FRONTIER CALLINGS

P.N. KAUL

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
Delhi Bombay Bangalore Calcutta Kanpur

VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002
Savoy Chambers, 5 Wallace Street, Bombay 400001
10 First Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Bangalore 560009
8/1-B Chowringhee Lane, Calcutta, 700016
80 Canning Road, Kanpur 208004

ISBN 0 7069 0468 0

1VO2K2401

Rs 35

Printed at Delhi Press, 3-E Jhandewala Estate, New Delhi 110055

Dedicated to the memory
of Jawaharlal Nehru,
an outstanding humanist and
ardent lover of nature and children

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In compiling this book I am indebted to Shri Narain Singh Rawat, who spent his off-duty hours working ceaselessly at my dictations, their revisions, typing and retyping. Some colleagues helped me with manuscript typing and I am grateful to them. I must thank Mr M.D. Gupta who kindly read through some of the chapters and gave me useful suggestions. I am especially indebted to Mr Darshan Singh, Senior Research Officer in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, who was a colleague of mine in Nepal, for having verified the dates of some important incidents mentioned in the book and for offering advice. I am thankful to Mr B.R. Jain and Mr V.D. Kainthola for their painstaking help in the preparation of maps for this publication. My deep gratitude also goes to many others, especially my niece, Suman Dhar, who helped me in preliminary editing.

My thanks are also due to Mr B.R. Nanda, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and Dr B.R. Baji, Principal Press Information Officer, Government of India, for furnishing me copies of photographs of Mr Nehru's 1949 visit to Leh.

Most of the photographs in the book are my own. The photograph of Mrs Indira Gandhi's visit to Ziro is by Shri G.C. Mitra who has been serving in Arunachal Pradesh since 1952 and I am indeed thankful to him.

PREFACE

In giving an account of thirty-four years service on the frontiers of Pakistan and India, I have attempted to make this account not so much biographical as the narration of incidents which readers may find interesting.

I have attempted not to divulge any secret information which may still be of importance.

My service career gave me the unique opportunity of combining duty with pleasure. My travels in the frontier areas enabled me to take diversions from the main route of duty into the picturesque areas of the Himalayas. Starting as an "Immortal Youth" I ended my service career having learnt to accept the handicaps that come with age and to maintain a balance in the rhythm of action, contemplation and silence.

In the chapter on "A Spell in Nepal" I have not delved at length into the programme of Indian assistance to Nepal.

I have written entirely from memory as I kept no diary. Where I have referred to any books by various authors, I have acknowledged these in the text.

The closing part of Chapter II on Ladakh, describing its geography, is mainly based on my tenure there of over two years, brief revisits and on recollections from a dozen books on Ladakh which I read more than a score of years ago while I was there. Mention of Gilgit and the surrounding Baltit areas is partly based on accounts I heard from my late parents.

I have been rather frank and if I have unwittingly offended anybody in my reference to him or her, I hope they, in their generosity, will forgive me.

147 *Vasant Vihar* P. N. KAUL
Dehradun

CONTENTS

I. NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

The first eleven years of my life were spent in the small town of Baramulla in Kashmir where my father served the Jammu and Kashmir government for nineteen years. In 1926, my father was transferred to Srinagar, fifty kilometres west of Baramulla, and it was twenty-two years before I visited Baramulla again. I graduated from Srinagar and in 1938 left Kashmir for the plains of Uttar Pradesh for further studies and to find employment. This was the period of depression and recession after World War I which resulted in large-scale unemployment. I joined the then British Indian army in November 1941 as an officer cadet. I was commissioned into the Rajput Regiment which I served in its wartime raised Battalion of the 15 Rajput, right from the date of commissioning in May 1942 until the end of World War II in 1945. In 1948, with only six years of commissioned service to my credit. I was rather prematurely promoted to the rank of an acting lieutenant colonel and posted to command a battalion in Kashmir. It was then that I took a day's opportunity to revisit Baramulla. The place was not the same as in my boyhood days. My boyhood's sylvan surroundings and the crystal clear streams in which I and my cousins had played for hours on end had changed. The house in which we had lived as a family clan was different, dull and drab. In my childhood in Baramulla we could have scores of plums, apples or apricots at our feet with one stone's throw. This was now a dream. Every fruit garden or tree was under contract and well guarded. Nature's free bounty was now in the hands of the cunning contractors.

The 15 Rajput Battalion to which I was posted remained earmarked for the North-West Frontier defence role of pre-partition British India, later divided into India and Pakistan in 1947. I cannot boast of having fought in great battles during World War II. I only got involved in minor skirmishes, in sniping and counter-sniping and similar excitements on the North-West Frontier. In May 1942 I reported to the battalion, then at Quetta. The unit was located in barracks. On arrival I found that the unit had only half its officer strength. The result was that where a company of troops ought to have been commanded by a major, it was in the hands of a subaltern. I was one of the lucky ones who became a company commander although posted as a second lieutenant, just because I happened to be a month or two senior to some of my colleagues. The unit consisted of a British commanding officer and one other regular officer who was a captain and the only Indian officer in this battalion until my arrival. This Indian officer, the late Major General Sardanand Singh, had passed out of Sandhurst (U.K.).

In my battalion at Quetta there were six war-time British officers in addition to the two Indian officers. They were from various walks of civilian life from Britain and were a friendly lot. They were far away from their homes and yearned for the day when the war would come to an end so that they could return to the U.K. Hardly a month after I arrived in Quetta, my unit was shifted fifteen kilometres to an open area known as the Baleli Mounds. There we were part of an infantry brigade, in barracks. The climate was hot and dry by day, cool in the shade and chilly at night. The winters were extremely severe. Even though the accommodation was temporary, it was a family station—although there were only four Indian officers who had their families with them. The others were British officers far away from their homes or young single Indian officers like me. Our war training was mediocre, in the absence of much equipment or weapons. The limited stocks of weapons and equipment went to the more active battalions. In fact, while we were on training in the Officers Training School (OTS) before coming to the unit, we had to content ourselves with dummy wooden two-inch mortars and anti-tank rifles! In our brigade at Baleli Mounds we looked forward to the weekends when we cycled to Quetta to participate in the club life there. The club at Quetta was good in spite of the enormous damage wrought

by the great earthquake of 1935. The cantonment at Quetta, although small, was clean and in a picturesque situation.

While on exercises in the Baleli Mounds area, I discovered one peculiarity of Baluchistan in the presence of *karezes. Karezes* are natural underground water channels which appear on the surface at intervals of one, two or three miles. It is an amazing underground water communication system. When on exercises during the hot summer days, wherever I saw the cold water of the *karezes*, I would find it a real boon. We purchased water melons, grapes and similar fruit, which was cheap in the area, and chilled them in the *karezes.* Some would even take a bottle or two of beer to be chilled in the *karezes* during the halts. This reminds me of our clever and kind colonel who was fond of his pink gin by day and whisky soda by night. He cleverly got his water bottle made of silver instead of ordinary metal and camouflaged it with khaki felt like the regulation water bottle. For daytime exercises he filled his bottle with gin in lieu of his share of water and for night exercises, with whisky.

During the few months that we were at Baleli Mounds, a few more Indian officers joined the brigade. Two came to my battalion, and there were a couple in the other two battalions. There were only three sufficiently senior Indian officers in the brigade; they were Sardanand Singh, by then a major in my own battalion, Captain Shah Nawaz Khan of the Punjabis and Captain P.C. Mohan of the Baluchis. In my seniority zone we were now three Indian officers in the regiment and I was the senior-most by a few months. Amongst the British officers in the regiment, there were the colonel (Sandhurst trained), two captains and the rest were subalterns. I had, therefore, the satisfaction of being a subaltern company commander in full charge of a company whose composition was entirely Hindu Rajputs mostly from Uttar Pradesh. The general composition of the regiment was fifty percent Hindu Rajput companies and fifty percent Punjabi Muslim companies. Not much communal feeling existed amongst troops at that stage but later, as partition time drew nearer soon after the end of World War II, Hindu-Muslim feelings were more noticeable. Even amongst the Rajputs (Hindus) there was some rivalry between those hailing from Western U.P. and those from Eastern U.P. For an officer in a regiment, be it Rajputs, Punjabi Muslims, or Sikhs, he had to have an outward semblance of being pro the troops he commanded. I am afraid I was not much of a success in this but the JCOs and

the troops in particular did not mind this very much as long as one used a modicum of tact and did nothing to hurt their sentiments. I perhaps had a slight advantage with the Rajputs through the accident of being a Brahmin by birth.

Our stay in Baluchistan was limited to approximately six months. We were then shifted to the countryside in the Poona region (now renamed Pune) in the winter of 1942. Here we were allotted the role of a lorried infantry division, which included my unit. The 15 Rajput, a few months before my joining it, had K.M. Cariappa as its second-in-command in the rank of major. Soon after World War II, he became the first commander-in-chief of the army of independent India. I remember our men often referring to him as "Kirpa Sahib." He had the reputation of being an upright, disciplined and smart officer ever since he was commissioned.

The place where our brigade, within the division, was located was a rural area known as Kumbargaon and the nearest tiny railway station on one of the main lines was Diksal. We were destined to be part of this lorried formation for about six months. The battalion had hardly adapted to its new role when we were again recast in the original role of North-West Frontier defence. The North-West Frontier was a semi-operational area, compared to the Burma or the Middle East theatres, and did not entitle us to field service concessions of free rations, etc. Kumbargaon was dry and sunny throughout this period. It abounded in millet fields and there were some spotted deer. After I shot my first deer with a single barrel 12 bore gun, I gave up shooting this animal, because I saw how innocent and pretty it was.

Life in Kumbargaon was dull with no amenities whatsoever. Two officers, except for the commanding officer and the second-in-command, shared a tent but we were fortunate to have electricity in our tents. My tent mate was a nice Sikh from Ferozepore district in the Punjab. He was a very good horseman, having ridden since childhood. He was superb at the riding course which he and I attended for a fortnight and mocked us for having to learn the hard way. As often happens with those excelling in various fields, it was he who had a bad fall from the horse as a result of being overconfident.

In a few months, we found ourselves at Landikotal in the Khyber, close to the border with Afghanistan. The Khyber, known for the

Khyber Pass, was a mountainous area with a salubrious climate, mostly dry and cold. The brigade at Landikotal was comprised of the Punjabis, the Jats and ourselves (the Rajputs). In addition, we had a battalion of the Nepal government, the Bhairabnaths. The Nepalese regiments on deputation with the British Indian army had a peculiar arrangement of having, in addition to the Nepalese commanding officer, a British lieutenant colonel, known as the senior special officer, who was supposed to watch and guide the performance of the Nepalese regiments. The Gurkha officers and men, as is well-known, are fine fighting soldiers and their British special officers were not hard pressed. It was a situation somewhat similar to the institution of a British colonel and the Indian *subedar* major then prevalent in the Indian army. The *de facto* control of the troops was in the hands of the Nepalese commanding officer. It was through him that the British special officer got all the information about the battalion. These special officers, like many of the British counterparts in the Indian states, made only occasional appearances among the rank and file. These practices soon ended once India became independent. The Indian army became more democratic and the commanding officers could no longer afford to stay aloof from their men.

I enjoyed my stay in Landikotal. Although a non-family station, it had good peace-time single officers' barracks. Each of the battalions had to take turns in being accommodated in tents and mine happened to be the first one. During the short time I was in the Khyber, I occasionally took a drive down the Khyber Pass up to Torkham, the boundary barrier with Afghanistan, a distance of about seven kilometres from Landikotal. The fort of Charbagh, a company strength post manned from one of the battalions in the brigade, was situated about 2,000 feet above the Torkham barrier. The Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919 was fought in this area. Because of the constant attacks and sniping by hostile tribals, all company or smaller posts (pickets) had to be very strongly built. They were generally made of solid stone with thick iron doors and the windows had slit visors. It was an interesting life but because it was isolated, the company posted to Charbagh fort was rotated at one- or two-month intervals. This fort, like most others, was reasonably self-contained and had small comforts like a small swimming-pool and a well laid out flower and vegetable garden. The lone company commander had a dining-room to

himself and a comfortable living-room. The rest of the company were located in the same quadrangular double storey building. There was a drill of action which had evolved from experience on the frontier and lots of material had been compiled and published about frontier tactics and warfare. A post like this had subsidiary pickets under its control, even though they were located in mountainous country a mile or two away from the main post. These were also solid double storey blocks, with the living-room or rooms on the first floor. The strength of these pickets varied from a section (ten people) to a platoon (thirty people), inclusive of the odd cook or sweeper. The huge iron gates of the big forts like Charbagh, Ali Masjid or Shahgai in the Khyber remained closed most of the time and they had smaller gates cut into them which were also usually closed. Small parties went in or out through these. In the pickets which had less men, there was no question of any individuals leaving the picket even by day, unless it was in full strength and well guarded against the prevalent ambushes and snipings of hostile tribesmen. In those days this was more true of Waziristan than the Khyber, which was comparatively peaceful after the operations of the 1930s. When coming out of a picket, an iron ladder was dropped down from the first floor and the picket strength stood on the alert. Using this ladder, occasional parties could leave the picket for essential duties by day. At night the ladders were withdrawn and it was a standing order that nobody could leave a picket or a fort at night, for obvious reasons. Life in such places was dull but the army soon gets used to this. Unfortunately, most people, besides those performing their duties, passed their time idling, gossiping or making up for the lost sleep of night duties. Not many officers utilized their time fruitfully by doing extensive professional and other studies and most took to reading lighter stuff.

In each garrison like Landikotal, particularly in Waziristan, there was plenty of literature about the history of ambushes or raids that had taken place in the area and the lessons which had been learnt from them. In some forts and pickets permanent records were maintained so that the people posted there for short durations could avoid making the same mistakes their predecessors had made. In short, it was a battle of wits between the crafty tribesmen and the army operating in these areas. The tribesmen had the advantage of operating from their own territory. The army per-

sonnel had the disadvantage of not being able to distinguish between peaceful and hostile tribals, which made their work extremely difficult. The Pathans generally had country-made rifles. The saying went that "A Pathan loves his weapon more than his wife" and would pay a heavy amount to acquire a weapon. In their ambushes against the army they went first for the arms and ammunition and then for the equipment. The tribesmen studied particular units for months on end to observe how vigilant or otherwise the troops were. Then they made ambushes or surprise raids which took seconds to carry out. Although the tribals had the reputation of being crack-shots, they were not necessarily so. It was their perseverance and observation that paid dividends. On days when the army was not operating on a road sector, they practised aiming at targets like a milestone or an odd pillar. On the day the troops actually passed that point they sniped at the pre-fixed targets. Camouflage and cover by the troops was therefore essential. There was a saying, "You commit a mistake only once and do not get a chance to repeat it." On one occasion, our very tall commanding officer had on a faded bushshirt, which was whiter than khaki, on the day when we were protecting a road sector through which a motor convoy was to pass. On this occasion the commanding officer was in the tactical battalion headquarters near a place called Razani. Suddenly two bullets whizzed past him. He had a lucky escape, the bullets had gone an inch in front and an inch behind him. Many of the officers dressed like their men so that they were not conspicuous targets for hostile sniping. It was common for officers to wear Punjabi Muslim's turbans or the Hindu Rajputs', depending on which company they were with. The brass on the equipment was not polished, unlike the tradition of "spit and polish" in the peace-time stations.

On Sundays I sometimes visited my friend in charge of the company at Charbagh. The road went down to the bottom of the Khyber Pass, up to the barrier of Torkham or Landikhana, and then it gradually wound its way up to Jalalabad and Kabul. From Charbagh, one got a glorious view of the snow clad Hindukush range. On one such Sunday, I did not leave Charbagh fort until just before dark. No doubt this was against regulations. On reaching the perimeter of Landikotal, which was barbwired and barricaded at the entrance points by night, I was faced with an awkward situation. I had been further delayed en route because the car had broken

down. It was already 10 p.m. when I reached the outer perimeter of Landikotal garrison. After following the normal procedures, I was allowed in. Then I had to enter my own battalion camp which was barricaded by similar obstacles. Further procedures had to be followed to get permission to enter. Although I presume the matter was reported to the commanding officer as a minor breach of rules, he generously did not take a serious view of this. Another time I was driving a 3-ton truck down the Khyber towards Peshawar, also against brigade standing orders which prohibited officers taking the wheel. On the way I went past my commanding officer who was coming up after a weekend in Peshawar. He stopped his car and so I stopped my 3-ton truck. He was again understanding and kind and made no queries but instead pretended he had not seen me driving. I was glad to see him in such a pleasant mood, I presume he must have had an enjoyable weekend.

We tried to make life interesting by playing games like tennis, squash and occasionally inter-battalion matches of hockey and volleyball, etc. After a few months under tents our turn came to shift to hut accommodation. Even then, a few junior officers had to content themselves with living in what were known as "Wana huts"; presumably the name came from a place in Waziristan known as Wana where such huts might have originated. These consisted of mud-brick walls with double-ply tented roofs. Although not as luxurious as the proper huts, they were quite cosy. We had electricity, an odd wardrobe almirah—admittedly the crude Military Engineering Service issues—and we even had fireplaces.

As part of the brigade we also had an animal transport company. In the North-West Frontier and Waziristan, equal importance was given to animal and motor transport. Any carelessness in the maintenance of the mules was taken as a serious offence. Death of or injury to a mule always resulted in a court of inquiry to determine the cause. However, a sepoy on duty losing his dentures due to a kick by a mule was not taken much notice of! In fact, under the RAI (Rules for the Army in India) there was no provision for free issue of dentures to such victims; I only hope the rules have since been liberalized to give some relief to the poor victims.

Apart from the two-week horse riding course at Baleli Mounds in Baluchistan mentioned earlier, I also attended a course on mules at Landikotal. The horse riding course was interesting

as we progressed from learning trotting and cantering with saddles to riding bareback. In the course on mules emphasis was given to pampering the mule and on its upkeep. Some of the cardinal principles were: feed the mule before yourself, and preference for giving the only blanket to the mule or the horse rather than yourself. These principles, although related in respect to animals, could be applied to all aspects of one's life, whether it was dealing with one's subordinates, pets or riding animals. That is why Field Marshal Chetwood's quotation in the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun is treated as a motto to be followed by all commanders:

"The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first always and every time.

"The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next.

"Your own ease, comfort and safety come last always and every time."

On the animal transport course, one of the veteran mules would hardly condescend to allow us mere learners to come too close to it. The men in the lines used to call it the "Brigadier!" Whenever there was a "column" march in the offing the mules somehow got scent of it several days in advance and would start neighing. The course was in the early hours of the wintery mornings and began with us giving a thorough scrub and massage to the animal we had been allotted for the duration of the course. In gradual stages we groomed, saddled, and fed it. Some of us were clever enough to get a lump of *gur* with which to humour our mules. This reminds me of the weekly inspections by the commanding officer of the battalion complement of mules and riding ponies. On inspection he used to offer a piece of *gur* to each animal while passing it. The result was that as soon as the commanding officer made an appearance, all the animals would start neighing and give him a riotous welcome!

Being posted to the frontier, each unit had a complement of riding ponies and more mules for transportation purposes. Riding a pony was quite interesting. Some of them were tricky. I remember one elegant-looking pony to which I was allotted for a brigade column march which took us outside our camp for three to four days. I thought I was lucky to be given a pony in the capacity of BLO (brigade liaison officer) while the rest had to footslog it.

My duties as BLO involved carrying messages between the brigade headquarters and my battalion. During the march, when we were on a mountain track with a sheer 3,000 feet drop on one side, the pony started misbehaving. The *syce* was of course nowhere in sight since I thought I was confident enough to ride the pony. Despite all the horsemanship at one's command, a naughty pony can sometimes be very troublesome and even dangerous. The pony insisted on going right to the edge of the track, and I decided it was safer to walk the distance than ride it. A week or two later I discovered that perhaps this pony could have been dangerous if I had insisted on continuing to ride it on the march. One Sunday evening I took the pony from the stables for a ride on an open ground known as the Landikotal landing ground. The pony appeared unhappy at being taken away from its companions for my pleasure ride since it was a holiday. When I was galloping on the landing ground, the pony suddenly came to a stop, threw me headlong onto the ground, and then bolted back to the stables. I got up with minor bruises and was relieved to find my spectacles still intact a few yards away. I thanked my stars that my boots had not stuck in the stirrups because the pony could have dragged me to my death in its flight back to the stables. While I was sheepishly walking back to the stables I found the pony's *syce*, Lance *Naik* Badshah Singh, galloping back with the pony. His intention was to let me ride it again. I was, however, too frightened to launch into a fresh adventure so soon after the fall. As bad luck would have it, a week later the same *syce* took it into his head to exercise the same riding pony on the same landing ground. This time the horse protested by somersaulting while it was galloping and it crushed the *syce* under its back, fracturing his skull. This was sometime in 1943. While I have mentioned earlier that severe disciplinary action was taken against any person found negligent in the care of a mule or pony, nothing could be done against the pony that intentionally killed his *syce*. Such are the ironies of fate where perhaps the doom meant for one passes to another.

This brings me to yet another incident illustrating the irony of fate. This was in Leh (Ladakh) in 1950, where I was posted as battalion-cum-garrison commander. In keeping with previous tradition I was asked by the local civil authority to lend them the use of the battalion troops in the station, together with an old ceremonial brass cannon. This was to celebrate the Buddhist New Year

(*Losar*). It used to be the privilege of the local garrison commander to light the torch to fire the cannon to get the ceremony started. Everything was spick and span with the army personnel "fallen in" and the civilian personnel as spectators. I need not dwell at length on the full ceremony, which was seen through to the end in spite of an extremely sad accident that occurred at the beginning of the function.

When I arrived at the appointed time to light the torch to set the cannon off, the usual "parade report" was made to me. Until this day I fail to understand why I took it into my head to go round the cannon and utter the words as to why I should be having the honour of lighting the torch. As I was walking round the cannon, we heard a burst and there was a lot of dust. It took us only a second to realise that a Buddhist JCO (junior commissioned officer) of my unit had perhaps taken my words to mean that he might light the torch. He had done so and for some mysterious reason, the cannon fired. Its huge muzzle hit the JCO and his head was found fifty yards away with his body left near the cannon.It was extremely sad to see this JCO lose his life. To add a comic touch to this tragedy, the function was carried on as normal and then I instituted a court of inquiry. My verdict on the accident went somewhat as follows: "If anyone is to blame, it is me. The defaulting JCO has suffered the severest punishment in losing his life!" We had no queries whatsoever from higher quarters.

The Landikotal Brigade, known for short as the "Landi Brigade," arranged for a limited number of officers to spend their weekends in Peshawar, a distance of approximately sixty kilometres. In army slang this bus was known as the "Passion Bus" as it enabled officers to spend the weekends in good hotels like Deans Hotel, Services Hotel and the Peshawar Club, one of the best clubs in NWFP. Some enjoyed themselves with their families, others contended themselves with going to the cinema, playing tennis, squash and swimming and, above all, having the nicest European and Pathan food in town. I remember a tiny shop by the name of Moti Mahal in the city bazar of Peshawar where I and many others often went for a good non-vegetarian meal whenever we were in town. Later on, after the partition of India, I found the now well-known restaurant of the same name in Daryaganj, Delhi. This is an example of how the brave people of Western Punjab and NWFP rehabilitated themselves after partition.

There was a narrow gauge railway between Peshawar and Landikotal. Like the train from Siliguri to Darjeeling, it took about three hours and also had two engines, one in the front and one in the rear. There were hardly any populated places on the route of this railway, unlike on the Darjeeling railway where lots of people are seen as populated places like Kurseong and Ghoom fall on its route. I only travelled by this train once and that was on my return from a war-time leave. I came by bus from Peshawar and put my luggage on the weekly train. My luggage consisted of one big frail tin trunk which had numerous dents and an ordinary cheap lock. The box contained my clothes, and also my loaded service revolver. I had completely forgotten that my revolver was in this box. The rules about carrying weapons were extremely strict on the frontier; it should have been on my person. On arrival at Landikotal I remembered the mistake I had made and was very worried about the fate of my revolver and almost convinced that it would never reach me. When my luggage eventually arrived, I immediately rushed to the small railway station and found that in transit the lock of my box had opened. I was convinced that my revolver and other things must have been stolen but on quick examination was pleasantly surprised to find my loaded revolver and everything intact!

