying a 'Khukri' was beaten up and hauled off to a camp prepared for detaining demonstrators. Some 500 Tibetan refugees were hastily issued with lathis and asked to help the police. The refugees took their task seriously and joined their forces with the police in the lathi-charges.

Wave after wave of demonstrators advanced towards the town only to be dispersed by lathi-charge and rifle fire.

While this was going on down at the town, up at the Palace Chapel the functions went on as if nothing had happened to mar the event. At 11 A.M. the Chogyal took the salute at the march past of girl guides, boy scouts, and a small contingent of the Sikkim Guards. The march past was followed by the award of birthday honours inside the Chapel.

The rest of the celebrations were called off at noon. At 1.30 P.M. the weather suddenly turned. A gale blew, followed by a heavy downpour. The police and the demonstrators ran for shelter and everything was forgotten, for the time being, except the thought of protecting oneself from the fury of the elements.

Towards evening the ardour of the demonstrators flagged, and they retreated to Ranipul, 12 kilometres below Gangtok, for food and rest for the night. The day's toll had been some 60 injured and wounded.

That evening the Crown Prince, Tenzing Namgyal, drove to Ranipul, accompanied by a security officer. With the rashness of youth, and perhaps flushed by a premature sense of victory over the demonstrators, he crashed through the barrier erected by the latter. A shout was raised and the young man, fleeing for his life, fired revolver shots at random, wounding three bystanders, two of them women. This further exacerbated the people's feelings towards the ruling family and, perhaps, accounts for the mounting resentment shown by the people subsequently towards every member of the ruling family.

On 5th April, some 8,000 people once again faced the police. The top leaders were called by the Political Officer for talks with Avatar Singh, a senior officer from the External Affairs Ministry, Government of India, who had been deputed by his Government to assess the situation. Learning that warrants of arrest had been issued against Kazi Lhendup Dorji and some other leaders of the J.A.C., these leaders, taking advantage of their presence in the India House sanctuary, requested the Political Officer for asylum and got it.

The demonstrators, abandoned by their leaders, were wholly ignorant of the latest developments. The seething mass engendered its own impetus and surged forward, only to be mercilessly beaten up by the police and the Tibetans, who had by now been joined by some Sikkimese Bhutiya 'volunteers'. Such was the onslaught that the demonstrators, who had throughout remained non-violent, fled for safety in all directions, eventually reaching their camp at Ranipul. More than a hundred demonstrators were injured. Of the wounded and injured on the 4th and 5th April six succumbed.

The demonstration in the capital had apparently failed.

While the demonstrators were regrouping at Ranipul under second echelon leaders, history was being made in other towns and district headquarters. On 4th, in all district headquarters and towns of Sikkim except Mangan in the north, the people, led by the budding youth leaders, had held black-flag demonstrations. The Sikkimese flags flown on rooftops had been pulled down, ripped, and trampled underfoot. The feeble attempt made by some loyal officials, supported by a handful of police, had further inflamed the anger of the youths, who, ignorant of the developments in Gangtok, and without the counsels of cautious and timid leaders to temper their zeal, had taken possession of all official buildings and police stations and proclaimed the people's rule. With little local variation, almost everywhere this pattern had been repeated.

While the authorities at Gangtok were heaving a sigh of relief on the 5th evening, a major part of Sikkim had passed under the 'Janata' or people's rule. That all was not well in other parts of Sikkim impinged on the authorities at Gangtok when a detachment of the Sikkim Guards under Lieut.-Col. K.S. Gurung of the Indian Army and the District Magistrate of Gangtok, sent to relieve the pressure at Namchi, reached Singtam, found that they could not penetrate farther, and returned to the capital with the news that beyond Singtam the Chogyal's writ no longer ran. Hardly had this shock had the time to register when Avatar Singh, accompanied by the Political Officer and the Major General commanding the Indian troops in Sikkim, called on the Chogyal and apprised him of the

worsening law and order situation and the total collapse of the Sikkim Administration in South, West, and East. The Chogyal was persuaded to bow before the storm and his signature on a prepared draft, purporting to be a request from him to the Government of India to intervene and restore law and order, was obtained. A similar request had already been received from Kazi Lhendup Dorji and others who, having abandoned the people to their fate, had sought political asylum at the India House. The talks to bring about normalcy started the same evening. K.C. Pradhan, who had been brought from jail to take part in the talks, refused to go back to the jail, and thus secured his freedom.