The Khyber Pass starts from the last small town in the plains called Jamrud, where the famous fort was built by the Sikh ruler, Raja Ranjit Singh. The name of the terrifying Hari Singh Nalwa was still remembered in the locality. In fact, in order to quieten their unruly babies the Pathan women would frighten them by saying that Nalwa had come. On some of the prominent peaks guarding the route or the pass, there were forts or pickets garrisoned with troops. During the thirties there had been operations in this area against the tribals. The important forts that dotted this route were Jamrud, Shahgai and Ali Masjid, besides the satellite pickets. Jamrud was an old historic mud fort manned by a company strength of troops. Shahgai was a fort which accommodated nearly a battalion, less a couple of companies, which were deployed on the subsidiary posts in its vicinity. Shahgai fort was a double storey compact fort built in the usual style and had a mini swimming-pool inside it. We were lucky enough to either have single or double rooms. Since it was a frontier fort, the room ventilation was limited to slanting slits in the solid stone walls. Ali Masjid, which was an

intermediate fort on a hilltop above a mosque of this name at the bottom of the hill, had been the scene of operations between the British Indian army and the hostile Pathans of the area. The area between Ali Masjid and Landikotal had a couple of old historic Buddhist stupas by the roadside. The villages alongside the roads were inhabited by various sub-tribes known as *khels* who were constantly fending with neighbouring *khels*. The life was therefore insecure for them and each village had a fortified, tall minaret in the centre of it from which a constant watch against raids from hostile *khels* was kept. It was a well recognized convention in Waziristan and Khyber to treat the road as neutral ground. Any tribal taking to the road would not be fired upon by the army operating in the area during tribal uprisings. There was nothing to prevent the tribals moving about with their rifles, for which no licences were required.

During the course of more than two years in this area, we stayed in the biggest garrison of Landikotal, a few months at Shahgai, almost midway between Jamrud and Landikotal, and then in Fort Salop, down in the plains on the outskirts of Peshawar. In the course of these duties it fell on our battalion to provide the company strength to man the Jamrud fort for a few months. The troops inhabiting these forts had to be extremely watchful against the cunning tribesmen in the area. They were extremely observant and took advantage of the slightest laxity on our part. I remember an incident one morning at about 3 a.m. when one of my battalion officers, Major A.S. Douglas, and myself were travelling in an open 15-cwt truck from Fort Salop to Landikotal to attend an exercise that morning. Lance *Naik* Sardar Khan was at the wheel. Fortunately, against all orders, we were unarmed and also not in the minimum strength of six to seven armed personnel. Midway between Fort Salop and Jamrud, at about 4 a.m., we were ambushed by a party of eight masked Pathans at a place known as Samagakhi. The ambush took place when our vehicle had gone down a slope to a dry *nala* and was climbing up the other side. The vehicle automatically stopped as it was going up the slope at slow speed. The three of us sat quiet and dumbfounded. All I could utter was to ask what was the matter. In return we got a volley of abuse in Pushtu. While we sat there, frozen, the vehicle was searched and with some abuse we were asked to get away, which we did as fast as we could. The ambush was apparently to

get hold of some arms and ammunition which we should have had if we had adhered to the standing orders.

Life was dull at Fort Shahgai except for the odd weekend in Peshawar, limited to a couple of officers at a time. I remember reading a book by one Mr Bailey, KCIE of the Royal Engineers, who during the 1920s was in charge of building the Khyber railway. He wrote a book about his work and travels in India. He described the routine involved in constructing the Khyber railway and how he went from Jamrud to the work site near Shahgai every morning with his gang of workers and in the evening rushed down to Jamrud to spend the nights. He described the place as infested with ghosts and described how one evening, after a day's work on the railway, he was on his way down to Jamrud when he was chased by a tall ghost.

Most of the battalion was committed to static duties in various pickets surrounding the fort. I was the battalion intelligence officer for some time and as such had to look after the training of the intelligence section. Here I may digress to repeat an army joke. A letter addressed by a layman to the battalion "intelligent" officer was returned to the sender with the remark that "there is no such officer in the army!" I would like to mention two more incidents while on the subject of intelligence and security. During 1947, Lieutenant General K. M. Cariappa, while he was general officer commanding-in-chief, Eastern Command, at Ranchi, was on a day's tour of inspection in his car. On his return journey, seeing a vehicle depot on the roadside, he decided to pay an unscheduled visit to it. At the gate his car was stopped by the sentry who, in spite of the army commander's flag on the car, would not allow it in unless the identity card was shown. The result was that on return to his headquarters a special Eastern Command order was published to the effect that while the army commander's pennant was visible on the car the identity of the officer inside would not be insisted upon, which I thought was rather an unfair order. On another occasion Major General Thimayya D.S.O., G.O.C., 19 Infantry Division, called a meeting of the officers of the 19 Division at Srinagar to address us on various aspects of operations, behaviour, discipline, security, etc. While on the subject of security, he mentioned an example of his own security officer at his divisional headquarters who, on the general's coming to the said meeting, had asked him to show his identity card. General Thi-

mayya, in his usual forgiving way, mentioned this incident and advised that he expected from his officers "security and not stupidity."

I had enough time to roam the hills around Shahgai. While doing so, I was often reminded of the ghost stories that were common in this area. Most of the pickets had numerous stories of incidents amongst the units that came to man them. There was a company strength in Fort Ali Masjid on a hill a few miles from Shahgai. There were also smaller subsidiary pickets like Fort Maud, *Khooni* picket, etc. These figured during the operations of the thirties. There was a subsidiary picket of the Ali Masjid fort. The story about this post was that a section strength of the Sikhs that occupied it were killed by a ghost with which the picket was supposedly haunted.

At the beginning of 1944 my battalion moved from the Khyber to Waziristan. The first station we were posted to was Gardai, not to be confused with Dargai which is in Tirah in the trans-border area of Waziristan and famous for the attack upon it in 1897 in which some three hundred Gordons and Gurkhas lost their lives. I recalled the history of campaigns like the Tirah campaign en route from Kohat to Thal, when I saw the imposing forts, Lockhart and Gulistan, on the distant hilltops. These forts also reminded me of the kidnapping of Miss Mollie Elis from the Kohat mission hospital in April 1923 by the tribals of the nearby no-man's land of Tirah. A missionary volunteer, Mrs Lilian A. Star of the Peshawar mission hospital, immediately rushed to the rescue of Miss Elis at risk to her own life. Mrs Star later wrote about this adventure in her book *Tales of Tirah and Lesser Tibet.*

Gardai was a mud hut camp midway between Bannu and Razmak. The move from Peshawar by railway train was interesting and we passed through Naushera, Attock, Khushalgarh, Mari-Indus, and Kalabagh, the site of the salt mines at the foot of the hill. A small railway, approximately eighty kilometres long, wound its way from Kalabagh to Bannu. It crawled at snail's pace and stopped and started more or less by mutual arrangement between the train conductor and the few officers travelling in it. There was a small station named Laki Marawat, which I used to call Lucky Marawal as it always fell on our journey at lunch-time. Here one got a sumptuous lunch for a moderate price. An officer in the small first class refreshment room could eat and drink beer at leisure. There was

a mutual understanding between the train conductor and the refreshment room contractor that the train would only move when the contractor gave the green signal to the conductor. Obviously, the conductor got a free meal on this account. The trains' destination was Bannu, a transit station with a few army units. The routes from there ran in one direction to Damdil, Gardai, Miramshah and Razmak and in another to Kohat and Thal, all frontier garrisons. The move beyond Bannu to Damdil, Gardai or Razmak, a total distance of about seventy miles, was a well practised affair. These moves were staggered to two to three days in a week which were officially secret. The moves involved large convoys of troops and supplies and the secrecy was only in name since the convoy contractors, then the Bagai Company, had to have prior notice to be ready for loading and moving of the lorry convoy of fifty to a hundred. Such movement days were known as "RODs" (road opening days). On RODs the troops from the garrisons of Bannu, Damdil, Gardai and Razmak positioned themselves in the early hours of the morning on both sides of the road, to protect the vehicular convoy of troops and supplies starting from either end against hostile ambushes, raids or sniping. At all the intermediate stations there were nearby permanent pickets which afforded additional protection to the main camps—which were of one battalion to two battalions strength.

Bannu and Razmak were the biggest terminal camps on this line of communication and Bannu was also a transit camp for the troops going into Waziristan or coming out of it. Gardai, where my unit was posted, was a two battalions camp. Razmak was a big brigade group garrison of about six battalions strength with all other ancillaries like supply companies, electrical and mechanical engineers, garrison hospital, mule companies, mountain artillery and armoured elements, etc. For the road opening days, information was given in brief code terms to the garrisons a day or two prior to the actual "ROD." It was only the previous evening that orders were issued to the battalion personnel by the commanders, laying down the order and techniques of moves for the following morning so that the road was fully protected before the convoy passed the position of these units/sub-units. Every movement of the battalion out on various operations was evolved into a drill which was incorporated into the standing orders in the minutest details. These orders were so detailed that they indi-

cated the appointed number of mules allotted to carry a certain number of ammunition boxes, the number of mules allotted to carry the rations, etc. The troops carried their own day's cooked pack rations. Once out of the camp, everyone moved on the double as any movement slower than this would have given the hostiles a better chance to snipe at them. The tactical positions allotted to each unit and sub-unit had to be occupied promptly and abandoned immediately after the road convoys had passed safely through their areas. One of the main principles was that all moves must start soon after first light and end in the camp before dusk.

When there were exercises or actual operations, the moves would be for a number of days or even weeks. Such moves were known as "column" moves if for exercise purposes, and "operations" if due to actual hostile uprising. The drill for such moves was very elaborate, laying down the number of wire bundles, water tanks known as *pakhals* and bivouacs, etc., that were to be carried on each mule. The mule was thus the most important part of any battalion's transport. While camping outside the garrisons for a night or more, complete operational drill of "stand to" was observed at dawn, dusk, and whenever necessary.

There were secret "incident files" maintained in each garrison for the benefit of fresh units coming as replacements. These were full of blood curdling accounts of ambushes by the hostiles, describing the lessons learnt from them. The frontier was active against the British Indian army under the leadership of the Faqir of Ipi and his followers. One was reminded of the gruesome incidents that had taken place previously whenever one went out on "ROD." The hostile Pathans seldom repeated the same story at the same place and one had to be very cautious.

One of the hostiles' typical tactics was to delay the withdrawal of the troops towards the camp, which was usually a distance of four to eight miles along partially wooded mountain slopes. In one incident we had seen the lorry convoy through our sector from our hill position of MKP (Malagai Khasedar post) which we had manned the whole day. Just when we were about to withdraw down to the camp, one of the sepoys complacently stood up to empty his bladder. A Pathan, who must have been patiently watching the whole day from the thick bushes above, apparently aimed right at his genitals. The rifle bullet, however, went into his thigh. Over the wireless set I made a request for a hail of mortar fire

from our tactical battalion headquarters onto the suspected point. We then managed to withdraw to the battalion locality before that wintry and snowy day became dark. One could mention dozens of such incidents where many lost their lives for their mistakes.

Just before our arrival in Razmak, more or less on promotion to a better camp from Gardai, one of the Gurkha battalions had suffered numerous casualties in one of the exercises. They had been out all day and towards dusk their withdrawal towards Razmak was delayed by sniping from the hostiles, who had patiently waited for their chance the whole day. They became further delayed on account of giving first aid and evacuating the casualties and the battalion could not avoid reaching the camp late. It was nightfall and the battalion was still outside the camp perimeter. Once darkness fell the hostiles always had an advantage over the troops. In this melee, the crack battalion lost many lives and the hostiles grabbed whatever weapons they could, chopped off legs for boots, etc. However, the battalion also played its traditional part although its *khukris* were ineffective as bullets in the dark.

This reminds me of an interesting book written by my first British commanding officer of the 15 Rajput Battalion which I served during the war. I would recommend this book to those who have served in NWFP or Waziristan. The book is entitled *The Khyber Calling*, with perhaps the pseudonym of *Rajput*. The officer humorously describes the trigger-happy nervous condition of troops who were plentifully supplied with ammunition. Any stir outside the picket, particularly during the night, resulted in unseasoned troops shooting a hail of fire. He describes an incident in a battalion camp where one of its perimeter pickets, guarded by a section strength of soldiers, wasted a few thousand rounds of light machine gun and rifle fire on suspected hostiles approaching to attack the picket in the night. The following morning they discovered that it was only a goat that had strayed into the barbed wire fencing outside the picket and fallen victim to the hail of bullets!

Although this book gives interesting descriptions of life on the North-West Frontier, it also makes some rather derogatory remarks about Indians. For example, "From the cradle to the grave Indians are steeped in intrigue, corruption and bribery." In the same book the author writes that "a British Officer in India should live at Olympian heights and show his face only now and

then to his men." This indeed was a very harsh judgement on Indians by an officer who, in my opinion, had hardly come into contact with real India. I happened to come across this book when I was ill in the military hospital at Shillong. The author was no longer my commanding officer. I wrote to the author protesting but his reply amounted to only a lame apology. While on the subject, I would like to briefly narrate two more incidents to show the conflicting views that existed among British and Indian officers in the army during the period of World War II.

In February and March 1943, I was doing a course in the Tactical School at Poona (now Pune). This was at the time when Mahatma Gandhi was fasting until death in the Agha Khan Palace at Poona. One morning, both British and Indian officers on the course were in the school bus when we passed the Agha Khan Palace. One of the British officers said to his colleague that it was time that "Gandi conked out." Mustering some courage, I entered into a minor quarrel with him for hurting my sentiments. Another time, towards the end of World War II, while in our mess at Razmak one evening, a few British colleagues were discussing the war situation on the Burma front. While doing so, one of them asked me what I felt about Subhas Bose having raised a defecting force in the INA (Indian National Army) and did I not feel that he should be heavily punished if apprehended. I disillusioned him by saying that Subhas Bose was held in great esteem by most Indians, despite his having raised the controversial INA. My British colleagues were rather taken aback by my reply and said they wondered how it would be possible for all of us to fight together in a war theatre. The incident was apparently reported to the experienced regular British commanding officer who presumably gave them a pep talk about the changed atmosphere in the Indian army and the need to respect our sentiments regarding such controversial issues. He knew that the partition and independence of India were in the offing and repatriation of British officers almost started. On the whole, we were all reasonably tolerant of each others' points of view and our relations were cordial.

Life in Razmak camp was healthy and interesting and, in comparison to Gardai camp, was almost a change to a town. Razmak was a brigade group camp with various supporting units like mountain artillery regiments, mule companies, good hospital, swimming-pool, club, squash and tennis courts, hockey and

football fields, etc., together with a small bazar where one could get almost all one's requirements.

Razmak was also the summer headquarters of the resident (political commissioner). The political set-up worked in close liaison with the army. The resident political agents and their assistants were a separate organization whose officers had previously served in regular regiments and because of their proficiency in the tribal language and their temperamental inclination were selected to this corps. Many of them had served in the irregular forces like the Tochi Scouts or the Kurram or Zhob Militia, etc. Unlike the army they wore light and generally grey militia or grey flannel uniforms, and they preferred frontier chappals to boots. They were supposed to know the pulse of the tribal population in the area and for this they had enormous funds at their disposal. The main information to the army about hostile activities and movements was received through them. Under the accepted code they could move fairly freely outside the camp perimeters. For this they maintained a large number of paid civilian tribal personnel known as *khassadars*. It was the political agency that provided such *khassadars* to act as liaison personnel with the regular troops going out on various duties on the frontier. The *khassadars* sometimes played a double game of giving the hostiles advance information of the army's impending moves, even though they were given at as short a notice as possible. In some respects, it was a way of bribing a section of the hostiles to keep the latter under a bond of observing peace. It was a funny situation where the government had to pay outh eavily. On manoeuvres or duty outside the camp, a certain amount of fire had to be resorted to sometimes either as an anticipatory protective measure or in response to hostile fire. The result was that a stray camel or goat grazing in the hills got killed by the troops' fire. After the exercises, the *khassadars* brought in the tails of the camels or goats as proof of the numbers that had got killed due to the troops resorting to firing. The political agents had to gauge the authenticity of the claims for compensation by equating the number of tails brought in with the number of animals thought to have been killed. In many cases, compensation was paid for an animal that died a natural death or was killed for its meat. This was a big joke in the garrisons!

No pet animals were allowed to go out with the troops on manoeuvres, but in our battalion there were two British officers who

had pet dogs. In spite of the commanding officer's orders, it was amazing that whenever we went out of camp these two dogs were found amongst us wherever we went. The commanding officer would swear at the concerned owners and yet appreciate the helplessness of the situation. The cocker spaniel was extremely sexy and used to stray after bitches. One day he strayed outside the camp perimeter, never to be seen again. He must have been taken into captivity by some tribal bitch's charm!

Those were the hardy days of youth when even after a hard day's exercise outside the camp, one would return in the evening fit enough to play a game of hockey, football or tennis. During my stay at Razmak, a British ENSA group came to entertain the garrison. This was a morale-raising measure resorted to in war-time. Similar parties known as *Fauji Dil Kush Sabhas* toured for the entertainment of the Indian troops. It was thrilling for the British officers to see a party of pretty women come all the way away from their homes to entertain the troops in far-off corners of the British empire like Razmak. The only other European woman that had tried entering Razmak had been in disguise, against all rules and regulations, before the war. We vied with each other to entertain the small ENSA party in the garrison club and even in individual messes where they were requested to leave souvenirs of their lip imprints on the bar counters. They were also made to autograph these imprints!

Before straying away from the North-West Frontier, I would like to make a brief mention of the colleagues in the 15 Rajput which I had the privilege to serve for four years until the end of World War II. During my war-time tenure with the 15 Rajput I served under two commanding officers, both British. Both were nice, though reserved towards Indians. One was fond of his drink and liked hot mess-style Indian curries and he did not, as is the case with many whisky drinkers, care much for sweets. We particularly avoided facing this commanding officer in the evenings when his liver was somewhat bad. One cannot really blame him since he was condemned to a lonely bachelor's life. He had served for more than twenty-five years in the Indian army and could speak fairly fluent Hindustani in his own forceful style. He gave periodic talks to battalion personnel and some of his usual sentences were like, "*Tum log ko ladai ke liye bahut tayari karna hai; agar nahin karta hai, to tum sab barubad hoga,*" or, "*Jungi lat Sahib ka*

hukum hai..." ("you people have to train yourselves hard for war; if you fail to do so then all of you will suffer destruction at the enemy's hands," or, "the C-in-C has issued orders..."). The other commanding officer was a tall gentleman, quiet and serious. He had false teeth and repeatedly chewed every morsel of food as he read a light magazine. Amongst the other British officers we had Majors Nigel Kealy and Meadows, as our battalion seconds-in-command. They were regular Indian army officers who had passed out from Sandhurst. The war-time British officers were A.S. Douglas, a very kind person; Norman Hunter, who left our battalion to go to Burma where he lost his life; Jackson, an officer from the London Metropolitan Police; and Northcote, an expert in Oriental languages. Other colleagues were Robertson, Gosling, Minchin, Jerry Chambers, Davies, George Blain, Tom Edwards, Sandford and Nicachi. Amongst the Indian officers were the late Sardanand Singh, "Bertie" Sahgal (Bishender Bahadur Sagal) and Ziaul-Latif Khan, both from Hyderabad, who joined the unit in 1942. Then came the late Ranbir Singh Mast from Ferozepore (Punjab), Bhaskaranand Choudhary from Assam, M.R. Davis, an Anglo-Indian from Mackleskiganj (Bihar) and Narindra Singh Chadha. Narindra Singh has since retired from service and is now a freelance journalist in Amritsar. Later arrivals were Majors Mohammed Said and Sahibdad. They were the senior-most Indian officers when I left the battalion in December 1945. Both of them later went to the Pakistan army on partition in 1947. Sahibdad, a very fine officer, later rose to be a brigadier in the Pakistani army and is now (1976) health minister in the Government of West Pakistan. During the 1971 conflict with Pakistan, the IAF fighter plane that General K.M. Cariappa's son was flying was shot down in West Pakistan in the brigade area of Brigadier Sahibdad. Sahibdad originally belonged to the same battalion (First Rajputs) as General Cariappa. This fact, combined with other factors, must have led to the announcement over the Pakistan radio during the conflict of the young Cariappa having become a prisoner of war in Pakistan, and being looked after well there. Little did the young P.O.W. know, when being interrogated by the curious Pakistani brigadier, that the latter had served as a junior officer in the same regiment as his father.

One of the Indian officers was fat and allergic to much physical

activity. The commanding officers, therefore, took some pleasure in allotting him arduous tasks on various exercises. While in the Khyber the commanding officer generally allotted the occupation of a steep hill known as Spinat-suka to him and his "boys." He was fond of good whisky and food and liked to exhibit evening mess uniform with gold buttons and badges of rank! M.R. Davis was a young officer fond of playing with explosives. Regardless of the rules and regulations he stripped any type of bomb or mine to pieces and then reassembled them. His hobby was collecting daggers and similar weapons. While on a course at Saugar he went for *shikar* and accidentally his gun fired, injuring him in the waist; nevertheless, he survived. Another officer who joined the battalion a few months before I left was Ratan Chand Mathur, from Agra.

After the end of World War II, I left my battalion for a three months' posting in the Northern Command headquarters, Rawalpindi. For the first time I was called upon to do a spell of legal work; presumably the authorities must have seen from my record that I had a law degree. In fact, I had never practised since immediately after doing my degree I joined the army. There was a large backlog of pending disciplinary and criminal cases, many of them from the war that had just ended. My work involved reviewing the proceedings of various court martials. I was also deputed as a judge advocate on several trials by different types of courts martial. Like most appointments in the army, the appointment of judge advocate also had the word "general" attached to it and my appointment was as a deputy judge advocate general. I did some interesting trials. One of them was the trial of two young Sikh recruits (sepoys) at Thal (Waziristan) who had shot their senior, a *naik* (corporal). Service in non-family stations resulted in a degree of homosexuality amongst the troops. The motive for the murder was the persistent amorous advances the sex-starved *naik* made to one of the young recruits. This was resented by the recruit and his equally good-looking colleague, and one night they both shot the *naik* dead in an isolated picket on the outskirts of Thal garrison. Even though one had some sympathy for the two young recruits, it was a premeditated murder and the court naturally awarded a death sentence. This was fortunately later commuted by the competent authority to transportation for life.

Another interesting case was at the Baluch Regimental Centre

at Karachi. A lance *naik* was accused of shooting and killing his superior non-commissioned officer (*havildar*). The accused had been jealous because the said non-commissioned officer had had his eye on a young recruit who was close to the accused. Another case involved the British Army Act and a study of British criminal law since the accused were two gunners of a British artillery regiment at Malir (Karachi). This was a case of "attempt at buggery." I soon learnt the funny colloquial barrack slang and terms connected with sex. Incidentally, while British officers could be appointed as members (judges) on a court martial of Indian personnel, when British officers and other ranks were on trial the members of a court martial could only be British officers, obviously because the British were the ruling race in India. The only exception was the judge advocate, who is not strictly a member of the court martial but only expounds the law to the court. That is how I happened to function as a judge advocate in the trials of British officers and other ranks. However, there was no ban on an Indian army officer functioning as a prosecutor or defending officer in the case of British personnel.

In April 1946, I was posted to the Eastern Command headquarters at Tollygunj, Calcutta. For the next six months or so I was mostly concerned with clearing the backlog of war-time crime cases. One case, where I functioned as prosecuting officer, was that of a British lieutenant colonel of the Frontier Force Regiment or Rifles, who was posted as registrar of a military hospital in a forward area during war-time. When he was reposted elsewhere he went underground because he did not want to part with his girlfriend, who was incidentally the wife of a colleague of his in his regiment. He was apprehended at Chittagong soon after the end of the war, and tried by a general court martial for desertion on active service.

Another case in which I was the prosecuting officer was in the trial of three young British soldiers who were involved in a shooting affray at Asonsol railway station in 1946. They were only moderately punished and part of the prison sentence was later remitted while undergoing imprisonment. Later, one afternoon in Ranchi, one of these boys approached me and cordially greeted me. I was touched for he obviously had no ill-will against me for the prosecution case I had had to conduct against them.