The Indian Army, which had maintained at least a fighting division in Sikkim since the Sino-Indian War of 1962, began to take over from the rebels' hands all the police stations and administrative headquarters captured earlier. The Sikkim police at Gangtok was confined to barracks while Indian troops took over police functions in the capital as well as elsewhere until relieved by the Central Reserve Police from India.

On 7th evening the Chogyal was sent a fresh 'draft' by the Political Officer whereby the Chogyal was to request the Government of India to take over the administration of Sikkim until some workable formula was evolved. And this led to the enactment of a farce in the Palace, which throws light on the working of the minds of some Bhutiya officials who even at that hour failed to realize the gravity of the situation. Some Bhutiya senior officers and a host of Nepali officers, among the latter many junior officers, were hastily collected to 'study' the draft and help the Chogyal make a decision. And there in the presence of Nepali officers some Bhutiya officers were still advising the Chogyal to use force and wipe out the demonstrators and anybody who dared to raise his voice against the Government. Saner counsels, however, prevailed and these Buddhists, the followers of the Prophet of non-violence, were reconciled to adopting less violent methods to cope with the revolt. It appeared that they did not fully grasp the fact that the effective control over the instruments of violence had already passed from their hands. Instead, therefore, a statement was drawn up wherein the officers present undertook to share the blame for

the administrative lapses leading to the revolt and also for the subsequent handing over of the administration to the Government of India. At about midnight the 'draft' sent by the Political Officer was signed and returned by a special courier.

The revolt was practically over when the Government of India intervened. The Indian Army was in firm control, allowing the 'rebels' to stage noisy but peaceful demonstrations. And these demonstrations continued for many days more, giving relief to the pent-up wrath of the masses and, at the same time, lending the 'revolt' an appearance of continuity to the outside world. People from all over Sikkim continued to pour into Gangtok—under the safety ensured by the presence and active control of the Indian Army—lending zest and vigour to the daily round of demonstrations. Anti-Chogyal sentiments gained with each passing day. During one of these demonstrations the effigies of the Chogyal, the Gyalmo, and the Crown Prince were burnt and the demand for the Chogyal's abdication began to be shouted around.

The Government of India appointed B.S. Das as the Chief Administrator. He took over on 9th April. Kewal Singh, the Foreign Secretary of India, held talks with the Chogyal, the eaders of the Joint Action Council and repreesentatives of the Sikkim National Party. The J.A.C. had presented a list of 14 demands with the original five demands for a written constitution, fundamental rights, a full-fledged democracy, one man one vote, and the abolition of 'parity' as the nucleus. At first, the abdication of the Chogyal was also included, but was dropped on the advice of the Indian Foreign Secretary.

Though the Indian Press continued to flash that the agitation was escalating, so completely had the Indian Army taken control of the situation that the 20,000 or so demonstrators who had gathered in the capital, after letting out steam in the shape of slogan-shouting processions, where any number of anti-Chogya l slogans were shouted, were being fed and generally cared for by the Indian Army. The foreign press was kept out of Sikkim first by the 'inner-line permit' restrictions that were operative even before the beginning of the agitation, and later by a Government of India fiat, which came when the Chairman of the

J.A.C., who had completely placed himself at the beck and call of the Political Officer and the Foreign Secretary, requested the Government of India to keep out "non-Indian foreigners", who were "out to create fissures in the friendly relations between the Indian authorities and the Sikkimese people".

As a result of the talks held by the Foreign Secretary of India with the Chogyal, the J.A.C., and the Sikkim National Party, an agreement was signed on the 8th May, 1973. The agreement purported to be the basis of a future constitution for Sikkim as well as that of a future Indo-Sikkim Treaty.

The agreement called 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 also called for election based on adult suffrage, equitable representation to all sections of the people, and the voting to be based on the principle of one man one vote.

According to the agreement, the Chogyal and the people of Sikkim had requested the Government of India to provide the Head of the Administration, and the Government of India had agreed to do so.