In one case a British captain was charged with having forged

cheques. This officer and many others as witnesses or accused in other cases, were called from Britain at great expense. They had already been repatriated home or released soon after the end of World War II. In the interests of discipline the army was more keen on seeing that cases were tried than on considering the expenditure involved in summoning the witnesses or accused from Britain.

The only time that I was called upon to be a defending officer was in 1948 in the case of a small group of freshly recruited junior and non-commissioned officers of a militia battalion. They were tried by a summary general court martial for what was technically an offence of mutiny under the Indian Army Act. In actual fact most of the accused did not realize that their action amounted to mutiny, although one of the accused had served in the Indian navy during World War II and was involved in the Indian naval ratings mutiny of 1946 at Bombay, which assumed great political importance at that time as it was on the eve of Indian independence.

Towards the beginning of 1947 the headquarters moved to Ranchi. Perhaps the then general officer commanding-in-chief, General Sir Francis Tuker of the 4 Indian Division fame and author of several books, preferred the retiring atmosphere of Ranchi to the hectic life of Calcutta. I had personally not taken advantage of Calcutta life, but Ranchi was also not much of a place at that time. Ranchi was then the summer headquarters of the Bihar government.

In 1948, there was a call for volunteers of my seniority to go to Jammu and Kashmir on promotion to command militia battalions. I had no idea of the nature of the work involved, but took it to be a good chance for experience and promotion. With only six years commissioned service to my credit, I volunteered for it. Within a week I was called to Jammu and Kashmir to assume command of a battalion. While passing through the then Western Command headquarters at Delhi, I was given a movement order to report to the headquarters of the Jammu and Kashmir Militia located at Srinagar. The commander of the Jammu and Kashmir Militia was Colonel B.M. Kaul, who as a lieutenant general became a victim of the 1962 NEFA debacle, about which a lot has already been said and written. This was the first time I had met Colonel Kaul. He was soon transferred on promotion following a controversy with Sheikh Abdullah, then Prime Minister of Jammu and

Kashmir. I later met him several times towards the end of the 1960s, after his voluntary retirement from the army, when I was posted at Delhi as a civilian officer. Here I must mention that I had been transferred from the army in January 1954 to the civil (Indian Frontier Administrative) service of which more later. Lieutenant General Kaul impressed me as a very patriotic and intelligent person. Apparently he passed sad days after his retirement and suddenly died of heart failure at his Delhi residence one evening in early 1972.

My posting to Srinagar in June 1948 turned into a revisit to my home state which I had left for the plains in 1938. In Srinagar I was given the task of raising a militia battalion from the Kashmiris. I achieved my task within a few months.

II. LADAKH

I had hardly started training the battalion when, finding life in Srinagar too cushy, I volunteered for a tougher assignment elsewhere in Jammu and Kashmir. This offer was readily accepted and in February 1949 I was posted to command the 7 Jammu and Kashmir Militia Battalion at Leh (Ladakh).

Although the order was issued in February 1949, due to bad winter weather over the passes, the airlift to Leh only materialized on 19 April 1949. I was in Leh soon after the January 1949 cease-fire agreement with Pakistan. The atmosphere was still tense. I had the distinction of having in the aircraft with me the late General K.S. Thimayya, D.S.O., who was G.O.C. 19 Infantry Division, also known as the Dagger Division. The Dakota also carried essential rations like rice, *atta* and *dal*. On the hour's flight to Leh we were flying at over 22,000 feet. En route we got a glorious view of the north of the Nanga Parbat (26,660 feet), first climbed in 1934 by an Austrian, Herman Buhl. We could also see the relatively small peak of Nunkun (23,410 feet) to the south. I have seen Nanga Parbat at a distance from various places in Kashmir but no view was as glorious as on this occasion when we were flying so close that we were almost face to face with it. Nanga Parbat is located in the Pakistan-occupied territory of Kashmir.

On arrival at Leh airport there was the late Brigadier K.L. Atal, M.V.C., to receive the G.O.C. The brigadier had come all the way from his headquarters at Kargil and had to wait in Leh for a number of days before the G.O.C.'s flight from Srinagar materialized. Brigadier Atal was a noble and brave soul of the pre-partition Fron-

tier Force Rifles. He was tall, sturdy, calm and professionally a sound soldier. He was then the brigade commander of the 77 Para Brigade in charge of the Ladakh area. It was under his command that the 77 Para Brigade launched an unconventional attack with the 7 Cavalry Light tanks in the forefront in October-November 1948, through the Zojila Pass (11,000 feet). The narrow pass was very heavily guarded by the Pakistani pickets from high commanding features on its flanks which had repulsed the previous attacks of the brigade. There were heavy casualties amongst our troops—the Jats, the Marathas and the Gurkhas. The appearance of the armour under the command of the then Lieutenant Colonel Rajinder Singh, popularly known as "Sparrow," took the Pakistanis absolutely unaware when they least expected the presence of armour under such heavy snowy conditions. Colonel Rajinder Singh later on became a minister in the Punjab government. The presence of light armour isolated the Pakistani pickets located on the two commanding and vertical hill features on either side of the Zojila, with the result that they fled their positions. This was the first snowfall of the season in the area and it fortunately stopped for some days to enable the brigade to push through right up to Kargil and thus link up with the Leh garrison which was in danger of falling to the Pakistanis. Kargil was thus recaptured and the link established right from Srinagar to Leh, just before the severe winter would have almost seen Leh and Kargil garrisons in Pakistani hands, from which it would have become difficult to dislodge them later. On a visit to the abandoned Pakistani positions in the Zojila it was discovered that they had resorted to having women in their bunkers, the evidence being some broken bangles and the like.

When we landed in Leh, apart from a small airstrip, there was not a single motor vehicle in the station, as at that time there were no roads on which these could ply. The airstrip was an awkward sandy strip, about 1200 metres long, at a height of 11,000 feet, with the Spitok monastery on a hillock at the entrance end of the airstrip. Kushak Bakula, the head lama of this monastery, was the only adult head lama of importance. Kushak Bakula later became minister for Ladakh affairs in the Jammu and Kashmir government and is now a member of the Indian Parliament. He belongs to the Gyelukpa or yellow sect of Buddhists who are mostly vegetarian and do not marry, as is the case with Kushak Bakula. The

other lamas who were in the majority in Ladakh belonged to the Nyingmapa or red sect. The *kushos* (head lamas) of this sect were the *kushos* of Hemis and Phiang monasteries, etc. Some of the *kushos* in the monastic hierarchy, though mere boys of eight to ten years, perhaps ranked higher than Kushak Bakula, but he was the most mature and grown up and took a lot of interest in the welfare and politics of Ladakh. Consequently it was Kushak Bakula who was consulted by the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other VIPs. The Hemis monastery was the most prominent monastery in Ladakh and had the greatest number of followers. The *kusho* of Hemis, who at that time was about seven years old, was a Lhasa-born child and under the traditional system of selection, somewhat like that of the Dalai Lama, had been installed as the *kusho* of the Hemis monastery, twenty-two miles away from Leh up the Indus river. The Hemis monastery was tucked inside a narrow mountain gorge a mile from the left bank of the Indus river. Most of the monasteries in Ladakh are located in seclusion and solitude, although by themselves they form small colonies or households. One can get an idea of such monasteries if one reads *The Way of the White Clouds* by Lama Anagrika Govinda, a German settled in Almora after World War II with his Parsi wife, Li Gotami. An annual fair is held in Hemis monastery when the usual lama dances are performed.

The first briefing given to me by the late Brigadier K.L. Atal was at the airstrip itself, before we ponied up to the officers' mess. This was about recording summaries of evidence in the case of three officers who were facing charges of mis-application of government funds. It was rather awkward for a newly arrived soldier to have to record evidence against three out of a total of six officers in the station. The three officers under disciplinary proceedings were a lieutenant colonel, a captain quarter master and a subaltern. The subaltern was only slightly involved and got away with a summary "reprimand" from the brigade commander. The other two officers were later court-martialled at Srinagar but after minor or major punishments continued to serve in the army. I later learnt that the captain was reposted to Ladakh after some years and won decorations for gallant actions in 1962. These officers had withstood the very difficult days when Leh was surrounded by the Pakistanis. It was these officers and their other brave colleagues and troops, with the full support of the local population,

that had succeeded in keeping the Pakistanis at bay until the November 1948 push through the Zojila, which linked up the life-line from Srinagar to Kargil and thence to Leh.

Although we managed to establish the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh land link, we could not succeed in linking up with and relieving the marooned Jammu and Kashmir Infantry's small garrison at Skardu, next to Kargil on the route to Gilgit. Brigadier Sherjung Thapa at Skardu stood the Pakistanis with the remnants of his retreating troops from Gilgit in the face of overwhelming Pakistani opposition, combined with defectors from the Jammu and Kashmir Infantry troops, for months on end. Brigadier Thapa at Skardu and Lieutenant Colonels H.S. Parab and Prithi Chand in Leh asked for airdrops of ammunition in preference to rations. While the Leh garrison could at least fall on the loan of local supplies to a limited extent, in the case of Skardu garrison this was only possible through well aimed airdrops into the fort which was surrounded by hostiles. Most of the airdrops for Brigadier Thapa's garrison fell outside the beleagured post. It was only when the last round of ammunition was exhausted that his force surrendered to the Pakistanis, with the approval by wireless of the divisional commander at Srinagar. Later on, Brigadier Thapa and his personnel were exchanged as prisoners of war after the cease-fire of January 1949. He got a well deserved Maha Vir Chakra gallantry award for the 1948 operations in Skardu, and Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand was mentioned in despatches. Until a few years ago, both these officers were living retired lives in the Dharamsala and Manali areas respectively.

At the time of my posting to Leh, the garrison was just coming out of the hard times it had from the Pakistanis. Before that the airstrip was almost non-operative, although the first risky trial landing was done at Leh in a Dakota by the late, at that time Air Commodore, Mehar Singh, known as "Mehar Baba," of the air force. He was accompanied by the able and popular G.O.C. 19 Division, General K.S. Thimayya. Mehar Singh was a very popular commander and was to have risen to be the air chief but for certain reasons did not make the grade and ultimately resigned. He could not give up his flying hobby and later, when flying a private small aircraft, crashed and lost his life somewhere near Patiala.

When Dakotas first started landing in Leh the locals came from far away to see the aircraft. The Ladakhis even offered grass and

respects to the aerial horse! Some years later I was in the erstwhile North-East Frontier Agency and the tribals there called the aircraft *patang gadi*—the winged horse or bird-wagon. Strangely enough in those days the people of such remote areas saw aeroplanes much earlier than motor vehicles. On arrival in Leh, I found that the majority of the troops had no uniforms. Ammunition and food were in extremely short supply. The local population of Ladakh had come to the rescue by offering their own local clothing and rations. It fell upon me to collect thousands of credit chits signed by the soldiers for supplies like *sattoo* (barley flour), butter, chicken, etc., which had been supplied to them in the various villages. In and out of Leh I found a number of Gurkha troops, and the Ladakhi local militia, clad in Ladakhi dress carrying a rifle. It was a problem finding out who belonged to the Indian army. The situation gradually improved and air flights started to increase. During the next three months our ration of basically *atta* and rice, which was supposed to be 24 ounces per head per day, gradually increased from 5 ounces to 20 ounces per day. Within a few years the land link was improved. Now a good part of the supplies are brought during summer by the land route via Srinagar. Later, towards the middle of the sixties, another fair weather road link was established which linked Leh with Manali. I happened to be in Leh on a brief visit when I saw the first vehicular convoy start over this new link. This road passes over the 16,000 feet high Baralacha Pass and down to Lahaul and up to Rohtang (13,500 feet),where it descends to Manali, a quiet hill station for tourists in the Kulu valley.

Compared to the hard times that my predecessors had been through, I came to Ladakh at a relatively easier time since the cease-fire had been declared. One of the Pakistani pickets inside Ladakh in our territory remained isolated far in the interior en route to Kishtwar. It was a Pakistani platoon under a *jamadar* (now known as *naib-subedar* in the Indian army) at a place known as Phutaksar. I had to inform this Pakistani picket, through our neighbouring post in the area, that there had been a cease-fire between the two countries and they would be given safe conduct to Pakistan. The platoon was so out of touch with events that they refused to believe it. Eventually we had to give safe conduct to a Pakistani officer from the Pakistani-occupied area close to Kargil. He managed to convince the Pakistani post and they were given safe con-

duct to Pakistan in June 1949, six months after the cease-fire.

The troops under my command consisted of both local militia raised during the emergency and some Gurkha troops. They were a fine, tough lot. I spent most of the time touring, inspecting my troops and in the process negotiating 18,000 feet, 16,000 feet and 13,000 feet high passes like the Khardungla, Changla, and Fatula. While all the area was only negotiable by foot, pony or, the most reliable, yak, by August 1950 we had the first jeep flown into Leh. With some improvements done on the local tracks, we drove the jeep the four miles between Leh airfield and the town.

One of my first tasks in Leh was to bring the battalion to its full strength by resorting to fresh recruitment. While I recruited a few locals, every day I was faced with two or three already-serving personnel having caught the venereal disease, gonorrhoea. This was somewhat of a predicament as one could not prevent the local troops from indulging in the necessity or luxury of social intercourse in the villages where they were posted or through which they passed during their journeys, nor could they be checked in Leh. This is a highly infectious disease which shows its extremely painful symptoms within a week or so. I was curious to understand the problem. For a month or two I followed the routine of having all the victims of this disease marched before me in the orderly room on receipt of a report from the unit medical officer. In the presence of the *jamadar* adjutant I examined the extent of the disease, which was a horrifying sight. Eventually I passed a battalion order that every rank must carry a sheath on himself as part of his pay book, AB-64-M, which a soldier is supposed to have on him at all times. Another high handed act of mine, although well intentioned, was to compile a list of the women in Leh who were carriers of gonorrhoea. This list was compiled from the interrogation of men who were brought to the orderly room after starting treatment for the disease. I had the audacity to publish battalion orders to be read out at roll call to the troops announcing the names of infectious women and warning the men from going to them. To my surprise, it had an amazing effect and showed good results. We also showed a film on venereal diseases which no doubt served its purpose.

When I reached Leh there was hardly a typewriter and all my messages went on a message form with a carbon placed under it.

Within six months, I had a fully equipped garrison office, a series of typewriters, typists, a *jamadar* head clerk, a *jamadar* adjutant, a *jamadar* quarter master, etc. The authorized strength of officers was raised from two to four, besides the couple of officers that I managed to get from the brigade to help me. On arrival in Leh, I found that I was naturally functioning as the battalion commander of my locally raised unit. For some unknown reason, there was a nucleus of the brigade headquarters (which was actually in Kargil) located two miles away in Leh. This nucleus of the brigade office was manned by a so-called staff captain and another subaltern. In the afternoons, I found myself as garrison commander visiting that office to pass orders on my requests initiated earlier in the morning from the battalion located two miles lower down. I took no time to abolish this ridiculous situation and waste of time and merely designated myself as commanding officer of the local battalion-cum-local garrison. Thus orders were issued from my office in the fort in my dual capacity. The captain and the subaltern were now more usefully employed in the fort office, putting an end to their separate office in the town. Of course, I did this with the approval of the higher formation at Kargil who were always more than reasonable in acceding to our requests.

One of the most important events during my stay in Ladakh was the visit of our Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to Leh from 4 to 7 July 1949. He was accompanied by his daughter, Mrs Indira Gandhi, the late Feroze Gandhi, the late Air Marshal S. Mukherjee and Mrs Mukherjee. People flocked from the farthest corners of Ladakh to see "Panditji." Kushak Bakula and the *kushos* of Thikse, Phiang and many other monasteries, received Panditji and his daughter with abundant affection and the traditional presentation of white silk *khatas* (scarves). People hailed the party with their traditional *Jule Joo* (greetings). Amongst the senior army officers who received Mr Nehru were Brigadier K.L. Atal, Lieutenant Colonel N.K. Chatterjee and myself. Mr Nehru was to proceed by pony from the airport to the officers' mess, four miles further up in the town. After breakfast in the mess, the party was scheduled to proceed to Hemis monastery. The party was to camp for the night at a picturesque place midway known as Choklamsar on the bank of the Indus river. Amongst other duties, I was assigned to get the heavy baggage sent direct from the airport to the night halt camp, keeping essential things

available to the party. Therefore, when the party came out of the aircraft I first approached Mr Nehru to enquire if he needed anything to accompany him for the day. Outside Delhi, Panditji was always in good spirits and a figure of physical fitness. In later years, after 1962, it was sad to see this great man of broad vision look worried and aged. Panditji was wearing a nice tweed jacket and riding breeches. He looked at his baton, which he usually carried with him, and said that he needed nothing with him. He was offered an army issue jungle hat, which he used on the journey. Mrs Gandhi gave a similar reply, with the result that I sent away all the baggage, including her handbag. On arrival at the officers, mess where the party was to halt for breakfast, Mrs Indira Gandhi looked for the "colonel" who had inquired about the baggage at the airstrip. Seeing me nearby she asked for her handbag. I had to tell her that it had gone away with the heavy baggage. A man was immediately despatched to retrieve the bag en route and it was soon produced before her, although she had not pursued the matter any further. Somehow, in outlandish places like Ladakh and NEFA, simple and single officers like me remained ungroomed in the niceties of life and were sometimes misunderstood.

On another occasion five years later, in the erstwhile NEFA, Pran Luthra, as the able development commissioner from the NEFA secretariat, paid us a visit when I was the political officer in Siang division. He was accompanied by his charming wife. I arranged for their visit to the nearby village of Darkang. Just short of the village, having come four miles by jeep from the district headquarters, we discovered that the last part of the journey involved crossing a stream by a precarious cane suspension bridge. Mrs Luthra was dressed in a colourful sari. It had not occurred to me to have asked her to come in trousers instead. However, there was no alternative for her but to climb the notched single log ladder to the bridge and then manoeuvre herself over the cane suspension bridge, with some acrobatics no doubt.

I was in command of the Leh garrison with the majority of my loyal and disciplined irregular troops, now the Ladakh Scouts, and some Gurkhas. Therefore, while Brigadier Atal and Lieutenant Colonel Chatterjee were lucky enough to accompany the VIPs to Hemis monastery, it fell on me to be left behind in Leh to look after the operational problems of the garrison, which included the forward defended localities. When Panditji returned to

Leh after two days in Hemis, the last day of his stay at Leh was fully utilized by posing for pictures in colourful Ladakhi dresses. He received delegations and hosted a luncheon on the lawns of the officers' mess.

Mrs Gandhi kept herself busy meeting women's delegations and took great interest in organizing their association and sorting out their problems. Even in those days, Ladakhi women were fully equal with the menfolk in this outlandish part of our country.

In December 1949, I took a journey from Leh to tour the area right up to the Pongong lake close to the border with western Tibet. This later figured a lot in the news during the Chinese aggression of 1962. Normally one would have undertaken this foot-cum-pony journey during the pleasant months of summer but I had no choice as the summer season would keep us busy with incidents on the border with the Pakistan-occupied territory of Kashmir. My journey was in December from Leh to Ranbirpura, then north to Tankse village, up the snow covered mountain and over the 18,000 feet high Changla Pass. The march over Changla, in heavy snow and with visibility almost nil, was tiresome and we had to spend the night at an ancient caravan halting place consisting of a wretched two-roomed mud hut which was more like a stable. The place still boasted of a name, Tsultak, even though it had no habitation, and was on the caravan route from Sinkiang and north-western Tibet into Leh, situated at a height of 15,000 feet. Tsultak was surrounded by animal and human skeletons. During December there was nothing available there except some dry yak dung for cooking fuel. That night I went without food despite my tiredness and the fact that I had sufficient tinned rations with me. The atmosphere was too nauseating to want to eat anything.

Early next morning I rushed from the camp down to Tankse village, some ten miles to the north-east. From Tankse the track diverged, one north to Shyok village on the left bank of the river of the same name, and the other track went west to the Pongong lake (Pongong *tso*) which stretched for fifty miles at a height of 14,000 feet. On this trip, I was accompanied by one of the army headquarters officers, Captain Inderjeet Singh. He was very welcome company. We reached Tankse village where we took shelter in one of the rooms of a local's hut. It is the system, as many readers will be aware, that the groundfloor storey in

these mud and stone huts is allotted to the animals and the upper storey is the living storey with a bore-hole type of latrine nearby. We were fortunately accommodated in the upper storey. Because of the extreme cold, below freezing during winter, sanitation does not pose a serious problem. But being unused to such a life, I felt uncomfortable on most of the journey when we took shelter in the type of places I have mentioned. I was obviously not made of the stuff of the nineteenth century Survey of India *pundits* or Alexander David Neel who travelled in disguise as a Tibetan beggar woman from Peking to Lhasa. From this village we spent a day going north right to Shyok village, a distance of about eleven miles. In this forsaken place I had a detachment of five to six local militia personnel. To give them some change, these detachments were replaced every six months. I must take my hat off to the patience and loyalty of these boys who did their duty without grumbling. As the locals had hardly any modern weapons and being Buddhists they did not like killing animals, game was therefore quite plentiful at Shyok. Towards evening, a deer-like animal known as *bhural* came to the spring, which was also the village water point. The militia boys had a routine of shooting one animal every day and sharing it with the villagers. We had our share of the meat on our visit. Shyok was on the route from the Karakoram Pass via Murgo; the other route being via the Sasser Pass (17,000 feet), Panamik and the Nubra valley, then across the same Shyok river further down. The Sasser Pass is on the saddle formed by the flanks of the Sasser Kangri. The Sasser Kangri (25,170 feet) was climbed for the first time by Commander (Navy) Joginder Singh and party in 1973. The source of the Shyok river is further north in a glacier. In about 1890, it burst its dam and submerged many villages in the Shyok valley; one could still see the high water mark left by this flood along the course of the Shyok river.

We returned from Shyok village to Tankse from where we resumed our journey up to the Pongong lake. We night halted at a couple of villages en route. It was a three-day journey by pony along the west bank of Pongong lake to Chushul village. Chushul village, situated at 14,000 feet, was prominent during the Chinese aggression of 1962. I found it swampy, with huge mosquitoes even during the sub-zero temperatures of December. However, the mosquitoes were confined to our rest hut which had been unoccu-

pied for months or years. From Chushul we had to ride for three or four hours to the top of a pass known as Tsaka-la (16,000 feet). The area from Pongong *tso* up to the northern foothills of Tsaka pass is a partial swamp. Here I saw the *kiang* for the first time in my life. This is a very swift-footed animal which looks more like a zebra than a donkey and has white anklets. It is untamed, in this area at least. They were extremely shy and galloped away at the sight of us. I watched them for several minutes through my binoculars before they bolted away. There was no point in trying to shoot at them as we were not in such a state of starvation that we had to resort to horse meat.

Going down the Tsaka-la, on the southern side, we spent the night in the lone hut in the area. This was newly built and we found ourselves in comparative comfort. The next morning we were on the bank of the Indus river and took our homeward (westward) course along it. Here the sandstorms are so frequent and strong that the wind really cuts into one's face. It is advisable to cover the skin with Vaseline day and night. The Ladakhis use butter for this. We got into a sandstorm within an hour of the day's halting stage, Nyoma village. There were strong "sand-devils," whirling columns of sand rising one thousand feet high which can lift a person from the ground. We dismounted our ponies and clung to the ground. After the storm abated we attempted to eat our packed lunch, but we gave up when we discovered that it was more sand than food. We reached Nyoma village in the afternoon. The villagers were enjoying a religious celebration and nearly everyone was drunk. It was very difficult for us to find a habitable room in the so-called mud dak bungalow. To cut the story short, we reached Chumathang village on the right bank of the Indus within a few days. Leaving in the early morning, just before light, as was our routine, I discovered a hot spring on the river bank within a foot of the ice cold, freezing Indus river. I had not had a bath for about ten days and we welcomed the luxury of a hot bath in this sub-zero temperature.

We continued on our way down the route along the Indus river right up to Leh. The Indus river was frozen solid in most parts; it ran under the ice, appearing and disappearing at intervals of a few hundred yards. Crossing the Indus was fairly easy, unlike in summer when one is restricted to crossing only where there are bridges at intervals of ten to twenty miles. One fine morning,

while we were on the march along the Indus river, we were faced with a situation like Robinson Crusoe's when he saw a lone foot print in the wilderness; we found half a dozen dead fish without any heads on the thick frozen river. This was really a puzzle and we could only solve it with the help of a local villager. He told us that the river abounded in otter which only relished the head of the fish and left the body. While I could understand the otter relishing the head, I wonder why it should have spared the body! My colleague, Captain Inderjeet Singh, had not had any good fresh meat for over a week. He collected the fish, less the heads, but despite his best cooking efforts I am afraid I did not sample the preparation. When we were within four days march of Leh, we spent the night as usual in a village hut. This village was also celebrating a religious festival. It appeared to be a free-for-all amongst the men and women there and in their fun they made all sorts of erotic gestures towards one another; this was Khajuraho enacted in pantomime!

Normally the mode of travel in Ladakh was by foot, pony or yak. I am afraid that I never took to riding a yak although it is the most surefooted animal in snow and during summer feels at ease above 13,000 feet. It does, however, shy easily and one feels frightened in its presence. It was a bit surprising to sometimes see a few camels come into Leh from the dry desert plateaus of Sinkiang, Khotan and the Aksai Chin.

On one of my tours, in order to avoid living in ramshackle huts for a couple of nights on a tour from Khalsi to Leh (fifty-five miles), I decided to ride the distance in one day. This was done by using four ponies in relays. This was all right for the ponies but certainly not for me as my legs ached for days after. Later I read the book *Simla Past and Present* during my tours in Himachal and saw that Lord Dalhousie had travelled the distance from Simla to Kalpa (headquarters of Kinnaur district) non-stop on his horse, which in those days would have been a tough pony ride of over a hundred hill miles.

Life in Leh was then rather lonely as there were only four or five officers in the headquarters. I was perhaps the most envied as well as the most lonely officer in that I was the senior-most and had to leave the others to indulge in their own pleasures at their own levels. Unfortunately, I had therefore to feel rather older and more aloof than I would have liked to.

In spring, Leh was green with barley fields and melting snow water flowing down through the town. With our limited garrison strength, we did not strain the country's resources too much by flying in any kerosene oil for fuel. Instead we contented ourselves by using the minimum of firewood, which was very scarce. We got firewood from as far away as possible and during spring resorted to tree plantations. The luxury of kerosene heaters, etc., only became necessary in later years. On one occasion I received a thousand "chemical heaters," each the size of a shell field dressing. I returned them to the divisional headquarters as an unwanted luxury. When I revisited Leh in the 1960s, it had a pressurized base hospital, a cinema and other similar amenities.

At that young age, I was practically unaware of the problems of acclimatization. In recent years I have learnt more and I am now surprised how I escaped without any permanent health problems in view of my reckless disregard of the rules of acclimatization for years on end. Research on mountain sickness, frostbite, chilblain, tick typhus, etc., only started as a result of the needs of the army deployed on frontier defence after 1947-51.

In the army, one is supposed to follow regulations and orders to the letter. I was always a rebel in defying the rigidity of such orders but was lucky enough to be fully appreciated by my superiors; I cannot remember ever getting ticked off for any of my actions. On one occasion, our G.O.C. 19 Division (at that time General K.S. Thimayya) flew to Leh in one of the supply sorties. The divisional headquarters had, no doubt, sent me a signal to see him at the airstrip, which I did. It was customary for us to offer a simple cup of tea in the only crockery then available, crude brass tumblers made locally out of melted fired cases of rifle bullets which were plentiful as a result of the recent operations. Amongst many questions that General Thimayya asked me about the operational and logistical matters of the garrison was to inquire if the full entitlement of rum was being issued to the *jawans*. I informed him that I had cut it to half. At this he politely told me that it was not within my powers to cut the men's ration. The reason I gave him was that my troops were mostly locally recruited militia who in any case took a lot of local brew known as *chhang* (equivalent of beer) and *arra* (liquor). I thought it was a good thing to restrict their airlifted rum ration to half, that is two ounces instead of four ounces per day. Before I could reluc-

tantly comply with his orders it so happened that hardly a week later I had a similar brief visit by the army commander, Lieutenant General S.M. Srinagesh, who was accompanied by the same G.O.C., Major General Thimayya. It so happened that besides these two officers, the rest of the sortie almost entirely consisted of cases of rum. The two generals were talking to me while the supplies were being unloaded and they were, as usual, offered cups of tea in the brass tumblers, without any biscuits, etc., which were rare luxuries at that time. General Srinagesh asked me what was in the wooden cases that were being unloaded from the aircraft. He was informed that they were crates of rum bottles. He did not seem to like rum being flown so expensively when the priority should have been for what he considered more essential rations like foodstuff. Knowing the argument I had had with General Thimayya only a week before, I merely looked towards the latter and he gave me an understanding smile! I said nothing to the army commander. As soon as the two generals left I made up my mind to take my own decision and adhere to the half ration of rum, and that was the end of the matter.

I would like to pay a tribute to the air crews of the Indian air force and the Indian National Airways (predecessor of the Indian Airlines) who did a marvellous job in making air sorties of essential supplies and personnel to Leh by ordinary Dakotas in rough weather over the high passes between Srinagar and Leh. Some of the civilian pilots whom I can remember were Captains Mistri, Raj K. Mehra, now flying a Boeing in the Indian Airlines, O.P. Mehta and the late R.S. Randhawa, who died in a brave air rescue operation in Nepal when tracing the victims of an aircrash.

On one occasion, the commander of 21 L. of C. area (line of communication area) whose headquarters was at Udhampur, paid us a day's visit. While his Dakota was landing at the precarious Leh airstrip, he must have appreciated that the hillock of Spitok monastery stood in the way of a safe landing at the approach end. After emerging from the aircraft, he told me to get the sixty feet high tail-end of the rocky hill demolished with my unit personnel. I informed him, as politely as I could, that it was a tall order which could only be achieved by engineers and sufficient machinery and not by a small headquarters strength of one hundred fully occupied personnel without any implements. The G.O.C. apparently considered my reply to be rude and issued an order

to me to give weekly progress reports by wireless. Immediately after the G.O.C.'s departure, I flashed the position to my operational divisional commander, Major General Thimayya. Promptly a reply came to "ignore" the order of the visiting general.

At Leh, we occasionally had people from various walks of life to be looked after for a day or two. On one occasion it happend to be Mridula Sarabhai, who passed away in 1974. We received her under orders from the headquarters 19 Infantry Division. She stayed in our mess for a week or two. I left her to herself to float around the town while I attended to my garrison work. One evening she insisted that she would like to go with me to see the troops billeted in the old Leh fort. I took her there at evening roll call time, which was also the time when evening meals were served to the men just before dark. The routine was to issue them their half ration of rum in their enamel mugs, followed by their dinner. She was rather inquisitive and, in keeping with her ideals, asked for an explanation of why rum was being served to troops. I politely quietened her by saying that all this was done under orders and within rules. By then I was rather fed up with so much fuss about the rum issue. Incidentally I never consumed rum except occasionally for fun.

Amongst the few important people that visited Ladakh during my tenure were Sir Owen Dixon who was the chairman of the United Nations team for Jammu and Kashmir; Sir Ivelaw Chapman, at that time the commander-in-chief of the Indian air force; Taya Zinkin, the wife of an ex-British ICS officer in India and also a journalist, who still has articles printed in Indian and British newspapers; and Dr H.N. Kunzru. Whenever any visitors came to Leh it was customary for us to entertain them with a display of Ladakhi dances. There were only three or four women that we could produce to give the performances. These dancers also entertained the audience with Ladakhi love songs like "Shekia-Moole" and they had also composed a few lines in praise of my predecessors.

With the advance of the communists in Sinkiang during the winter of 1950, we had several thousand refugees fleeing from Sinkiang into Leh. Theirs was a tale of great suffering. These refugees were Muslims and later on they were air-lifted by returning flights to Srinagar, from where they gradually went to various parts of the Middle East and Turkey.

Most of the refugees came with what little they could carry on their hardy ponies. Many of them had lost some members of their families in their arduous journey over the Karakoram or neighbouring passes. Amongst these was the vice-governor of Sinkiang—if I remember correctly his name was Isa Beg—together with his charming wife. They had lost their daughter in their flight from Sinkiang.

These refugees had lost almost everything they had before they could manage to escape. They brought Yarkandi and Sinkiang carpets with them. I had a hard task trying to see that they were not fleeced by those connected with their evacuation from Leh. I am happy to say that this task was performed ruthlessly honestly for which my thanks are due to those who cooperated with me. Our consul general in Kashgar, R.D. Sathe of the Indian Foreign Service and an ex-army officer, and his wife also arrived in Leh during the winter of 1950, after their long and difficult journey from Kashgar. From distant Urumchi (Tiwah), the capital of Sinkiang, came the American consul general, Mr Paxton, and his young wife. They had to stay with us before they could be airlifted. They had an exciting story to tell of their flight from Sinkiang. I was sorry to learn that Mr Paxton later died in the USA. Another person who dropped in over the passes later was the British vice-consul from Kashgar.

During one of the winters, I was summoned from Leh by the brigade commander at Kargil to participate in an exercise. It was a severe winter and it took me six days through heavy snow to reach Kargil. The last eight miles were the toughest and my sturdy Yarkandi pony succumbed to the effects of snow while halfway to Kargil from this village. I reached Kargil shortly before dusk. In those days the accommodation was very poor and I found myself billeted in a glorified stable. That night also happened to be a "Dinner Night," which in peace-time stations is observed as a formal dinner with proper etiquette and routine, ending with the drinking of the toast to the President. Soup was served, followed by a very tough piece of chicken which every officer found almost impossible to tackle with the fork and spoon with which we were meant to deal with it. There was one medical officer who, after starting to tackle the chicken with his hands, boldly told the brigadier that whether he liked it or not, he could not afford to miss the piece of chicken. The commander was an understanding officer and a stickler for mess etiquette but he had no choice but to keep

quiet. I am not sure whether the following morning he called for an explanation from the medical officer.

Life in Leh was by no means exciting. The population of three thousand people were simple, peace loving, contented and cheerful. During spring, when the barley was usually sown, they remained extremely busy with their fields from before sunrise until sundown. The whole day they sang and worked in their fields in the villages located at the mouths of snow-fed streams joining a river. Tea and lunch were brought to them in the fields by errand boys and girls. When dusk fell the people could be seen for an hour in the hub of Leh town, the dusty little market place, where vegetables, *chhang* and similar things were sold. This was the only diversion before dark when one could see some human activity—not that there was very much of it—or do some shopping. As firewood was extremely scarce, the locals resorted to minimum use of fuel. Day and night, they ate roasted barley flour mixed with water, known there as *tsampa*. This involved very little use of fuel. After sundown it was completely quiet as the people went to bed in the absence of any lighting. Our mess boasted a petromax light and we would adjourn from our mess ante-room by nine. I had rightly or wrongly discouraged use of gambling in any form in the mess following our previous bitter and brief experiences of it in Leh and elsewhere. To the credit of my colleagues, this was strictly observed.

One of the important social hubs of the town was the drinking water point, the only one in the town, located in a narrow lane off the road leading to our mess. This lane was popularly known as "Lovers' Lane." In the evening the young girls of the town came with their pitchers in their baskets to fill water. The few troops in the town went to this attractive water point to have dates with peaches!

There were about a dozen Leh personalities who we knew well. The civil administrator, a government official, was a gentleman by the name of Khawaja Gulam Kadir Gandarbali (he came from Gandarbal, near Srinagar).

The *tehsildar* was Mr Tsetan Phuntsok, a local Christian. He later left Ladakh for Mussoorie-Dehra Dun as his presence in Ladakh, I understood, became difficult because of political differences. The *tehsildar*'s wife was a charming lady respected among the local people because until then the *tehsildar* was considered an

important official in those areas. Occasionally I saw her on a pony wearing her ornaments and the pretty head-dress (*perak*) embedded with turquoise. Being a *tehsildar*'s wife, she preferred to ride on an elegant pony rather than resort to walking.

The *naib-tehsildar* was a local Muslim gentleman, and the *maulavi* of the local mosque came from Srinagar. He was very sad because he had lost his son during the 1948 operations. Mr Gregan, the assistant conservator of forests, was also posted in the station for a couple of years. Two other Ladakhi gentlemen from the area were the late Mr Duchen and Mr Rixin who were posted in government jobs in Srinagar. Mr Sonam Norbu was one of the first educated young men from Leh. He later on became our ambassador in Mongolia and has now been taken into the Jammu and Kashmir ministry formed by Sheikh Abdullah in early 1975.

One of the fine personalities was the late Kalon Rixin, which in the old days meant a high official. He was a real patriot and assisted the Indian army in the defence of Leh against the Pakistani invaders before the 1949 cease-fire.

His younger brother, Kalon Lama, as is the custom, had been allotted a monastery. It was far to the north, across the 18,000 feet high Khardung Pass, at a village near Panamik in the Nubra valley. Panamik is on the route to the Sasser and Karakoram passes. Kalon Lama played his part during the operations by arranging supplies for the army operating in the area; for this reason he was known as the "supply member." It fell upon me, as mentioned earlier, to redeem all the credit slips for supplies received from locals, signed by all ranks of troops in far-flung villages. I discovered that during 1947-48 one of the dashing Leh garrison commanders had appointed a council from amongst the important locals with himself styled as the military governor. In the absence of adequate army logistical support, he had assigned these influential locals various designations and tasks, such as defence, supply and health. No doubt there was method in his madness!

The late elder Kalon's son, Rixin Namgyal, was then a *naib-tehsildar*. He took a sojourn right up to Gartok in western Tibet while I was there. When I revisited Ladakh towards the end of the sixties, I found him taking an active interest in raising vegetables and fruit locally and earning a good income.

Another personality of the town was the late Aksakal (which

means the white beard, which he had). Another friendly gentleman was the father of Mr Ataullah who in 1974 was Pakistan's ambassador in Kathmandu.

My predecessors had been Lieutenant Colonel H.S. Parab, a Maratha commanding the 2/8 Gurkha Battalion; Lieutenant Colonel Prithi Chand of the Dogras who hailed from Lahaul; and Major Harichand, who was a dare-devil officer who could be entrusted with any guerilla activity. It was Major Harichand who, with a small detachment of *jawans* and the young Lieutenant Swaroop Krishna Kaul, played hell with Pakistani hostiles by using guerilla tactics. Both Harichand and Swaroop Kaul were God-fearing men of austere habits, teetotallers and non-smokers. Major Harichand and his dare-devils went right to the rear of the Pakistani-occupied position at a place known as Bazgo. Harichand went to their gun position in the middle of night and exploded it by lobbing a live grenade inside its barrel. He fled in a flash, as all guerillas do, to safety miles away. He had the advantage, in addition to his guts, of having the cooperation of the local Ladakhis.

One of Major Harichand's helpers was a schoolboy studying in class eight named Chhewang Rinchin. When I arrived in Leh in 1949 to assume command of the garrison and the local militia battalion, I found that Chhewang Rinchin was a lance *naik* in one of our companies. On the basis of reports received from my second-in-command, Major S.J.S. Bhonsle (of the Marathas), and others about this brave young man I recommended him for an appropriate decoration for bravery during the operations. I was happy to see that soon after I left the place he was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC). I had already promoted him to the rank of a *havildar* and then *jamadar* (now *naib-subedar*). Much later I learnt that he had become a major in the same battalion.

I would like to briefly mention some of my loyal officers in the garrison. They were Majors S.J.S. Bhonsle, J. S. Sidhu, Narendra Singh, K.S. Takkar, Lachman Singh, Lieutenants G. S. Ahuluwalia and Krishna, Major K. Vasu, Captain Inderjit Singh and the medical officers, etc.

Another personality that I had in the battalion was a lance *naik* who was the *raja* of Stok, a village across the Indus river near Leh. He was no longer strictly a *raja*, although according to local tradition he was taken round on a pony in full ceremony by the local population once a year. Because of his high family background

I was prevailed upon by my superior officers to promote him. I was rather miserly and promoted him in stages to only *jamadar* (now known as *naib subedar*). Later on, when I was on one of my brief civilian visits to Leh in 1958, I found this gentleman was a captain in the same battalion and relishing mugfuls of beer to keep his then commanding officer company. He was married to a girl from a good family of Keylong (Lahaul).

The only foreign couple in the whole station were Mr and Mrs Driver of the Moravian Mission. They were British and had been missionaries in Leh for over fifteen years. They were dedicated to their proselytizing work and Mrs Driver was a doctor in her mission hospital close to their mud cottage. Just before I left Ladakh on transfer for the plains in June 1951, they were replaced by a younger French couple, Mr and Mrs Pierre Vittoz. In 1953 Pierre Vittoz was one of the successful members of the French expedition who climbed the 23,460 feet high Nunkun Peak in the Zanskar range (Punjab Himalayas) of southern Ladakh.

I would be failing in my duty if I did not mention the late Mr T. Dorje, known as Babu Dorje, who was the subdivisional officer, P.W.D., in Leh. He was a simple, unassuming jack-of-all-trades and a very useful and helpful person. On the eve of the arrival of a VIP to Leh the tie-rod-end of our only jeep broke while struggling through a sandy patch. Apart from towing the jeep into town with a passing camel, Babu Dorje sat up the whole night making a new tie-rod-end. Thus, we were able to drive the VIP from the airfield to the town the following morning. As my orderly-cum-batman, I had Sonam Norphel who, because he was short and stout, had been given the nickname of Rolly-polly by me. Another person in the mess who was particularly attached to me was Mrs Mohammed Maqbul from Srinagar, a fine soul.

The incidents and experiences I had with the village ponies are too many to be described but I will take the liberty of describing a few. In one instance, at the sound of a piece of paper being unwrapped, the pony shied and bolted away, leaving me helpless on the ground, luckily on soft sand! To recapture one's pony was no minor manoeuvre. It was not the same pony every day since it was customary for each village to provide a fresh relay of ponies. This was welcome in one respect, at least one did not have a tired pony; on the other hand, the ponies were usually slow and stuck to their own pace and rhythm.

Once, while I was in the middle of a ride along the sandy bank of the Shyok river towards the forward localities, I happened to take out my white handkerchief in order to clean my sandbitten face. This was enough to startle the pony. In a jiffy I found myself on the ground and the pony bolted away, fortunately in the same direction as my day's destination. I had to walk almost the whole distance on foot to reach my destination and, worse still, over a sandy patch.

On another occasion my brigade commander, Brigadier Gurbachan Irwin Singh Khullar, was on his way from Kargil to Leh to inspect my garrison. I had, therefore, gone ahead two stages on pony to a village called Saspool to receive him. The following morning we covered a distance of twenty-five odd miles back to Leh. He was accompanied by his staff captain on another pony. The brigadier and I were a mile ahead of the captain when, while passing over the sandy slopes of an area known as Tharu which figured during the defence of Leh, I turned my head back to see the captain trudging along on the sandy plain. We stopped and with my binoculars I could see the captain's pony had bolted and was fleeing fast towards the Indus river! Being young, and perhaps to show off a little to the brigadier, I instantly galloped off to catch the defaulting pony. When about to catch up with it, I had to finally jump off my pony to catch hold of it. In this process, I could not catch the defaulting pony and also saw my own pony out of my hands, running off in a different direction! The poor fat captain was somewhere far in the distance. To add to my folly, I took out my .38 revolver from its holster and fired to scare my pony off in the direction of our destination (Leh) but unfortunately it did not work. I wound my way back sheepishly to join the brigadier, who had a hearty laugh. Not only had I lost the pony but also my two blankets which I had used as a cushion on the hard wooden saddle provided by the owner. The owner, of course, was nowhere in sight since they generally followed an hour or so behind and sometimes one person was in charge of three or four ponies belonging to different owners. I had no alternative but to walk. When we were within six miles of Leh I had arranged to spring a surprise on the brigadier by having the pony track cleared to bring the jeep two miles further ahead of the existing jeep head. So it was not long before we were able to take the jeep ride into Leh. Later in the evening we saw the pony owner come to receive

the wages and he also returned the two blankets to me.

One afternoon my appointed pony was leashed with its rope to a poplar tree next to our mess verandah in Leh. I was not going to ride it that afternoon. After lunch my staff officer, Lieutenant G.S. Ahluwalia, asked permission to ride the pony to the fort for the afternoon session. We next saw the poor officer with his booted left foot stuck in the stirrup and him on the ground being kicked in the chest by the eccentric pony. By the time we were able to help, the pony had broken the leash and was about to bolt away when the officer's left foot luckily came out of the stirrup. A few seconds more and he would have been dragged to his unfortunate end by the sturdy pony. The officer cried that his heart had been seriously hit and any minute he was going to die. Our medical officer assured us that since the officer was still alive there was no worry and fortunately it turned out to be so.

On another occasion, I had a fairly serious fall from the same pony, which was a fast and elegant-looking animal but suffered from one very bad defect—when mounting it, it would bite you. Therefore, the usual technique was for me to bring the pony to the nearest mound or boulder and then jump on to its back from there. Once on its back it was as docile as anything and one could ride it as one liked. One morning, while I was in my office, a wireless message was transmitted to me over the local telephone line by my cypher in-charge saying that in the middle of deciphering a message, he could hear the drone of the aircraft about to land. The part of the message that he had managed to decipher was "G.O.C., accompanied by ... arriving ... Meet at the airstrip." I had no time to wait for him to decipher the whole message or have it checked and galloped hell for leather on the above-mentioned pony, straight for the airstrip. En route, as ill luck would have it, the pony stumbled on a stone. I fell off the pony and onto the ground, but luckily the pony stood still. Although my back was badly sprained, I jumped back onto the pony and made for the airfield. I arrived a minute or two after the army and divisional commanders' exit from the plane. The two VIPs were Lieutenant General S.M. Shrinagesh and Major General Thimayya. The G.O.C. did not like my being late when he was accompanying his superior officer. He asked me whether I had received his message, particularly because he had wanted me to come prepared with certain information. I explained the position to him, how I

had received only part of the message and that too only a few minutes earlier. No sooner were they back in Srinagar by the same returning flight than I received a "flash" signal from the headquarters of the 19 Infantry Division asking for an explanation as to why I had not received their previous signal in time. I replied that their previous signal in code was not even marked immediate and so it received its proper priority, particularly as most of the unimportant coded signals were marked immediate!

I would like to give a brief description of the mountains and rivers of Ladakh before I finish this chapter. Before the Pakistani aggression of 1947 this consisted of the Ladakh Province, including what is left of Ladakh with India and the portion of Kargil, Gilgit, Skardu, etc., now forming part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. In the extreme west of Leh there are the Chang Chenmo, Lingzi Tang, and Aksai Chin Plateaus in the extreme north-east. It was through this north-eastern corner of Indian territory that the Chinese gave India an unpleasant surprise when they took a road from the north-west of this area south-eastwards into Tibet, which was discovered soon after its construction in 1956. Further west and almost directly to the north of Leh is the Karakoram Pass. Further south are the Saserkangri peaks and the pass. As we go further west into what is now Pakistan-occupied Kashmir there are the snowy giants of K-2 or Mount Godwin Austin, the second highest peak in the world, Masherbrum, Gasherbrum, the Saltoro Kangri, the Kanjut and Dastaghir, and similar peaks of Rakaposhi and Haramosh to the north and north-west of Gilgit, and Chogolisa (25,110 feet) or the "Mona Lisa" of the Karakorams. To the north of Gilgit are the twin Baltistan towns, with different Muslim faiths, of Hunza and Naga, and further west is the Yasin river, which reminds one of Henry Newbolt's poem, "He Fell Among Thieves." The only giant snow peak in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, south of the Indus river, is the Nanga Parbat (26,660 feet).