The agreement also provided for an assembly in Sikkim ; the election to this assembly "shall be held every four years". The assembly shall have 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*) Press and Publicity,
(*v*) Transport,
(*vi*) Bazaar,
(*vii*) Forest,
(*viii*) Public works,
(*ix*) Agriculture,

(*x*) Food supply and,

(*xi*) Economic and social planning, including State Enterprises,

(*xii*) Home and Establishment,

(*xiii*) Finance,

(*xiv*) Land Revenue."

The assembly "shall not discuss, or ask questions on", among other things, the following :—

"The Chogyal and the members of the ruling family..."

"Any matter which concerns the responsibilities of the Government of India under the agreement or under any other agreement between India and Sikkim".

The agreement provided for an Executive Council, "which shall consist 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". Any difference of opinion between the Chogyal and the Chief Executive "shall be referred to the Political Officer in Sikkim, who shall obtain the advice of the Government of India, which shall be binding".

The agreement leaves many questions unanswered. On many matters it is vague and equivocal. Only when it takes a more concrete shape in the form of a 'written constitution' will this vagueness be removed. There is no indication when the promises contained in the agreement are to be translated into action.

Some conclusions, however, can be drawn from the agreement. The powers of the Chogyal, even though he remains the "Head of the State", have been drastically reduced. The preponderant ascendancy of the Bhutiyas in every field has been rudely shaken. The Nepalese people of Sikkim, who had risen in revolt, have been assured of a fairer deal. The Government of India have gained enormously. The Indian hold over Sikkim has become firmer. The internal administration of Sikkim has, to all intents and purposes, been taken over by India.

APPENDIX 'A'

Treaty of Titaliya—1817

TREATY, Covenant or Agreement entered into by Captain Barre Latter, Agent on the part of His Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl of Moira, K.G., Governor-General, etc., and by Nazir Chaina Tenjin and Macha Teinbath and Lama Duchim Longdoo, deputies on the part of the Raja of Sikkimputtee, being severally authorised and duly appointed for the above purpose,—1817.

ARTICLE 1

The Honourable East India Company cedes, transfers, and makes over in full sovereignty to the Sikkimputtee Raja, his heirs or successors, all the hilly or mountainous country situated to the eastward of the Mechi River and to the westward of the Teesta River, formerly possessed by the Raja of Nepaul, but ceded to the Honourable East India Company by the treaty of peace signed at Segoulee.

ARTICLE 2

The Sikkimputtee Raja engages for himself and successors to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against the Goorkhas or any other state.

ARTICLE 3

That he will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any disputes or question that may arise between his subjects and those of Nepaul or any other neighbouring state, and to abide by the decision of the British Government.

ARTICLE 4

He engages for himself and successors to join the British troops with the whole of his Military Force when employed in the Hills, and in general to afford the British troops every aid and facility in his power.

ARTICLE 5

That he will not permit any British subject, nor the subject of any European and American state to reside within his dominions, without the permission of the English Government.

ARTICLE 6

That he will immediately seize and deliver up any dacoits or notorious offenders that might take refuge within his territories.

ARTICLE 7

That he will not afford protection to any defaulters of revenue or other delinquents when demanded by the British Government through their accredited agents.

ARTICLE 8

That he will afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company's provinces and he engages that no duty shall be levied on the transit of merchandise beyond the established custom at the several golahs or marts.

ARTICLE 9

The Honourable East India Company guarantees to the Sikkimputtee Raja and his successors the full and peaceable possession of the tract of hilly country specified in the First Article of the present Agreement.

ARTICLE 10

This Treaty shall be ratified and exchanged by the Sikkimputtee Raja within one month from the present date, and the counterpart when confirmed by His Excellency the Right Honourable the Governor-General, shall be transmitted to the Raja.

Done at Titaliya, this tenth day of February, 1817, answering the ninth of Phagun, 1873 Sambat, and to the thirtieth of Magh 1223 Bengallie.

Sd/ BARRE LATTER
NAZIR CHAINA TINJIN
MACHA TIMBAH
LAMA DUCHIM LONGADOO

Sd/ MOIRA
N.B. EDMONSTONE
ARCHD. SETON
GEO. DOWDESWELL

Ratified by the Governor-General in Council, at Fort William, this fifteenth day of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

Sd/ J. ADAM
Acting Chief Secretary to Government.