The Indus is the main river of Ladakh and originates from the area to the north of Manasarovar. It joins another tributary coming from the Manasarovar lake at Tashigang, and then becomes the Indus proper. Incidentally, the Tsanpo river, known as the Brahmaputra in India, also originates from Manasarovar. Towards the west the river known as the Sutlej in India enters Himachal close to the Shipki Pass. Another river, the Pare *chu* (*chu* means river), enters near the border of Punjab at Kaurik and becomes the Spiti

river while passing through Spiti district. Then it joins another river, the Chandra and later the Bhaga from the north near Keylong in Lahaul, and thereafter assumes the name Chenab. Another of the five rivers of pre-partition Punjab, the Beas, originates from the southern face of the Rohtang Pass, which separates Lahaul from Manali and the Kulu valley.

The Indus river enters Ladakh near the border with Tibet at Demchok. As it flows further down beyond Leh the Indus becomes more torrential and in the course of thousands of years has forced its way through gorges until it comes to the plains of Pakistan near Attock. While passing through the area of Leh, the Indus is separated from another river, the Shyok, which runs parallel to the Indus to its north. These rivers are divided by the intervening Ladakh mountain ranges, between Leh and Kargil. These mountain ranges are relatively low, ranging from 16,000 feet to 18,000 feet; some of the passes in this range are the Changla, Digarla, Khardungla and the Chorbatla. To the south of the Indus river, near Leh, is the Zanskar area with the prominent Nunkun peak (23,410 feet). The Shyok and Indus rivers join each other beyond, north and west of Kargil, in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, short of Skardu.

After the partition of India and as a result of the hostilities between Pakistan and India, air and road communications to Ladakh and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir had to be developed. There are now regular air services to Leh and seasonal road communications between Srinagar-Leh and Leh-Manali and all over Ladakh. Similarly, Pakistan has also developed air and road communications to Gilgit, Skardu and beyond Naushera to Dir and Swat via Malakand. Pakistan and China have opened road communications for strategic purposes, making the old silk route motorable in the north up to the Mintaka Pass (15,450 feet), north of Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Ladakh.

Towards the end of the 1950s I was informed by my divisional commander, 19 Infantry Division, the late General Mahadev Singh, D.S.O., that I had been selected to lead an army expedition to the Karakoram Pass (18,300 feet) to the north of Leh. I felt very happy to be allotted this assignment and meant to tackle it in the proper season after a couple of months, without much fuss and at my own pace, but not like people such as Maurice Wilson who attempted Everest via Tibet alone with only a couple of

porters and lost his life. They had sanctioned me a paltry sum but these things could not deter me. To my regret, I soon received orders that I and about seventy other infantry officers had been "specially selected" to go immediately for conversion to the Artillery Regiment, and that no appeals would be entertained. This was apparently done to sort out seniorities in the Regiment of Artillery. I did not like this change from the foot-slogging life of the infantry to that of a jeep-riding soldier in the artillery, nor did most others as it was a bit too late in the day to adapt to this change. In June 1951, three years after I had entered Jammu and Kashmir, I left for Devlali near Nasik where the School of Artillery is located and where I was to undergo a four months' conversion course. When I went to the G.O.C., the late General Mahadev Singh D.S.O., at Srinagar to say goodbye, he informed me that he was unable to stop my transfer as the orders were from General Cariappa, who was the commander-in-chief at that time.

After leaving Ladakh, while en route from Srinagar to Palam (Delhi) in an IAF Dakota as the sole passenger, I received a wireless message that Major General Kalwant Singh, officiating army commander, Western Command, New Delhi, wanted to see me immediately on arrival at Palam. I reported to him at South Block and after a brief introduction he expressed his regret at my having been dropped in rank to a major, although it was quite natural as my previous rank was only acting and fortuitous considering my seniority. He wanted me to write a paper on the frontier defence of Ladakh as he was the secretary of the Frontier Defence Committee, which had to submit its report to the Government of India. He told me that to enable me to do so I could report two to three days late at Devlali. Since I did not want to miss any lessons on conversion to a new corps, particularly in the beginning, I stayed the whole afternoon and handed in the paper to his G.S.O. II (general staff officer grade II), Major Man Singh, the same day. I presume the staff officer must have given my pencil written report a good brush-up because when I met General Kalwant Singh a few months later in the artillery unit where I was posted, he congratulated me on the report.

The four months at Devlali were tough sweating on gun drills and work on artillery boards, dial sights, etc. In September 1951, I got my posting orders to the 24 Medium Regiment of Artillery, then located in dugouts near the Beas village close to Amritsar.

This was a time when there was tension between Pakistan and India and troops on both sides had concentrated close to the border. We were in what was known as the "conc" (concentration) area. Next to the commanding officer of my regiment I was the senior-most officer but, being new to the artillery regiment, the post of second-in-command was held by a thoroughbred artillery officer. Our entry amongst the gunners was unwelcome to many because large numbers (seventy to eighty) affected the chances of promotion of almost an equal number of existing officers in the Regiment of Artillery. We thought this was an ill wind that did nobody any good. To add insult to injury, there were still one or two more batches to be converted to the Regiment of Artillery. The older gunners who had not undergone conversion like us differentiated us from themselves by calling us "convertees" amongst themselves and out of politeness in front of us as "introductories"! Two of us were posted to the 24 Medium Regiment and a couple of others to the then only other medium regiment of the Indian army, which was also in our neighbourhood. The second "convertee" officer posted to my regiment was Major Ram D. Advani. We shared the same dugout and alternated the routine of shaving and the use of the bathroom to avoid clashing in the narrow space available. The first couple of months in the regiment were easy going as we did not really take the job seriously, especially as we had not been given any particular appointments. However, after this transition period I was posted as second-in-command of the same unit and Ram Advani was one of the three battery commanders. Once I became a little proficient in the job of an artillery officer I found life amongst the gunners rather pleasant.

Our commander of the Artillery Group, consisting of only two medium regiments, was Brigadier Chandra Shekhar, son of the late Sir Sitaram. He died a tragic death, together with almost all his family, in a car accident a few years later. Our corps commander was the late General Kalwant Singh, who unfortunately passed away a few years back about the same time that his son met his sad end as a passenger in an aircraft in rough weather over the Alps.

On my joining the 24 Medium Regiment Artillery I was pleasantly surprised to find that my younger brother, Lieutenant Hridaya Kaul, was also posted nearby. He had then done three years commissioned service and was with his regiment, the 2nd Lancers (the erstwhile 2nd Royal Lancers of the Armoured Corps), who were

ten miles away from us. He was soon posted as an instructor to the Armoured Corps School in December 1951. I was responsible for instigating him to join the army in 1947 when he was doing extremely well in his B.Sc. (Final) in Lucknow University. So I am particularly happy to see that he has done very well. He has achieved distinctions in the numerous courses he has attended, fought in the 1965 war and commanded a brigade in the 1971 war with Pakistan. He was mentioned in despatches during the 1965 war and awarded an AVSM for his efforts in the western sector in the 1971 war. He is now a major general in the army.

III. NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

At the end of 1953, there was a requisition on the defence forces and civil departments for volunteers for the new service, to be called the Indian Frontier Administrative Service, to be formed for the expanding administration of the North-East Frontier Agency now renamed Arunachal Pradesh. I was one of the officers called for interview to the South Block and one of the seventy odd officers selected for the new challenging service which was mooted by Mr Nehru himself. About one-third of us were selected in grade I (same as the senior scale of the IAS) and about two-thirds in grade II (equivalent to the junior scale of the IAS). We next assembled in South Block for the first briefing by our Prime Minister, Mr Nehru, in December 1953. He had amazing ideas of behaviour towards tribals and hill people and while talking about them would get into an emotional and pensive mood. While he was in the midst of his dream talk, in came the chief of protocol to whisper in his ear of the sudden and tragic electrocution in a bath-tub of the young Royal Nepalese Ambassador in Delhi, Bijay Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana. This put Mr Nehru in a sad mood and I believe he liked Bijay Shamsher very much. Much later, in 1972-76 on my posting to Nepal, I met his able son, Pashupati Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana (now a member of Nepal's National Assembly) and his charming wife from the Gwalior royal family.

In December 1953, I and my colleagues, mostly from the army and a few from the air force and civil departments, assembled at Shillong. Here we met Mr N.K. Rustomji, ICS, known as Nari

Rustomji amongst his friends. He was the outgoing adviser to the governor of Assam (for the North-East Frontier Agency). His successor, Mr K.L. Mehta, ICS, was already at Shillong. Nari Rustomji has since brought out a book, *Enchanted Frontiers*, which gives an interesting account of his service career in Assam, NEFA, Sikkim and Bhutan. He is at present chief secretary to the Meghalaya government. During our brief stay in Shillong we were given talks by eminent speakers conversant with tribal affairs. One of our senior colleagues was the late Dr Verrier Elwin who had just been appointed adviser for tribal affairs in the NEFA secretariat. He is well-known for his books on the tribals of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and NEFA.

On my arrival in Shillong in early January 1954, having come from the army, my sole possessions were just a couple of boxes, one full of army pamphlets and books, and the other with my few army uniforms. However, en route I had got a suit made at Delhi on credit. Due to our ignorance of the rules, we had been given no advance of pay on this transfer of service. The gods in Shillong, taking us to be high-ranking officers coming as political officers at the head of important districts, had arranged for our board and lodging in the best and most expensive hotel. After staying there in a false display of glamour for about a week, I and most of my colleagues decided to shift to more austere accommodation in the MLA's hostel. Most of the time we depended on invitations to meals from our new friends and colleagues in Shillong and at other times we went to cheap restaurants. I soon discovered that it was not like the army where you were sure to get your pay on the first of the month. This was a completely new service for which proper rules had not even been formulated. Some of us were in a real quandary, others had a small bank balance on which they could exist for a few months. However, I was not one of those. Three to four weeks after my arrival in the divisional headquarters of Bomdila as the head of a district, I discovered that I did not have too much to worry about on this account. Through my subordinate officers I got things on credit and managed to eat two meals a day. In fact, it was two years before I got my arrears of about Rs.12,000. The adviser expected me to purchase a car at that time (1956) as I was posted in Shillong for six months as secretary, supply and transport. He was surprised when I told him that Rs 10,000 had gone straight to the *Baniya* who had been kind

enough to feed me for two years.

When we arrived in Shillong we found that a big hills and plains festival week had been arranged there. Small groups from all over Assam and the North-East Frontier Agency had assembled, many of whom had never been as far as Shillong. They were dance and art troupes, both men and women, from the various tribes of the North-East Frontier Agency, Garo hills, Lushais, Nagas, Manipuris, Tripuris, Kacharis, Khasis and Jaintias, etc. They had also brought their tribal art and craft exhibits for display in the spacious grounds at Shillong. Shillong had dozens of marriageable, attractive young girls. My younger colleagues were particularly in demand for invitations to dinner, luncheon and tea parties. I felt I was too old to go in for too much fun. The younger crowd took advantage of these invitations since at least it saved having to eat in the cheap restaurants. Assam and the other tribal areas are indeed very alluring and the people very innocent and attractive. I was drawn to the beauties of Kamroop, as the name itself suggests, and Sibsagar, etc. During the first month of my stay there I almost proposed to an attractive girl but my advances were received rather coolly. A few years later, the situation was reversed and it was me who happened to be cool. While on the subject of young marriageables in Shillong, I understand that one of the young colleagues later decided to change his name—perhaps to indicate his failure in love.

After a month in Shillong we were posted to various frontier divisions in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The district heads were known as political officers and we had enhanced powers to be able to cope with the heavy responsibilities of administering the tribal areas. These frontier divisions are now called districts, and all the district heads are now known as deputy commissioners. We were invested with the powers of a sessions judge in addition to our executive powers. This was a necessity in the absence of any judiciary and the precarious communications of NEFA at that time. Later a special officer known as the legal officer was appointed in the NEFA secretariat to act as a sessions judge for the district heads who had either insufficient time or insufficient judicial experience, or were as district heads too closely involved to act as judges. We were fortunate in having Brigadier D. M. Sen as our legal officer. He had formerly been the judge advocate general (JAG) of the defence forces. He is now a judge of the

Assam High Court. Because the distances to be covered in the NEFA districts were so vast, Brigadier Sen had to be unconventional in his methods and was on the move most of the time. Travel to the divisional headquarters was usually by uncertain airlifts in supply Dakota sorties, or by foot, elephant and boat. In order to avoid wasting time on adjournments, Brigadier Sen would collect his fold for a fruitful court session in the interior of NEFA. Brigadier Sen loved law and I would often see him engrossed in its study as if reading a novel. On occasions he could not help having the two parties to a case in adjoining rooms to his. On one occasion he was staying for a night in a remote rest hut, the adjoining room of which was occupied by one of the parties to a criminal case. Late in the night, in spite of trying to avoid listening, he heard one party in the adjoining room admitting his guilt in the case. He dispelled from his mind what he had heard and went by the evidence as it came forth in the court later on! He came dressed for the hazardous NEFA journeys in khaki bushshirts from his army days and marched like an army brigadier into the improvised court room.

I was posted as political officer of the most westerly division of NEFA, the Kameng frontier division, previously known as the Sela sub-agency, which was named after the 13,000 feet high Sela Pass. This division was prominent during the 1962 Chinese aggression, together with the Lohit, Subansiri and Siang frontier divisions to the east. The North-East Frontier Agency consisted of six divisions, the Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, Tirap and Tuensang frontier divisions. Most of them had been renamed after the large rivers flowing through them. Tirap and Tuensang divisions were south of the Brahmaputra river while the rest were to the north of it. Later, Tuensang division was taken out of NEFA to form part of the Naga Hills and Tuensang area, and later part of the Nagaland State of today.

My first journey to Bomdila was not entirely uneventful. For the first time in my life I had to look around for an attendant-cum-cook to serve me in the newly posted district as until now I had been dependent on army messes. On the day prior to my departure from Shillong I engaged a young attendant-cum-cook. I left Shillong in the early morning by jeep. On the way we reached the plains town of Gauhati. I left my newly acquired attendant at a spot with instructions that I would pick him up in a short while and went to

enough to feed me for two years.

When we arrived in Shillong we found that a big hills and plains festival week had been arranged there. Small groups from all over Assam and the North-East Frontier Agency had assembled, many of whom had never been as far as Shillong. They were dance and art troupes, both men and women, from the various tribes of the North-East Frontier Agency, Garo hills, Lushais, Nagas, Manipuris, Tripuris, Kacharis, Khasis and Jaintias, etc. They had also brought their tribal art and craft exhibits for display in the spacious grounds at Shillong. Shillong had dozens of marriageable, attractive young girls. My younger colleagues were particularly in demand for invitations to dinner, luncheon and tea parties. I felt I was too old to go in for too much fun. The younger crowd took advantage of these invitations since at least it saved having to eat in the cheap restaurants. Assam and the other tribal areas are indeed very alluring and the people very innocent and attractive. I was drawn to the beauties of Kamroop, as the name itself suggests, and Sibsagar, etc. During the first month of my stay there I almost proposed to an attractive girl but my advances were received rather coolly. A few years later, the situation was reversed and it was me who happened to be cool. While on the subject of young marriageables in Shillong, I understand that one of the young colleagues later decided to change his name—perhaps to indicate his failure in love.

After a month in Shillong we were posted to various frontier divisions in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The district heads were known as political officers and we had enhanced powers to be able to cope with the heavy responsibilities of administering the tribal areas. These frontier divisions are now called districts, and all the district heads are now known as deputy commissioners. We were invested with the powers of a sessions judge in addition to our executive powers. This was a necessity in the absence of any judiciary and the precarious communications of NEFA at that time. Later a special officer known as the legal officer was appointed in the NEFA secretariat to act as a sessions judge for the district heads who had either insufficient time or insufficient judicial experience, or were as district heads too closely involved to act as judges. We were fortunate in having Brigadier D. M. Sen as our legal officer. He had formerly been the judge advocate general (JAG) of the defence forces. He is now a judge of the

Assam High Court. Because the distances to be covered in the NEFA districts were so vast, Brigadier Sen had to be unconventional in his methods and was on the move most of the time. Travel to the divisional headquarters was usually by uncertain airlifts in supply Dakota sorties, or by foot, elephant and boat. In order to avoid wasting time on adjournments, Brigadier Sen would collect his fold for a fruitful court session in the interior of NEFA. Brigadier Sen loved law and I would often see him engrossed in its study as if reading a novel. On occasions he could not help having the two parties to a case in adjoining rooms to his. On one occasion he was staying for a night in a remote rest hut, the adjoining room of which was occupied by one of the parties to a criminal case. Late in the night, in spite of trying to avoid listening, he heard one party in the adjoining room admitting his guilt in the case. He dispelled from his mind what he had heard and went by the evidence as it came forth in the court later on! He came dressed for the hazardous NEFA journeys in khaki bushshirts from his army days and marched like an army brigadier into the improvised court room.

I was posted as political officer of the most westerly division of NEFA, the Kameng frontier division, previously known as the Sela sub-agency, which was named after the 13,000 feet high Sela Pass. This division was prominent during the 1962 Chinese aggression, together with the Lohit, Subansiri and Siang frontier divisions to the east. The North-East Frontier Agency consisted of six divisions, the Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, Tirap and Tuensang frontier divisions. Most of them had been renamed after the large rivers flowing through them. Tirap and Tuensang divisions were south of the Brahmaputra river while the rest were to the north of it. Later, Tuensang division was taken out of NEFA to form part of the Naga Hills and Tuensang area, and later part of the Nagaland State of today.

My first journey to Bomdila was not entirely uneventful. For the first time in my life I had to look around for an attendant-cum-cook to serve me in the newly posted district as until now I had been dependent on army messes. On the day prior to my departure from Shillong I engaged a young attendant-cum-cook. I left Shillong in the early morning by jeep. On the way we reached the plains town of Gauhati. I left my newly acquired attendant at a spot with instructions that I would pick him up in a short while and went to

make some purchases. After half an hour, I continued driving for the foothills town of Charduar, a distance of more than a hundred kilometres. Half way to Charduar, it suddenly dawned on me that I had left the newly acquired attendant behind at Gauhati. It was too late for me to do anything and after giving the matter a few seconds of thought, I decided to drive on regardless and reached Charduar in the evening. I later learnt that the cook was seen by one of my colleagues on his way to another district, as it was the day of dispersal for most of the trainee officers, and he acquired him as his attendant. I was quite happy to see that my loss was a gain to my colleague and my conscience was satisfied that I had not intentionally let down the poor soul. However, I had to do without a personal attendant-cum-cook for a month until I was able to find a new one. We were an over-enthusiastic lot of new civilian officers infatuated with working in the challenging tribal areas. My predecessor in the Kameng frontier division was R. Khating. He had been a brave soldier during World War II and had won many awards and decorations. He recently retired as the Indian ambassador to Burma.

Bomdila was a tiny divisional headquarters on a steep slope at a height of 9,000 feet. In fact, this headquarters was a small clearing of tree trunks surrounded by miles of thick deodar forest. It was a slow process felling the giant trees and clearing room for huts. There was only a handful of us working at the district headquarters at that stage. The hut which I used as my residence had one room, a thatched roof and was made of bamboo. In whichever of the three districts I served for five years in NEFA, I had to live in similar huts as the task of getting designs prepared and proper accommodation constructed fell on us. It was only the late-comers that took advantage of the improved residential and office accommodation. One problem was that I forgot to provide any accommodation for the V I Ps that would soon come to visit the developing divisional headquarters. Nowadays these places can even boast of circuit houses; but I remember how in 1955 in Siang district the governor of Assam decided, much against my polite protests, to visit the district headquarters for six days. He had to stay in a leaking *basha* (bamboo hut) with a very damp floor. This hut was my residence and I had not bothered to improve it as immediately after being posted to Along, in the middle of the monsoon, I had taken to extensive touring. The bed was made of rough

bamboo *chang* and one was apt to get bruised on its sharp edges. There were hardly any carpenters and no timber in the newly established district headquarters. The place was so undeveloped that even the available bamboo firewood could not be used in a fireplace or stove, which we didn't have anyway, and I had to provide a pan in which firewood was put and burnt. Consequently, the room was covered in ash and smoke. We had no carpets or durries, nor had I acquired such worldly possessions in the army career which I had just left. The roof was also leaking. However, the tolerant VIP did not say a word about the discomfort he had to suffer.

Reverting to Bomdila, I stayed there hardly a week when I went out to tour the district. I took my first tour to the western areas of my district, adjoining Bhutan. This was then called Tawang subdivision, one of the first towns which fell to the Chinese aggression in 1962. I went further up to the 14,000 feet Bumla Pass close to the border with Tibet. It is a nice trek to Bumla, except for the rising altitude, invigorating and refreshing and the route strewn with lush green meadows and lakes. I was soon back in Tawang and then on a march down over the Sela Pass, through Dirang and back to Bomdila for a week, and out again towards the east. One could use a riding pony for part of the tour to Tawang, but no ponies plied anywhere east of Bomdila right up to the far eastern boundary of the Lohit frontier division. This was because there were no proper bridges over the turbulent streams. My journey east from Bomdila was through But village, four jungle camps, and the villages of Leyak and Bameng. A place named Chiang Tago close to Bameng was later annihilated by tribals of the area. Crossing the Kameng river past Bameng I reached the subdivisional headquarters of Sepla. After staying here a couple of days with the assistant political officer, C. Gohain, a Khamti tribal officer, we marched through thick jungle and marsh for four days. Some of the swampy areas in this region figure in Ralph Izard's book, *Hunt for the Burro*, where he imagines a pre-historic animal like a dinosaur existing in the swamps of Popumpoma territory, east of Sepla. The area west of Tawang, up to Sepla and then southwards up to the Assam plains, was infested with leeches in this season (April/May). Another pest that had to be faced on this journey was what is known in those areas as *dim dam*, on which very little research had been done at that time. It is found in pine

forests close to water. The insects look like something between a mosquito and a fly. I remember how on reaching a jungle camp called Khelong on this journey, I sat under a nice pine grove to camp for the day. One of the first things I did was to remove my boots and socks to get rid of a dozen leeches which had clung onto or crept into my boots. By the time I opened the boots many of them were full grown leeches, having done good justice to sucking my blood. No sooner had I got relief by removing the boots and socks than I found myself attacked and bitten by *dim dams*. In a few minutes, both my feet were very swollen and the next morning I had to do the march in large-size tennis shoes. This reminds me of the old road from the foothills to Bomdila that was being constructed by the Army Engineer Group during 1954. The road passed a forest camp called Sessini which was infested with *dim dams;* consequently, an author who had suffered the punishment named this camp, "Insectiferous Camp."

What used to annoy me most was to see the most common local animal, *mithun* (*Bosfrontolis*), which looked like a bison, infested with leeches, particularly on its nostrils. It had no way of getting rid of them and the leeches clung on until they swelled up and then fell off. Much as I wanted to help the poor animals, we were mutually scared of each other and I was too frightened to approach them with some salt to scare away the leeches. One of the remedies against leeches, while on a march, was to carry a tiny pouch of salt tied to the end of a stick. When a leech was detected, it was gently touched with the salt pouch and the leech dropped off immediately. Other methods we used were to soak the socks in boiling tobacco water before using them, soaking the socks in kerosene, or putting tobacco leaves between the socks and the feet and ankles. Some used gumboots on the march as most of the leeches could not climb the shiny rubber surface. However, I cannot walk long distances in ordinary rubber gumboots in a tropical and humid climate. Leeches are perhaps partially blind but have an acute sense of smell. When marching through the forests, the first one or two men passed through unscathed but the rest would have dozens of leeches dropping on them. One other somewhat tiring manoeuvre that I adopted was to head the column of marchers, walk fast and thump my feet down at each step in order to shake off the leeches clinging to my boots. Despite all the measures we used against these creatures,

none was foolproof; whether we used kerosene, tobacco, or salt, everything diluted in the pouring rain and gave the leeches a chance to have their way.

While on the march down to the plains from Sepla, one of the jungle camps was on the footpath and barely spacious enough to camp on for the night. To add to the difficulties, it was raining hard and this being the only sufficiently clear spot where everybody used to camp, the sanitation was far from desirable. In the morning I discovered that I had slept on the wrong and dirty side of the small camp! Early next morning we tramped down fast to the foothills of Sejousa where, to my pleasant surprise, a jeep was waiting to take me to our plains base at Charduar, close to which was also the location of the Fifth Assam Rifles Battalion at Lokra.

Reaching the plains, I spent a couple of days in sorting out the problems of transporting our rations and stores, difficult problems that we had to face throughout the year. I indulged in the luxury of spending a few hours in the town of Tezpur and the tea planters clubs in the Thakurbari area. At Charduar I also called on one of my predecessors, a British political officer, Mr Allen, who was now in the tea plantations close to the foothills of his old division. I again trudged up the high mountains back to Bomdila. It was a distance of thirty-six miles over the mountain track beyond the jeep-head and I usually did it in two days. While returning I sometimes made it in one day as most of the journey, except for ten miles, was downhill. The route up was through the tea gardens, past the Ghabru river, the foothills, Sessini jungle camp, to the top of the mountain (9,300 feet) known as Pirila or Chako Camp, after the name of a second lieutenant of the army engineers who was located there during road construction. After that it was ten miles down to the village of Rupa situated on the Tenga river and finally a steep nine miles to Bomdila. Once a week I made a tumble-down evening run from Bomdila to Rupa and back for dinner.

At Bomdila our supplies were delivered mostly by air as the road link had not then been completed. Some of the rations came through expensive porterage and the rest by airdrops. The circuit for an airdrop was rather limited and a tricky manoeuvre for the IAF pilots, for whom the airdrop operations served the dual purpose of training for them and supplying our needs. In Bomdila it

was foggy in the mornings and the fog hung over the town until about 10 a. m. Then it became nice and sunny for an hour or two and this was the appropriate time for the airdrops. Often the weather was so unfavourable that the airdrops were abortive. On many occasions the airdrops of supplies like *atta*, rice and *dal* fell on bamboo-roofed huts. Just before my arrival in the station, one of the drops had killed a clerk. We did not generally resort to para-drops of *ghee*, mustard oil, kerosene, etc., which we preferred to bring by the expensive land route. In those days often only *masoor dal* was airdropped, with the result that the dropping zone cum volleyball ground had an abundant crop of this *dal* growing—thanks to the good soil of Bomdila. In the evenings the volleyball posts were removed to clear the ground for the following morning's airdrop, in case the airdrop materialized. On Sunday mornings, while playing volleyball, the posts would be removed in a jiffy on hearing the drone of the approaching aircraft.

On return to Bomdila after the long tour I found a confidential D. O. letter waiting for me. This was from the adviser to the governor of Assam informing me that it had been decided to immediately transfer me as political officer to the middle and eastern district of Siang frontier division (the Abor Hills of the old days). Although this division was in its own way equally interesting and challenging, I felt sorry to leave Kameng. In a couple of weeks I was relieved by my colleague Randhir Singh Nag.

In August 1954 I started my career in the Siang frontier division. My predecessor in Siang, Rashid Yusuf Ali, received me at Pasighat, the base town of the district, located on the right bank of the river Siang. Like Tezu further east, this was an old town dating back to the 1870s. Until the great earthquake of 15 August 1950, the two base towns of Pasighat and Tezu were linked by a land route to Assam. Rashid Yusuf Ali had been called posthaste to Shillong to take over as deputy adviser to the governor, I suppose in view of his previous knowledge of Assam, including the North-East Frontier Agency. Rashid had been ADC to the late Sir Akbar Hydari, then governor of Assam, during World War II. He had also served in the eastern theatre in the army. Yusuf Ali was, and I suppose still is, very fond of the hill people. As IFAS officers, we felt the whole world revolved around the problem facing our charges—a very narrow outlook indeed. After serving a particular district and then being posted to the Shillong secretariat

or in the ministry at Delhi, most of us could not help connecting any issue under reference with the conditions prevailing in the districts where we had previously served. I remember a very high official in the ministry of external affairs remarking on one of our notes which read something like, "whether relevant or not, (unnamed) must, like King Charles' head, bring the Naga problem into every matter under reference."

Rashid Yusuf Ali flew out of Pasighat for Shillong and I trudged my way up to the divisional headquarters which, a year earlier, had been shifted further to the interior to Along, relegating the old town of Pasighat to a subdivisional headquarters. Later on, however all the frontier divisions were further bifurcated, the primary charge being in the hands of the political officer and charge of the remoter part of the divisions generally in the hands of an additional political officer. Under this scheme, in addition to the primary headquarters of the Kameng division being located at Bomdila, the additional divisional headquarters was located at Tawang. Similarly, the Subansiri division was bifurcated into the main divisional headquarters at Ziro and the additional headquarters at Daporijo. Lohit, previously the Mishni Hills, had its original divisional headquarters at Tezu, and the additional headquarters was now located at Roing. In the case of Tirap division, the main headquarters was located at Khonsa and the additional headquarters at Changlang.

Next I found myself enduring the heavy August rains from Pasighat to Along, most of the way fighting the leeches. The journeys in these hills are tough and the porters can only take a load of twenty kilos. The tracks were only foot-tracks and the gradients extremely steep. Each day's journey, though a distance of only ten to twelve miles, involved a march of six to eight hours. In the course of this one climbed up one ridge, down another, up another and so on, in the process crossing a number of streams, some with cane suspension bridges of their own type and some without. The stages covered were Rengin, Rotung, Pangin, etc., a total of five to six days march. It was 14 August 1954 when I found myself making a last day's march into the divisional headquarters of Along in pouring rain. Throughout my marches in rain in NEFA, I never used an umbrella or a raincoat, nor did I own these worldly possessions. I would rather use a jungle stick to help me on the steep and slushy ascents and descents on the narrow jungle tracks. On arrival in a camp, thoroughly drenched, I changed into fresh clothes and dried

the wet ones over a fire. One of the priority tasks on arrival in a camp was to light a fire, set up the tiny three kilos radio (transistors were not known then) with its wire aerial tied to two jungle bamboos and open my big medical box to attend to patients for a couple of hours, before visiting the village nearby and attending to their problems.

The two assistant political officers-I, since redesignated assistant commissioner-I, Kishan Chand Johorey (at that time acting political officer) and U. Chakma, had taken pains to receive me on entry to the so-called town of Along which was the newly established district headquarters. I was led into what was my residence, a *basha* on a mound. It was a necessary tradition in these areas for the divisional head to be located on the highest point in the colony with our national flag flying aloft. Even though I liked the commanding location of the political officers' residence in various divisions very much, in most cases it meant good exercise on foot down to one's office after breakfast, up to one's residence for lunch and so on, half a dozen times during the day. My residence was vacated by my predecesor a week or so earlier and when I tried to enter it, I found my path barricaded by huge cobwebs with defiant spiders guarding the entrance! I hinted to my two colleagues that I would have appreciated a little help in cleaning the hut before my arrival. However, there was not very much that one could do to this ramshackle *basha* hut. Insects and vegetation multiply rapidly in the monsoon damp of these areas. This reminds me of the saying of a senior forest officer. He said to us, "If you leave a walking stick outside your hut overnight, it will bloom into a tree by the next morning!" During the short time I was at my headquarters, as I was usually on tour, particularly during the monsoon season, I found mushrooms growing under my *chang* (bamboo charpoy). The windows and doors of this hut, and others, were split bamboo screens which had to be crudely manoeuvred by hand for opening and closing them.

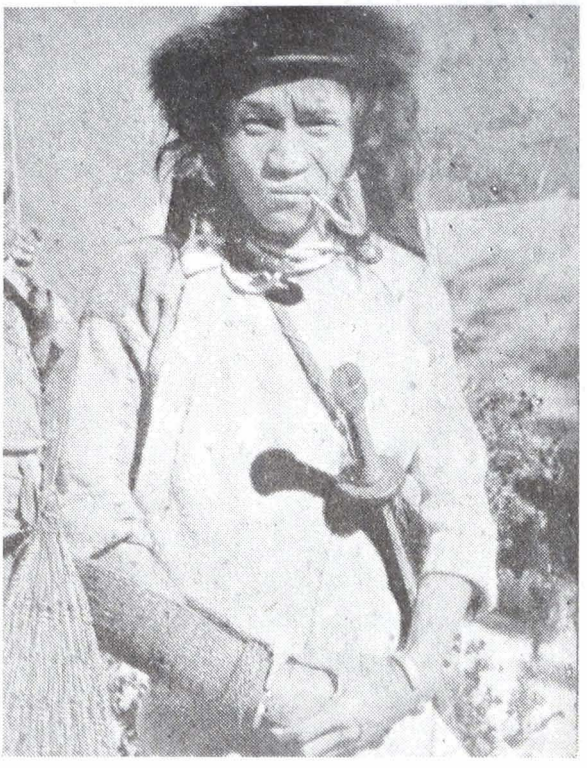
I had two senior officers to help me in the headquarters, U. Chakma and K. T. Khuma. The latter was a sober and unruffled officer who had been in the area from before our arrival and was liked by the people. After his retirement, he was until recently a minister in his home area of Mizo Hills. Unfortunately, however, I was not made of the same stuff as him and even until retirement, I have been impatient by nature and tend to rush things through.

Jawaharlal Nehru on arrival at Leh airport (4 July 1949) being greeted by Kushak Bakula. The late Brigadier K.L. Atal is to the left of Mr Nehru.

A *Kebang* in progress

Tribals of Kamla Valley

Ramo headman



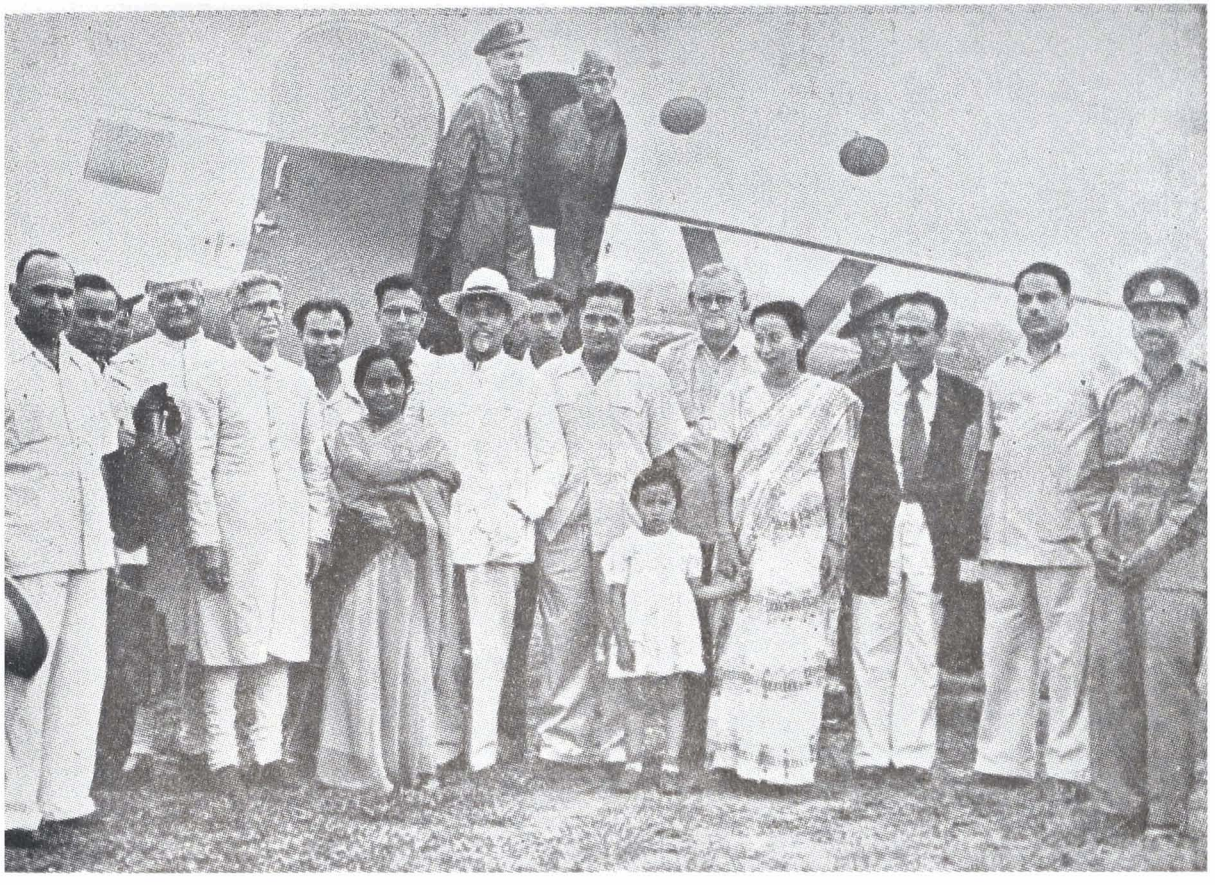
Pailibo headman

Bokar headman

Tangam girl

Yami in 1955

Tashi in 1955

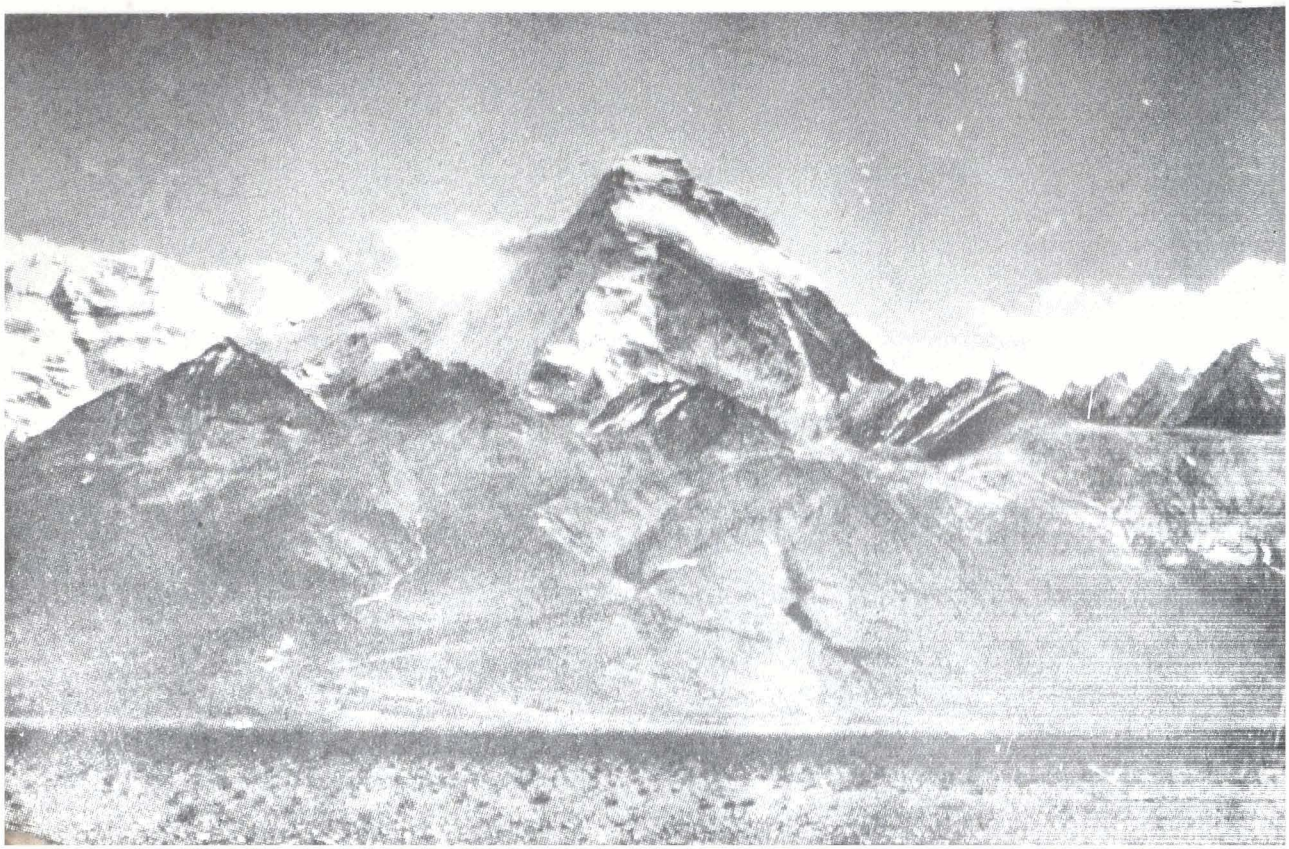


Visit of the State Reorganisation Commission to Along (Siang Dist.) in 1955
Left to right : K.L. Rathee, Dr H. N. Kunzru, Mrs Haldipur, Late K. M. Panikkar, K. L. Mehta, Late Dr Verrier Elwin, Mrs U. Chakma, author, Col. A. Misra, Lt. Mathur

Mrs Gandhi's visit to Ziro in March 1958

The author's visit to Bhutan in 1963. *Back row:* Senior Bhutanese official and Dasho Wangchuk, Paro Penlop (Governor of Paro). *Front row:* Kalyan Singh Gupta, author, Bhutanese official

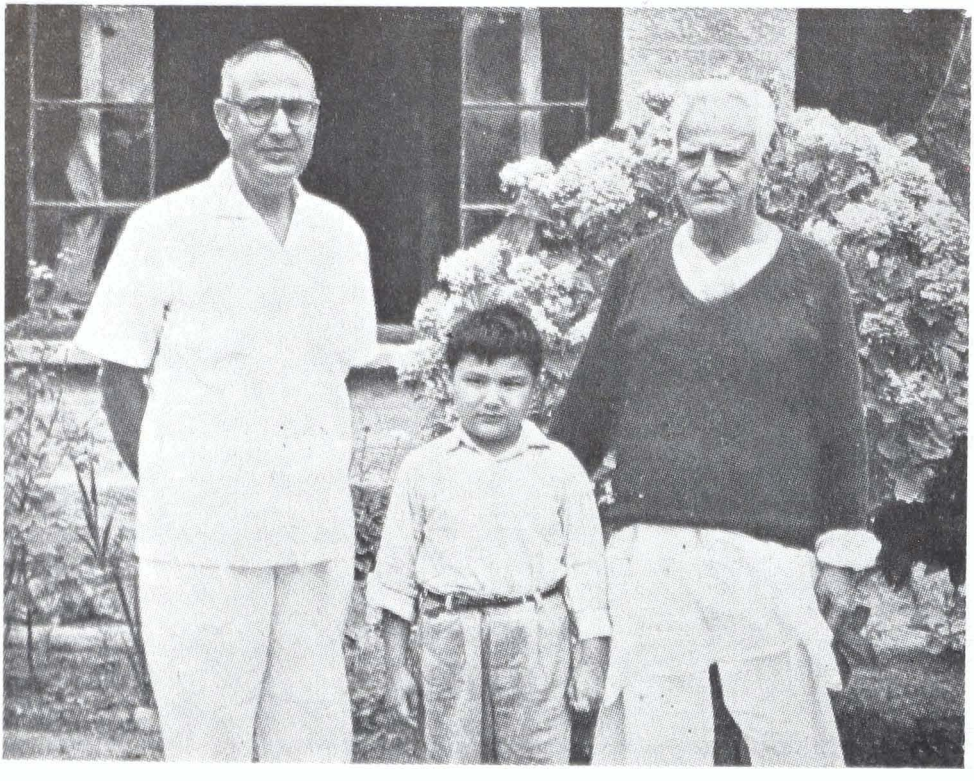
Chomalhari (23,997 feet)



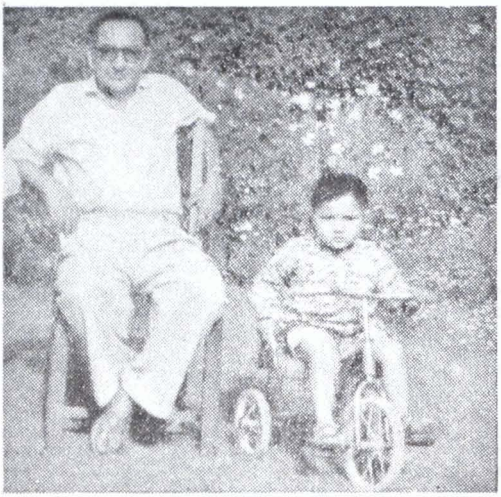
The author's late parents,
Gunwanti and Tota Kaul

The author's wife, late
Gaurishwari Kaul

The author with his
son and father



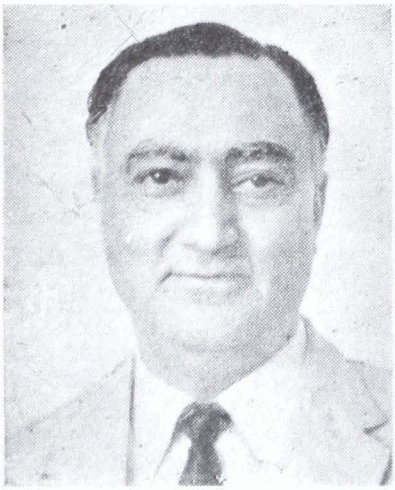
The author's brothers, sisters and son



Radhenath Kaul and
author's son, Abhilash

Kamla Kaul Kilam

Indira Dhar



Trilokinath Kaul,
at present Indian
Ambassador in the U.S.A.

Kanta Dhar

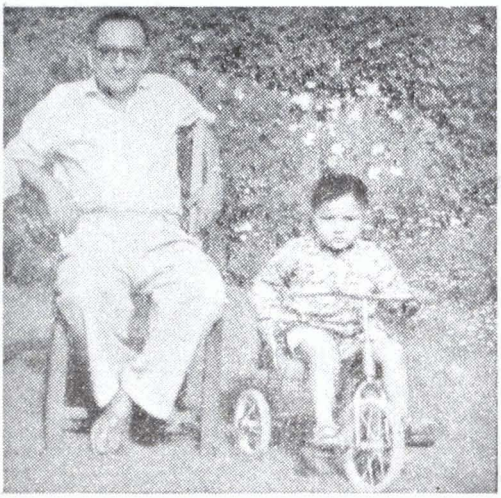
Major General
Hridaya Kaul,
A.V.S.M.

In Kay-cee (K. C. Johorey) I found a still more excitable person, enthusiastic and eager to solve problems as soon as possible. Kay-cee was my trusted and energetic assistant political officer at Pasighat. He is an ex-sapper officer. He had earlier been in the expeditions to Kamet and Nunkun. My other colleague, U. Chakma, although fresh from the army, seemed as if he had always been a tribal administrator, obviously perhaps because he hailed from the tribal hill area of Chittagong. He was strong and opinionated in his views. On the whole we formed a good team. One morning while I was away on a month's leave in Delhi, I saw in the front page news in the daily newspapers that a yeti had been found in my division! I discovered that Chakma, feeling bored perhaps, had sprung a surprise on a visiting group of journalists with this news item. Eventually I found that a bear had been killed in the northern region of Mechukha instead of a yeti. This opinion was based on the examination of the so-called yeti's head by the experts at Delhi. As usual, this exhibit had taken more than a month to reach Delhi from the far northern region of Siang division and had remained in the safe custody of the office drawer of Rashid Yusuf Ali in South Block, where he was assigned for work on the NEFA desk for some time. Anyone entering the room was entertained with the fragrance of this rotting exhibit hidden in the drawer!

In NEFA districts the tribals massacred scores of domestic animals like pigs, *mithun*, etc., on important festivals like the Molocco festival amongst the Apatanis. After butchering the animals, they singed them over a fire and then kept chunks of it to be consumed over a month or two. We could detect the offensive smell of decomposed meat from a distance, but not so our tribal wards. One evening a group of Apatanis came to my hut. In the sitting-room, I would not call it a drawing-room, I had *agarbatti* (incense) lit. On entering the room all the visitors held their noses against this offensive smell!

In Along proper, most of the tribals were Galongs, while further south towards Pasighat they were Minyongs. In the northern regions there were a half dozen more tribes, some of which were Bokars, Boris, Pailibos, Ramos and Tagins. Each of the three officers mentioned above subconsciously preferred one or the other tribe, though as administrators they could not so express or allow this to influence their judgement in their dealings with their tribal wards. For example, Chakma, who was proficient in the Minyong

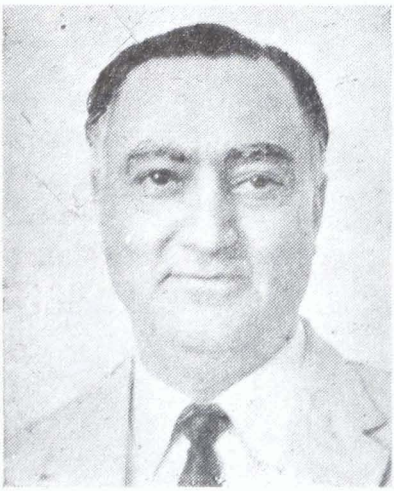
The author's brothers, sisters and son



Radhenath Kaul and
author's son, Abhilash

Kamla Kaul Kilam

Indira Dhar



Trilokinath Kaul,
at present Indian
Ambassador in the U.S.A.