Appendix 'B'

TREATY, Covenant, or Agreement entered into by the Hon'ble Ashley Eden, Envoy and Special Commissioner on the part of the British Government, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Right Hon'ble Charles, Earl Canning, Governor-General in Council, and by His Highness Sekeong Kuzoo, Maharaja of Sikkim on his own part, 1861.

Whereas the continued depredation and misconduct of the officers and subjects of the Maharaja of Sikkim, and the neglect of the Maharaja to afford satisfaction for the misdeeds for 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 Maharaja 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 the Sikkim territory now in the occupation of British Force is restored to the Maharaja of Sikkim, and there shall henceforth be peace and amity between the two States.

3

The Maharaja of Sikkim undertakes, so far as is within his power, to restore, within one month from the date of signing of 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 compensation to the British subjects who were pillaged and kidnapped by 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	Rs.	1,000
Nov. 1st 1861	,,	3,000
May 1st 1862	,,	3,000

As security for the 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 to the British Government that portion of its territory bounded on the south by the River Rummam, on the east by the Great Rungeet River, on the north by a line from the Great Rungeet to the Singaleelah Range, including the monasteries of Tassiding, Pemwonchi, the Changacheling, and on the west by the Singaleelah Mountain Range, 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 depredations on British territory, or kidnap or otherwise molest British subjects. In the event of any such depredations or kidnapping taking place, the Government of Sikkim undertakes to deliver up all persons engaged in such malpractice, as well as the Sirdars or other chiefs conniving at or benefiting 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 the 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 councils of, or hold any office under, the Maharaja or any of the Maharaja'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 the 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, 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 be at once 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 Nepaul, 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 undervaluation for assessment of duty, it is agreed that the customs 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, an to erect and maintain suitable travellers' rest-houses 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 neighbouring States, such disputes or questions shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government, and the 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 any other 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 seize them, and to make them over to the British Authorities at Darjeeling without delay.

22

With a view to the establishment of an efficient Government in Sikkim and to the better maintenance of friendly relations with the British Government, the Maharaja of Sikkim agrees to remove the seat of his Government from Tibet to Sikkim, and 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, Maharaja, at Tumlung, this 28th day of March 1861, corresponding with 17th Dao Neepoo 61, Mr. Eden has delivered to the Maharaja a copy of the same in English, with translation in Nagri and Bhootiah, under the seal and signature of the said Honourable Ashley Eden and His Highness the Sikkimputtee Maharajah, and the Sikkimputtee Maharajah has in 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.

(Seal) (Sd.) SEKEONG KUZOO SIKKIMPUTTEE
" ASHLEY EDEN,
Envoy (Seal)
" CANNING (Seal)

Ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in Council on the sixteenth day of April 1861.

(Sd.) C.U. AITCHISON
Under Secretary to the Govt. of India

APPENDIX 'C'

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, have agreed upon the following Convention in eight Articles :—

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. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier and

follows the above-mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets the Nepal territory.

2. 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.

3. The Government of Great Britain and Ireland and the Government of China engage reciprocally to respect the boundary as defined in Article 1, and to prevent acts of aggression from their respective sides of the frontier.

4. 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 the High Contracting Powers.

5. The qustion of pasturage on the Sikkim side of the frontier is reserved for further examination and future adjustment.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications 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 seventh 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.

(Chinese seal and signature)

(Seal) (Sd.) LANSDOWNE

APPENDIX 'D'

Regulations regarding Trade, Communication and Pasturage to be appended to the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890

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 iberty to travel freely 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 the description 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 the opening of Yatung to trade ; but after the expiration of this term, if found desirable, a tariff may by 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 Station 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 X. 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 the 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 should 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 article 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 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 of the 10th moon of the 19th year of Kuang Hsu.

Signed :—
(Seal) HO CHANG-JUNG
JAMES H. HART
Chinese Commissioner.

Signed :—
(Seal) A.W. PAUL
British Commissioner.

APPENDIX 'E'

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 inside or outside Sikkim. In particular, the Government 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, 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 imposts 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 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 and, 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 it is so demanded by the Indian Representative, such person shall be handed over to him for trial before such courts as may be established for the purpose by 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, 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.

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 3 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 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 parties.

Done in duplicate at Gangtok on this fifth day of December, 1950.

Sd/ HARISHWAR DAYAL
Political Officer in Sikkim.

Sd/ Tashi Namgyal
His Highness the
Maharaja of Sikkim.

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