Kanta Dhar

Major General
Hridaya Kaul,
A.V.S.M.

In Kay-cee (K. C. Johorey) I found a still more excitable person, enthusiastic and eager to solve problems as soon as possible. Kay-cee was my trusted and energetic assistant political officer at Pasighat. He is an ex-sapper officer. He had earlier been in the expeditions to Kamet and Nunkun. My other colleague, U. Chakma, although fresh from the army, seemed as if he had always been a tribal administrator, obviously perhaps because he hailed from the tribal hill area of Chittagong. He was strong and opinionated in his views. On the whole we formed a good team. One morning while I was away on a month's leave in Delhi, I saw in the front page news in the daily newspapers that a yeti had been found in my division! I discovered that Chakma, feeling bored perhaps, had sprung a surprise on a visiting group of journalists with this news item. Eventually I found that a bear had been killed in the northern region of Mechukha instead of a yeti. This opinion was based on the examination of the so-called yeti's head by the experts at Delhi. As usual, this exhibit had taken more than a month to reach Delhi from the far northern region of Siang division and had remained in the safe custody of the office drawer of Rashid Yusuf Ali in South Block, where he was assigned for work on the NEFA desk for some time. Anyone entering the room was entertained with the fragrance of this rotting exhibit hidden in the drawer!

In NEFA districts the tribals massacred scores of domestic animals like pigs, *mithun*, etc., on important festivals like the Molocco festival amongst the Apatanis. After butchering the animals, they singed them over a fire and then kept chunks of it to be consumed over a month or two. We could detect the offensive smell of decomposed meat from a distance, but not so our tribal wards. One evening a group of Apatanis came to my hut. In the sitting-room, I would not call it a drawing-room, I had *agarbatti* (incense) lit. On entering the room all the visitors held their noses against this offensive smell!

In Along proper, most of the tribals were Galongs, while further south towards Pasighat they were Minyongs. In the northern regions there were a half dozen more tribes, some of which were Bokars, Boris, Pailibos, Ramos and Tagins. Each of the three officers mentioned above subconsciously preferred one or the other tribe, though as administrators they could not so express or allow this to influence their judgement in their dealings with their tribal wards. For example, Chakma, who was proficient in the Minyong

language, appeared to be pro-Minyong. Johorey as APO-I, Pasighat, had been administering a Minyong area. Khuma appeared to be pro-Galong. I was neither pro-this nor pro-that as I was responsible for administering the whole division!

Amongst the officers in the lower ranks there was an assortment of Assamese and non-Assamese and at least one tribal officer from Pasighat. This was a young man named Daying Ering. He was one of my assistant political officers-II in Pasighat. Being a tribal officer, he needed all encouragement and was respected by the people of the area. He had been taken care of by the kind governor, Shri Jairamdas Doulatram, from his school and college days. He was later nominated as the first M.P. to the Lok Sabha from NEFA and for a few years was parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister. Daying Ering had genuine qualities and was also popular amongst the parliamentarians. He would always meet anyone from NEFA as an equal and was ever willing to render assistance. Unfortunately, he suddenly died in 1971 when he was on a brief visit to Shillong.

We had a loyal and semi-educated tribal in Tamik Dabe as one of my junior officers. He was dashing and fearless but is unfortunately no more alive. Similarly, we had the late Thai Tsering as APO-II at Mechukha. His daughter Bindu has been in the IAS or central services for the last seven years or so. I can also recall K.T. Khuma's daughter Lapari (easily mistaken for *Lalpari* or Red Fairy).

I have seen many children grow up who are now serving the administration as officers in various ranks. Some of the young tribals have taken to an army career and some to the air force, agriculture and other avenues of life. There was a small category of semi-officials representing both the government and the people, known as political *jamadars* (PJs). Most of them were nice, old and loyal people who played their rather decaying role well. Similarly, there were *gams* or *gam budas* (village headmen). The political interpreters (PIs), political *jamadars* (PJs) and the *gams* wore a robe of distinction, which was periodically issued free by the government. This was a red coat of woollen blazer cloth. It was an important matter to award a red coat to anyone and a serious matter if a man was disrobed of it for some serious lapse in the performance of his duties. The *gams* could be compared to honorary class IV magistrates as they could, amongst other minor awards, inflict

a fine of Rs 75 in a case! Some of them were influential and effective, others were not.

The political interpreters or *katukis* or *do bhashis* helped us in our dealings with the tribals. *Katuki* is an Assamese word, as Assamese was almost the *lingua franca* as far as the middle regions. The political interpreters had the advantage of their language proficiency and commanded influence with their tribes. It was in our interest to learn the language as quickly as possible. The oldest head political interpreter was Kotuk Moyong from Pasighat. In Along we had a rather young head political interpreter, Boken Ette, who hailed from a village very close to Along. Both of them are still serving in their respective areas in slightly elevated positions.

Touring is essential for any district head or officer and it was still more so in the North-East Frontier Agency. Although tough because of the rough terrain and jungle, it was extremely interesting and rewarding. I found touring in Siang division even more interesting than in the other districts. A mile or so short of a village, I could see in the distance the *gams* in their bright red government issued coats. This insignia of office and authority was only worn on the occasion of a visiting officer or sometimes when presiding over village *kebangs* or *mels*, which are village councils to adjudicate in minor litigation. At the entrance to a village, particularly in the Siang division, the red-coated *gams* received the officer at a clean and cleared spot with a bamboo bench to sit on. They served freshly prepared *apong* (mild millet brew) in the freshly cut bamboo mugs and on a green broad leaf a few hard boiled and peeled eggs to eat. One could see thumb and finger imprints on the shining white peeled eggs. To add fun to this feast, and yet to fulfil my funny sense of hygiene, I would wash the eggs and then eat them; this would evoke great laughter from the *gams* and others assembled there! In the western part of the Kameng division the *chhang* was served in Tibetan-type wooden bowls lined with silver. As I did not relish consuming too many cupfuls of *chhang*, I got a miniature cup of similar design made for me in which I took the brew. The hierarchy in the Shillong secretariat sent us directives on the proper behaviour to be observed by officials with the tribals, which included consideration and regard for their customs, taboos, etc. The cardinal point, not to refuse the hospitality of a drink offered by the tribals, was respected even by visiting teetotaller VIPs. Some of the lower ranks of

officials read too much into this part of the directive and would consume too much of the liquor offered by the tribals. One had therefore to caution those concerned and ensure they read the correct spirit of the directives in a moderately spirituous measure!

During 1955, there was a serious shortage of whatever crops were grown in these areas, mostly millet. Not that shortages had not occurred before but, with the spread of the administration deep into the interior, such needs had naturally to be taken greater notice of. There was an acute food shortage all over the division. The air force effort was not sufficient to fulfil our requirements, particularly as a good part of it had been diverted to the needs of the then Naga Hills (now Nagaland) where troubles had started. I could not wait for the usual reference to higher headquarters and their approval but struck a deal with a commercial air transport company in Indamer (later Kalingas). Theirs was the cheapest rate and no other agency was in fact forthcoming. No doubt the airlift costs were almost as high as the cost of rice flown in from Dibrugarh. However, there was no time for doing detailed weighing on receipt or distribution. We had to resort to bulk inspections. I had to be very trusting as well as mistrusting in this and had to supervise the whole operation, of course with the help of my trusted officials. Queues of tribals from far-flung parts of the district flocked day and night to our improvised godowns and sales were made by purpose-made measures instead of resorting to the slow process of using weighing scales. Money was collected in cash and it was perhaps the first time that the tribals of the interior areas realized how their money, earned from porterage or other construction jobs for the government, could be best utilized. The air transport company did a marvellous job of touch-and-run flights from dawn until dusk. Being commercial supply flights, they could afford to take the risk of having minimum fuel for the flights so that they could take more load. The bills were promptly cleared and a partial subsidy was recommended to the government towards bearing part of the cost of the airlift. Although little known outside our own world, it was a critical famine saved without much fuss or publicity. I am glad to say that the government appreciated the problems and promptly sanctioned airlift subsidies, though *ex-post-facto*. Later, when an audit party from the A.G. Assam came to audit our accounts, they demanded that they audit this account of famine relief rice sales. I was firm

and told them they had no jurisdiction to audit what I had done in a personal capacity at my risk and not on government orders! It was amusing to see them yield, in any case no elaborate accounts could be or had been maintained.

The Syom river is a scenic river that flows by the side of the divisional headquarters. It was crossed by one small country boat which could take seven to eight people; during the rains this was impossible for weeks on end. We had one government outboard motor which could be fixed to this boat to ply occasionally but not in heavy rains when the river became turbulent. The nearest cane suspension bridge from the divisional headquarters across the Syom river was twenty miles down and a similar distance up the river. Later on, we resorted to making available GI wire ropes with small winches so that the tribals could construct suspension bridges at important crossing places. Not many bridges were constructed because the villages were located far apart with small populations. In the absence of GI wire ropes the tribals resorted to constructing a few essential cane suspension bridges. These ingenious devices consist of a series of circular loops of cane joined by single or jointed longer cane ropes. Rivers a hundred metres wide were spanned by such bridges and they were somewhat precarious for people like us to negotiate. The bridge ends were fastened to two sturdy trees on the two banks and had an enormous sag towards the middle and a very steep climb towards the ends. They swung a lot when crossing and for us it was monkey acrobatics. If such a bridge had to be constructed during the rainy season, the tribals had an ingenious way of catapulting across one end of the long cane rope to the other bank, if this could not be done by a man swimming across. On one occasion, when I was on a longish exploratory tour of the interior of the adjoining Subansiri division, on emerging on my return route at a point opposite Palin village, the villagers constructed a cane suspension bridge for me in one day over the Khru river, a span of thirty metres. It cost us fifteen to twenty bags of salt to achieve this. It was a semi-permanent bridge which served the needs of the tribals besides enabling me to go across to return to my divisional headquarters at Ziro by a different route than the one taken for the outward journey. Later, however, an interested tribal quietly cut off this bridge to prevent an opposing party from crossing it.

The administration of justice amongst tribals had, and I suppose

still continues to have, its own peculiar logic, not fully understandable by the logic and ethics of "civilized" jurisprudence. Though as emotional as any other human beings, their traditional ways of seeking redress or compensation are different from what is known outside. In most cases justice is in the fashion of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth while the emotions are high. This not only leads to individual feuds but also to sub-tribal and tribal feuds. Eventually, justice is administered through the village councils, *kebangs* or *mels*, in which the leading men from either party and the litigants assemble and argue for hours or even days on end. Each party recounts all the wrongs done by the other for which compensation is sought. These claims and counter-claims often date back generations. In the *kebangs* they evaluate the facts and the compensation due to each party by counting bamboo strips. In the end, there are several heaps of bamboo sticks as their counting is limited to single digits. After interminable argument and excitement, which sometimes lead to further bloodshed, a compromise is struck and compensation paid in the usual form of *mithun* and heirlooms such as bronze plates, *deoghanties* (composite metal heirloom trinkets), beads, etc. These items are valued highly by the tribals. Now the economy is gradually changing and a money economy is bound to replace this. At the end of a successful *kebang*, which is not always the case, both the parties celebrate with a lot of eating and drinking at the expense of the litigants, yet not as expensive as the plains system of litigation. It took us quite a long time to gradually introduce an idea of our sense and system of criminal justice and jurisprudence!

A long tour of the Siang division that I made was to the northwest, to an area where a serious massacre of a government party took place in October 1953. This was reminiscent of the murder of Captain Williamson in 1912 in the lower area of Pasighat. A full account of this episode is in the book *The Abor Expedition* by Angus Hamilton. During October 1953, a party consisting of an administrative officer, Mr Barua, Major R.D. Singh and his party of more than forty Assam Rifles ranks, together with some tribals from the lower area of Along, were ambushed at a site known as Achingmori, while they were on an administrative tour of the area. The tribals had prepared a nice camp site for the party and received them very cordially. However, a group of tribals (Tagins) armed

with long *daos* (swords) were hidden behind thick forest surrounding the cleared camp. The party settled down after the day's march to distribute salt, prepare tea, and collect water from the nearby streams. Then the camp was attacked. There was no time for defence and in the chaos that ensued, each ran for his life in whichever direction he or she could. Major R.D. Singh ran through the jungles on the track by which they had come, and so did many others through the thick jungle. But tribals are clever and cunning in their warfare and they had made sure that on the only line of retreat was a cane suspension bridge over a torrential stream. They caught hold of Major Singh and in desperation he jumped into the stream. His body was recovered from the Subansiri river near Daporijo after a month or so. I heard eye-witness descriptions from a few surviving tribals who were porters and interpreters in the party, of how they hid in the jungle watching the massacre. Some of them survived and some fell victim to the hostiles. One of the leading tribal political *jamadars* with the party was the late Guidam Yomcha of Yomcha village, some six days march towards Along. He suffered a very painful end at the hands of the hostiles, who thought he was leading the government party to subjugate them. They made a bonfire in the village where he was subjected to all sorts of tortures, including gouging his eyes, before ultimately killing him in great glee. One of the political interpreters from Gusar village was Taluk Rano who was a sturdy young man. He was caught and put in heavy wooden stocks through which one of his legs was passed before the stock was locked with thick iron nails driven into it. He was kept in one of the village huts with a guard kept on him all the time. Taluk Rano persisted in his ideas of escape. One day he quietly started burning his wooden stocks with a *bidi* that he was allowed to smoke. It must have been hours before the stocks burnt sufficiently to detach the thick iron nails fixed to it and allow him to remove his badly burnt leg. In a flash, he jumped out of the hut and made for the Subansiri river close by. He swam across the river with his captors chasing him but unable to succeed in catching him. He was still alive and serving as a political interpreter when I met him in 1954 and 1955. Later, Taluk Rano unwittingly posed us a serious law-and-order problem. He was out hunting in the area of his duty post of Gusar. Seeing a black object moving in the jungle he fired and then discovered that he had killed a tribal out in the jungle, mistaking him for a bear!

When out, the tribals use a black raincoat made of a dried black grass; it was this that caused him to mistake the victim for a bear. In any case, the tribals are trigger and sword happy and do not have the patience to watch for long and such accidents are not infrequent.

One of the many victims of the Achingmori massacre was a tribal porter by the name of Tare Nosi from the area close to Along. He got a terrible jab in his belly with a sword but managed to run undetected all the way down some seventy miles of hill track to Along! The tribals have amazing endurance power. On my tours I have seen dozens of cases of victims of recent attacks by a bear, wild boar or a panther, torn to shreds and yet having survived with the use of local methods such as the application of hot rice or herbs. I had the satisfaction of attending to many such cases with my voluminous medical box which was the most important item I carried on my tours.

After this great massacre, the Assam Rifles sent a force of a few battalions into these hills to see if they could arrest any culprits. The Tagin tribes have hardly any permanent holdings and they can run for miles into the interior to evade arrest. Consequently, hardly any culprits were apprehended by this force. It therefore fell on me, during the middle of 1955, to go peacefully into the area and see if we could arrest at least the ring leaders of the massacre. This was an arduous task as no tribal was willing to give any clues, more for fear of revenge by the culprits and their clan. However we had the advantage of having with us the aggrieved tribals who had suffered the loss of people like Guidam Yomcha. They gave us clues about the main culprits, people like Agi Radap of the Radap sub-clan of Tagins, Duchak Kora and Komda Kotuk. Later, in 1955, I took the risk of going into Agi Radap's village and from there sent him a message to produce himself before me on the promise of lenient consideration but not of complete pardon for the crime. During our parleys round the fire in the night, the defaulting leaders half sat on their haunches with their hands always on the hilt of their swords so that they could be swiftly drawn in case of danger. I saw this happen a number of times. Late in the night, Agi Radap hesitatingly came and sat before me. He told how the massacre had been planned and executed. It was due to rumours spread amongst themselves that the government party was coming to emancipate slaves from their

area. This was unfortunately confirmed by the village priest on the ominous examination of a chicken's liver or egg yolk. Unfortunately, the omen favoured murdering the peaceful party of Major R. D. Singh. We planned a series of *kebangs* at the new Dinekoli administrative centre which was located a little higher on the left bank of Subansiri river. Exactly opposite, on the right bank, was the Taliha administrative centre in the Subansiri frontier division. The Subansiri river here spanned a hundred metres and could only be crossed by swimming across it or by going two days march to Daporijo where there was a cane suspension bridge. At some risk to ourselves, and with the cooperation of some of the tribals, we were able to arrest some of the ring leaders of the Achingmori massacre. They were later tried and awarded life sentences or imprisonment, which, for good behaviour and considering their way of thinking, were remitted after three or four years in the Assam jails. When I met some of them years later on one of my revisits to NEFA, I learnt that they had become loyal helpers of the administration.

The aggrieved tribe of Galongs was not satisfied with the arrest of only a few of the Tagin culprits and for not being allowed to kill the culprits in the tribal fashion of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. A few months later, when I was fast asleep in my hut at divisional headquarters at Along, the primary school teacher from Yomcha ran forty miles to narrate the scene that he had just witnessed in Yomcha village. He had seen Komda Kotuk being dragged into the village and there tortured by men and women just as Guidam Yomcha had been tortured by the Achingmori assassins. The aggrieved tribals had been planning this for nearly two years. It gave them great satisfaction to kill at least one ring leader of the guilty Tagins. They had been keeping a track of the movements of Komda Kotuk and other ring leaders for over a year. On this occasion they got information through their inter-village tribal agents that Komda Kotuk had come to a village two days march from their area. That was enough, and they raided the house in which Komda Kotuk was staying for the night. Although I was sympathetic to the aggrieved Yomcha villagers, I could not let this gruesome murder pass unnoticed. I had also taken into consideration that punishing the Yomcha tribals under the Indian Penal Code would certainly not be considered fair justice, by them at least. For the maintenance of law and order, I

summoned posthaste all the *gams* of Yomcha village. They were disrobed of their red coats and all the gun licences cancelled and guns confiscated. Having had their revenge, they took it all calmly. I did not have the heart to lodge a case of murder against them. By the time the case would have reached the High Court in the plains, which was a pre-requisite, the evidence would have weakened from all angles. Such are the differences in the *mensrea* or "criminal intent" and I feel that criminal intent should be interpreted according to the mental makeup of the society one lives in. What may be a criminal intent in one place in a fully administered area, in my opinion need not be so in a very remote tribal area.

Life in Siang division was tiring but rewarding. It was all pioneering work which needed endless energy. The political officer or an officer in charge of an administrative centre flew aloft the Indian national flag. The tribals knew that any type of complaint had to be referred to the place where the flag flew, be it an administrative centre, or the political officer on tour or in his headquarters. The tribals are childlike by nature. They have a good memory for facts and are very convincing when arguing their case. The Minyong and Galong tribes had known the administration longer, others like the Tagins, Bokars, Boris, Ramos and Pailibos were less influenced by it. Therefore, one had to slowly bring them round to understanding the correct viewpoints. One of the best ways to achieve this was by inviting them to see areas lower down and arranging *Bharat darshan* tours and the like. In those days it meant fifteen to twenty days' march one way for a tribal from a remote area to come down even to the divisional headquarters. With the opening of land communications, integration has become easier. The normal journey of a villager was restricted to two to three villages. The barter trade in goods was also not direct from one terminal village downwards or vice versa, but through intermediary villages. There was hardly any tribal from the remote highland areas who had been down to the plains. A journey in either direction was dangerous because of the possibility of being captured by the intermediate village tribes.

The tribals are a cheerful, contented and self-respecting lot. The Tagins, Daflas, Boris, and Bokars are warlike in comparison to the other tribes of the lower areas. In keeping with the needs of their surroundings, the tribals in the higher regions resorted to bows and arrows, sometimes with poisoned tips for game shooting

and inter-tribal feuds. They also used long sharp swords (*daos*). While the tribals of the lower regions possessed medium-sized multipurpose *daos*, the tribals of the higher areas used long *daos* like the ones used on the Achingmori victims. Similarly, the tribals of the higher regions used back and chest armour made of animal skins or cane. The hats are of thick or thin cane, fine pieces, many of which have started decorating the drawing-rooms of the plains gentry. Similar armour from locally available materials is made for the protection of the sword wielding arm and for the legs.

The tribal economy was almost all bamboo and cane. In the absence of iron nails or carpentry tools, everything was made out of bamboo and cane, with the use of the multipurpose *dao*. The tribals are very skilled at making bamboo goods such as pots, water carriers, liquor mugs, ornaments, combs, mats, baskets, etc. Cane was commonly used in lieu of GI wire ropes, which were unknown until recently.

It was amusing to hear the Adis of Pasighat and Along pronounce *H* for *S* and *S* for *H*. For example, they pronounced *jai hind* as *joi sind* and *chakma* as *hakma*. In the old days they were known by their clan names, Minyongs, Galongs, Bokars, Pailibos or Ramos, but now they like to be known collectively as Adis.

Life was rarely dull in Siang and if it ever got dull there would soon be an overenthusiastic officer to break the monotony. It might be "X" full of fervour, placing a couple of visiting army officers under arrest; Chakma deciding to have some excitement with a visiting journalists' team about the capture of a yeti in the division; a Mukerjee accidentally shooting his colleague; Taluk Rano shooting a tribal in the jungle in mistake for a bear; Rashid Yusuf Ali wanting to parachute-drop himself at Along to tackle a law and order situation in the absence of the district head; or Subimal Kar, in his excitement, mistaking an evening star for a sputnik due to pass over India! Or there was the Naga officer posted to the lonely spot of Gusar in NEFA, still suffering from the hallucination of a massacre in Nagaland, imagining Naga hostiles in Gusar trying to murder him. Or the sincere and enthusiastic political officer who fired at a defiant tribal unwilling to abide by the officer's just decision.

It was not unusual for a political officer to be woken up in the middle of the night by a tribal confessing to the murder of his

wife by reporting it to what he considered to be the highest judicial authority cum family head. An officer was addressed as *Migom* amongst the Adis and the political officer as the *Botene Migom.* Some tribals would quite seriously approach the political officer for the hand of a VIP's daughter on payment of the bride price, a thousand *mithuns.* Or he would come and tell you that he would like to purchase an aeroplane and want to know the price of it in terms of his currency of *mithuns*! One *gam* approached me several times to purchase a jeep for him. He was ready to dish out Rs 20,000 for it. I had to convince him that his owning a jeep was not a feasible proposition as it was not the jeep alone he would have to pay for but also the employment of an expensive driver and maintenance costs, all this at a time when the whole district administration could boast of only half a dozen jeeps. I understand that soon after I left Subansiri district, this *gam* acquired a second-hand jeep which obviously did not last more than a week and resulted in an inquiry against those who had helped him purchase the useless vehicle.

Once a tribal party that had been taken to Delhi for Republic Day was conducted round various important places in Delhi. While visiting South Block to call on several high officials concerned with the administration of NEFA, they passed the Prime Minister's office. One of the leading *gams* from Pasighat area insisted on being shown the inside of the Prime Minister's office. This was arranged at a time when the Prime Minister was not in, not that he would not have been happy to meet them. When the *gam* got into the office he could not resist the temptation of sitting on Mr Nehru's chair and taking his pen to pose as if he was passing important orders!

Tribal life is hard and adapted to local resources. Ingenious traps are laid for rats in the open and stone chutes or poisoned *punjies* and poisoned arrows are used for trapping or shooting big game. The methods for catching fish from rivers and *nalas* are also peculiar to the various tribes. In the season they prepared a huge bamboo barrage across a stream and at intervals fitted it with conical bamboo traps. Fairly big fish rushed through the escapes placed in the barrage and got caught in the bamboo traps. The tribals came every few hours to empty the traps, catch hold of the live fish and thread them one by one through their gills onto a thin split thread of cane or bamboo. Another system was to channel

the fish to one side of a shallow stream by putting stone or other barricades in the middle and rubbing a poisonous weed in the shallow water. The diverted fish became numb and were easily picked up. Another method was to spear the fish inside a clear stream or river. Another method was to use improvised fishing tackle made of bamboo with a cane thread that had a noose at the end. On coming to bite it, the fish got caught in the noose. The methods used for catching rats in the open were also diverse. The jungle rats could be trapped by placing bamboo string nooses on a horizontal bamboo supported on two bamboo trees over a path in the jungle. The rats tried to cross the bamboo to get the fruit or bamboo flowers on the trees and in the process got caught in the noose in the middle of the overhead bamboo. The tribals would collect the rats once a day and make a delicious meal with them. Another more laborious method of catching rats was to smoke the ratholes in the fields and catch them as they tried to escape. There were often disputes regarding the poaching of these traps and the tribals would come to the administration to settle them. However, it was best to let them decide their own cases in their interminable *kebangs* outside the political officer's office. A platform was sometimes constructed just outside the office to enable the rival parties to debate their cases. As a political officer, I found it quite relaxing to visit the spot occasionally and get some relief from the monotony of the office. Once the tribals reached a decision, it was best for the officer to simply add his signature of authority.

While I was political officer of the Siang division we had a party of two defence officers, an engineer and an air force officer, sent to reconnaissance for suitable STOLS (short take off and landing strips). The party consisted of Captain Easwaran, a sapper officer, and Flying Officer S.L. Tandon, together with a sepoy as an orderly. When on the last day of a six-day march, they lost their way. They had started rather early in the morning and left their pack-lunch with their baggage porters who were following behind. As there were not many tracks in the area except the one they were travelling on, they marched quite confidently towards the day's intended destination, Karko, leaving the porters to start a little later. They discovered much later in the day, that they had unknowingly taken a *mithun* track, and were now far into the jungle. They had no lunch as it was with the porters. The only

smoker had used his last match in smoking a cigarette en route. They were very hungry and did not know what to do, there was no habitation nearby, no water nor any sign of anything available to eat. They had no alternative but to halt, exhausted, for the night in the jungle. They could not even light a fire to scare away any wild beasts. The few rounds of revolver ammunition were fired in the vain hope of attracting the attention of any search party or nearby village. Next morning they tried to find the way down to the Siang river which they reached on its left bank, whereas Karko is located on the right bank. They were not sure whether they were further up or down than Karko on the opposite bank. One of them, feeling very weak, refused to go any further. The other officer, leaving the orderly with his exhausted colleague, marched slowly along the left bank. To his great joy, he found a search party of a detachment of Assam Rifles in the distance! On another occasion a medical officer, Dr B. S. Guha, who had been in the area for a couple of years and knew the tribal language, had started from Daporijo towards a place known as Gocham. He was also complacent enough to be ahead of his couple of porters. He also tripped into a *mithun* track in the jungle, mistaking it for the main foot-track. Having discovered his mistake, he completely lost himself in the jungle in his efforts to get out. He fought for survival in the jungle for two days but on the third day he luckily struck the main track where he collapsed, exhausted and bruised. After an hour or so he was rescued by a couple of passing tribals. An important lesson learnt from these incidents is the need to know survival techniques in jungle, desert, snow, etc.

One summer night I was woken up by my cook and informed that the district office next door was on fire. While my hut was located on one mound, the bamboo office was located on another knoll, a hundred yards away. A fresh load of stationery that had been dumped on the office verandah, added to the violence of the fire. The fire was so strong that I thought it was no use risking lives to try to retrieve much, particularly the cash book. Fortunately, the cash was kept in the Assam Rifles quarters guard, half a mile away from the office. The nearest water supply was half a mile away and there were no luxuries like fire engines or extinguishers. A verbal order was issued at the scene of the fire that normal work would be resumed the very next morning in the

open air! A wireless message was sent to Shillong with a copy to the accountant general informing them of the fire and intimating that a new cash book was being started, which was done in spite of a few objections and quoting of rules from some quarters. The suspected culprit was arrested after a few weeks of sleepless nights for me. Although I wanted to try the case, the administration had in the meantime received legal advice from Delhi saying that I should, strictly speaking, be treated as a party and an investigating officer rather than a trying judge, because of my close knowledge of the facts and my presence in the small station. In this bargain, I had to be transferred from the division to enable someone else to try the case. At that time, a central legal officer had not been appointed. A year or so later, Brigadier D.M. Sen was the first such roving judge for NEFA, with his headquarters at Shillong.

Thus, towards the commencement of the rainy season, my transfer came as secretary, supply and transport, in the NEFA secretariat at Shillong. My substitute, Ramdas N. Haldipur, came promptly, and I handed over the charge to him. I was to leave in a couple of days. One evening prior to my departure a farewell dinner by the local tribals had been arranged for me. This is a big event in which a *mithun* or two are killed for a great feast and *chhang* is consumed in bamboo mugs made for the occasion. On that Sunday morning, I saw a single-engine Otter aircraft land on the airstrip. Wing Commander Dhatigara (now an air marshal) and his co-pilot, Flight Lieutenant Kennel, informed me they were on a flying reconnaissance to Tuting further north and would be back in a couple of hours. I asked if they could give me a ride to Tuting so that I might say goodbye to my colleague and subdivisional officer, R.K. Haranga. In less than an hour we landed at the *kutcha* airstrip of Tuting. Haranga insisted that I stay the night with him, which I agreed to on the condition that the wing commander would airlift me the following morning, which the latter accepted. Within a few minutes of the aircraft taking off on its return flight, it suddenly dawned on me that I had my send-off dinner at Along the same evening and had to leave for my new posting in Shillong the following morning! I could only hope to be in Along the following morning. The sky was clear but within an hour, clouds gathered overhead and then came the pouring rain which lasted for five days! I was stuck in Tuting and no aircraft would land in such weather. Haranga did his best to make me

comfortable and we went on eating *dal bhat* or *bhat dal,* together with an odd chicken, day in and day out. When I eventually arrived in Along no one could believe that all this had happened unintentionally. I was informed that they had imposed a fine of one *mithun* on me for absence from the dinner that had been arranged for me!

The people of this district are generally more progressive than many others in the erstwhile NEFA and are aware of the need for development. While we were trying to build some sort of a district headquarters and grapple with the problems of the far-flung division, the Shillong secretariat, which was now manned by able and enthusiastic officers, was hyperactive. The development commissioner, Pran Luthra (P.N. Luthra, secretary, ministry of social welfare, since retired), was an army colonel. He had landed in the secretariat after a tenure as a political officer in the Tirap division. He kept a team of stenographers busy round the clock and one wondered at his untiring energy. The result was that down in the divisions we would receive a series of numbered "development directives" for practically every day in the year! Later on, I saw an index of "development directives" prepared by the NEFA administration. These directives ranged from the important topics of implementing the Five-Year Plan, which was being introduced for the very first time in these areas, to subjects like the raising of roses and live fences! Added to this were the long monthly letters from the community development ministry. I am afraid that having come fresh from the army, where one is not used to lengthy directives, I found the task of attending to this literature rather arduous. However, it was not long before our able development commissioner found himself an elevated place in the South Block secretariat where he assumed the appointment of special officer border areas (SOBA), on which many friends passed playful comments. There was thus a wide gap between the intellectuals in the Shillong secretariat and the "gazing rustics" in the divisions, who found it difficult to keep pace with the Shillong and Delhi bulletins. No sooner was Pran Luthra, for whose abilities I have immense regard, transferred to Delhi than there was a sudden break in the issue of the development directives, perhaps to the relief of some "rustics."

The story of Siang frontier division would not be complete without a mention of the institution of *ponung* that was particularly

prevalent there. *Ponung* is a voluntary dance performed by a mixed ring of males and females. It lasts for hours on end, generally in the evenings. It is usually the male *miri* (leader) who sets the pace and tune to the dance. It is a lively affair of basic rhymes about the simple matters of life and the tribal concepts of the Sun and Moon God, their clan origin, etc. One of the rhymes started *Ayo Dilli Mahatma Gandhi*, that is, Mahatma Gandhi came from Delhi.

In 1955, the late Dr Verrier Elwin came to Along and made a fortnight's tour of the interior on foot. On return to district headquarters, he had to suffer the *dal bhat* or *bhat dal* with an additional *lai sag* (local vegetable) for a fortnight with me as due to heavy rains there were no flights. He didn't waste his time but used his portable typewriter to type his tour report. My association with Verrier Elwin was memorable and affectionate. While we were usefully indoctrinated into his philosophy for the tribals, he also had to moderate his extreme views about keeping tribals as museum pieces. This the tribals would not swallow and they would rather be influenced by outside customs in dress, language, etc., whether for good or bad. Dr Elwin passed away suddenly in 1964, which coincided with the publication of his last book, *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin*,

To revert to my narrative, on reaching Shillong and after incurring the mild displeasure of the adviser to the governor of Assam for delay in reporting there, I tried to settle down to my new job as secretary, supply and transport. I was harbouring a grievance for having been, what I thought, deliberately deprived of my district, but on arrival at Shillong it was explained that the legal experts had opined that I could not try the case of the culprit suspected of setting fire to my office at Along. I was also mildly informed that in any case I needed a dose of "taming" in the secretariat, as presumably they had been finding my wireless messages and letters rather abrupt and impolite !

In 1955 the State Reorganisation Commission came on a brief tour of NEFA. Its chairman, the late Fazl Ali, was now our governor after Shri Jairamdas Doulatram. Of the team only Pandit H.N. Kunzru and the late K.M. Panikkar visited Pasighat and Along, the headquarters of my district, for a few hours. At Along, Panikkar popularized himself by joining in the *ponung* and had a good sip of the local brew prepared at the site. He left his hat as a sou-

venir to the dancing *miri* in exchange for the latter's tribal cane hat!

Other important visitors were the late Shri Govind Ballabh Pant, then home minister at the centre, to Pasighat, and the late Air Chief Marshal S. Mukherjee and his wife to Along. Each of these parties came for only brief visits. Many VIPs who wished to visit us for a few hours or a day could not do so because of bad weather.

During the fifties, slavery was prevalent in the remoter regions of the North-East Frontier Agency. However, as one probed deeper, one discovered that slavery as it existed there was not the usual concept of slavery. For certain offences or civil wrongs, parties seeking revenge captured the weaker parties by surprise raids and took them as slaves. These slaves and their offspring became the property of the masters. However, it was usual to see the slaves living like members of the family with their masters. They did various household and other chores. They appeared to have a slightly inferior position in the household but they could, in due course of time, even marry the master's daughter. We had to be extremely cautious when taking action. Rumours would spread amongst the tribals that the administration was coming to emancipate their slaves. One of the causes of the Achingmori massacre, mentioned earlier, was that the Tagins of the area suspected the government party of having come to emancipate their slaves. However, a policy was devised and gradually introduced as the administration increasingly got to know and win the confidence of the tribals. Compensation was made to the slave-owners when their slaves were emancipated. The government also provided the slaves with useful jobs. I hardly resorted to this technique and believed that the objective should be achieved voluntarily . In due course of time, as communications and contacts increased, certain slaves were voluntarily surrendered or some slaves managed to come down for various jobs. I took an outwardly non-partisan and casual attitude to this game, but wherever I found a slave had run away from his master and sought assistance, I quietly helped him by providing him with a job. In my academic arguments with the tribal chiefs whom I came to know well, they could not grasp our theory of slave emancipation. In keeping with their way of thinking they quite sincerely argued that just as a father is responsible for the upkeep of a son or a daughter and takes work out of him

or her, they had a similar right of action towards what we called their slaves (*pagbo*). There were, however, some communities like the Silung Abors in the northern region of Kameng and Subansiri districts who were actually treated as inferior communities. I would sometimes end the argument with Ralph Waldro Emerson's words, "If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself round your own."

This leads me to the story of Tashi and Yami. During the monsoon of 1955 I received a wireless message from the remote Mechukha administrative centre in Siang saying that they had received information that a Tagin woman had been kidnapped from Achingmori. She was being taken over various passes beyond Mechukha by the people of this area. The officer-in-charge at Mechukha had despatched an Assam Rifles party with local interpreters to pursue the culprits. After pursuing the culprits, the latter ultimately abandoned the woman, who could not keep pace with the fleeinge party, on a high snowy pass in Tada-dege area. The rescue party found the kidnapped woman lying dead on the snow with her three-year old boy by her side. I sent instructions that the surviving boy should be looked after and sent down to my divisional headquarters at Along. After about three weeks, I saw a couple of interpreters from Mechukha come into my office with a small cute Tagin boy. I immediately knew that this was the boy I had asked for. I asked the boy what his name was and quite boldly he replied "Tashi." Then I asked him where his mother was and he replied "Shiniko" (she is dead). When I asked him where she had died, without any apparent emotion he replied "On the snows." I sent for the local tailor and got a few tribal dresses made for the boy, together with a *dao*. Tashi looked cute in this dress. To cut the story short, he remained with me as my ward. Being rather charming, he was pampered by everyone in the town and consequently became a bit of a loafer. I always looked anxiously for him on return to my hut in the evenings.

Months later, I was on a tour in Achingmori area. My usual routine on arriving after a day's march was to set up a small camp, light a camp-fire, attend to patients and then indulge in gossip with the local villagers until late. This gave me a lot of information about the habits of different clans, their problems, their blood-feuds, their inter-clan litigation, etc. One evening, they mentioned about the only surviving child of a woman who had been taken as

slave some months ago. On further enquiry I came to know that the young daughter of the kidnapped woman mentioned earlier was still in the village. Her name was Yami. I asked the girl to be brought. She was a pretty girl of seven and cute like her brother, Tashi. She looked as if she had been well brought up. I questioned her about her mother. She said that her mother, who had been kidnapped while Yami was in another hosse or village, had died while crossing a pass. When I asked her if she remembered Tashi, she said she remembered him very well as it was only a few months earlier that the incident took place. I asked her if she would like to meet Tashi and she was thrilled with the idea. On my return journey, after a week or so, Yami joined the caravan to Along. On the day prior to my arrival in Along, I had sent word to Along that Tashi should be brought a few miles out to meet us. It was, in fact, customary that when a political officer returned after an absence of three to four weeks to his headquarters the political interpreters and *gams* would come out to receive the district head. This was an affectionate custom and one really felt it was a homecoming. Two miles out of Along, the welcoming party had made bamboo benches to sit on and chat. *Apong* was prepared. We sat and chatted and Yami immediately recognized Tashi and rushed to hug him. It was a really touching occasion, the union of a young brother and sister!

Yami was found a place in the girls weaving school at Along. After a year or so she accompanied my colleague, Butch Butalia (H.S. Butalia), and his wife to Daporijo when they came to Along on a liaison visit from their headquarters. At that time I was the political officer at Ziro in Subansiri division. She was looked after and attended the weaving centre at Daporijo. Later Yami married a tribal medic of her own choice and Tashi, I was sorry to learn, was serving as a Class IV in the A.S.C. (Agency Service Corps). At my request, the district authorities later informed me that Tashi had been better rehabilitated with a peon's job! I feel rather sorry that Tashi did not make a better career than this. When I left Siang in May 1956 on transfer to the Shillong secretariat, I left Tashi under the care of my successor, Ramdas N. Haldipur, who used to send me news about him from time to time until I was in the North-East Frontier Agency.

One of my duties as secretary, supply and transport, was to attend to the pensions of the Assam Rifles personnel whose head-

quarters were at Shillong. I was surprised to see, during my further "taming" in the Shillong secretariat, that there were dozens of cases of Assam Rifles families whose pensions had not been paid to their next of kin for a decade or more; in some cases the claimants were no longer alive. This naturally irked everyone in the Assam Rifles and I was all with them in fighting the battle of the widows for clearance of pension arrears. Though to start with, I found the usual queries and objections from my finance associates, very soon we developed sympathy and understanding and cases were quickly cleared. I would request young colleagues and officers-in-charge of finance or administration to place themselves in the position of those whose fate they were deciding.

One of my flying "jaunts" as secretary, supply and transport, took place when we received information that Major R. K. Haranga, who had earlier been my APO-I at Tuting, was required to present himself at Shillong before a Government of India Selection Board for promotions to Grade I of the IFAS. I had arranged for a supply flight to land at the *kutcha* airstrip of Tuting. Captain Kashyap, in spite of the wet airstrip, landed at Tuting, waited for ten minutes but since the weather was going from bad to worse, took off for Dibrugarh. Haranga missed the flight since he was running down to the airstrip when the aircraft took off. There was only a day left for Haranga to reach Shillong. I rushed to Mohanbari (Dibrugarh) airfield and found a young tea planter with a small twin-seater single-engined aircraft on a hop to the tea gardens of Assam. With little hope of success, I requested him to fly me to Tuting. The pilot was very sporting and got permission by telephone from his manager to fly me to Tuting on the condition that I gave in writing that it was at my request and on my authorization as secretary, supply and transport, that I was requesting the pilot to fly into a prohibited area. There was actually a ban, and really only the governor of Assam could permit this. However, I had no time to get his permission. In about an hour, we were over Tuting with me acting as the navigator, as the pilot had never been so far north of the Brahmaputra. We gave a circuit over APO Haranga's office-cum-residence complex and landed at the airstrip. There we found him gasping from having run to meet us so that he would not miss the airlift again. We squeezed him in on the condition that he would not carry even a brief-case! He reached Shillong at 8 p.m. where the interview board was kind enough to assemble to

interview him. I was glad to know that he was selected for promotion. In another incident, an assistant political officer-I of the then remote Taliha administrative centre appeared for a similar interview as Major Haranga's. He apparently did not fare so well and betrayed his ignorance of current events. He explained his ignorance by saying that he did not get newspapers as airdrops to his small centre materialized only once every month or two months. They asked him why he could not listen to the news on a radio. To this his partly honest reply was that the radio battery had discharged some months ago and no one could be bothered to paradrop one for him! He was, however, fortunate enough to be selected for promotion. All this goes to show how rusty one can get by a prolonged and lonely stay in such remote places.

Once I was on tour to a remote administrative centre like the one mentioned above. While strolling there one day I heard a few local tribals address the officer-in-charge as *magbo* (son-in-law); I soon learnt that the officer, in his loneliness, had taken to a local girl as a temporary companion and I teased him about this!

Towards September-October 1956 I was posted back to another division (district) of NEFA, the Subansiri frontier division. I stayed here for almost two years before I was posted to Delhi. The headquarters of my new district was at Ziro in the heart of the Apatani valley. Apatani valley is at a height of 5,000 feet, half an hour's flight from the air base of Jorhat in Assam. Towards the end of my stay there, Ziro was connected by a ninety kilometres all-weather road from the foothills. This is the only spot which is green and cool in the lower regions of the district and the only valley in the world inhabited by the Apatani race. The area round Ziro is inhabited by various tribes like the Daflas, Hill Miris, Tagins, etc. In comparison to the Apatani valley all the villages outside have a warm and tropical climate. The small, compact Apatani valley is like a small Kashmir. It abounds in tall deodars and some willows. When we made a point of planting more of these, the tribes suspected us of wanting to grab their land and they pulled the trees out overnight! The Apatanis are concentrated in a small area of half a dozen densely populated villages of bamboo huts. This was done in the old days so that the maximum of land was available for cultivation and they united against attacks from the neighbouring Daflas. There is a history of constant hostility between the Daflas and the Apatanis. I would recommend the book titled

The Himalayan Barbary by Von Furer-Haimendorf, which is about the Apatanis and Daflas and was written in the middle of the 1940s.

Until the 1940s, the Apatanis had not seen much of the outside world and in their journeys down to the foothills of Assam they were liable to be captured by the intermediate tribes. Similarly the movement of people from the Apatani valley upwards was limited to a couple of villages in each direction. There were about ten thousand Apatanis in this small valley. Their way of living, although not very hygienic, involves an intricate economic system. Every custom has the backing of some myth or taboo behind it but it is basically based on sound logic. For instance, they preserve their forests by going long distances to collect firewood, timber and bamboo. The Apatanis usually only cultivate paddy and kitchen gardens. They work very hard, regardless of the pouring rain, and had not yet taken to modern agricultural implements or practices. In contrast to the Apatanis, the tribes outside the valley such as the Daflas and the Tagins, are warlike, wild-looking and robust. They resort to *jhooming* or the slash-and-burn method of clearing forests by burning them for shifting cultivation.

There was a beautiful stream that passed through the heart of the Apatani valley, from one end to the other, of which I was very fond. I introduced the first tiny boat on this and enjoyed manoeuvring it along the stream. I was also able to introduce the first drinking water scheme in Ziro district and the first bathing ghat for the Apatanis. I brought the first horse (a riding pony) into the Subansiri division. No ponies existed anywhere in NEFA, east of Bomdila, the western-most district, because of the unbridged torrential streams. I had the pony flown in on one of the supply Dakota sorties to Ziro. Like the first Dakotas into Leh in 1948, the pony or *ghore* as the tribals learnt to call it, attracted tribals from neighbouring villages to see this "wonder" of the world. I saw many young tribals comparing the pony with the pictures of ponies in discarded magazines.

During my time, the Subansiri division was split into two, with an additional political officer located further east at Daporijo on the right bank of the Subansiri river. It happened to be my friend and colleague, H. S. Butalia, who was posted there. He, with his wife and two boys, Tinoo and Binoo, showed an amazing adaptation to living in the isolation of Daporijo. In the winter of 1956, I

decided to take an administrative-cum-exploratory tour north-west of Ziro into the Kamla valley located on the slopes of the Kamla river. This tour lasted nearly a month, during which I installed a young base superintendent, S. K. Mitra, incharge of a newly opened administrative centre at a remote place known as Tali. I was very lucky for I was never attacked by the tribals. However, the poor base superintendent, soon after I left the division, had to face many problems when one of his interpreters was murdered by the local tribes. At Tali I arranged for a dozen airdrops of salt, aluminium utensils, cotton cloth and good steel (of the discarded vehicle springs) for the locals to make into *daos*. A monetary economy was unknown to them and most of the airdropped articles on this tour were distributed free. After spending a week or so at Tali, I made my way back to Ziro, by a different route than the one I had come by. We crossed the Kamla river on an improvised bamboo raft and then climbed up and down various valleys until we reached the left bank of the Khru river, further south opposite the newly established Palin administrative centre. On the journey to Palin we passed through several villages whose inhabitants were very suspicious of us. Although one village became quite friendly, another refused to even let us pass through it and we had to beat a hasty retreat. On reaching the left bank of the Khru river, with the gift of half a dozen bags of salt, the tribals constructed a circular cane bridge over the river to enable us to go across. From Palin it was only three to four days march to Ziro. Palin was on the route from Ziro to the newly opened Nyapin administrative centre. At Palin I was met by APO-I, S. K. Banerjee, who had come all the way from remote Nyapin like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, with his bodyguards of young Dafla girls and political interpreters. Banerjee later changed his name to Sono Loveraj. I understand that now there is a jeep-track connecting Ziro with Palin, nearly half-way to Nyapin.

One of the most important events of my short stay in Subansiri division was the two-day visit of Mrs Indira Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi arrived in Ziro on 18 March 1958 and left the next afternoon. Her visit was not without some anxiety. She was scheduled to come by a Dakota, accompanied by the adviser to the governor of Assam, Shri K. L. Mehta, and his late and noble wife Geisela Mehta. It was only half an hour's flight from Jorhat but the plane had not appeared after two hours, despite leaving on time. Jorhat also

lost wireless touch with the VIP aircraft. Eventually, to everyone's relief, the plane landed and we learnt that the pilot had lost his course, gone back along the same wrong river valley to Jorhat and then taken the correct course to reach Ziro. Mrs Gandhi did not appear perturbed. She made the best use of her time by going to the nearest Apatani villages and meeting the various tribal leaders and people. We took advantage of the event to get our new drinking water point in one of the Apatani villages inaugurated by Mrs Gandhi.

Towards the end of May 1958 I received transfer orders to Delhi as special officer frontier areas (SOFA), previously known as special officer border areas (SOBA). I resented my posting to Delhi and appealed against it. I was, however, pacified with an assurance that I would not be kept in Delhi for long. The authorities were true to their word. Within thirteen months of my reporting at Delhi I was posted as Indian consul general to Lhasa, one of the IFS. cadre posts which some of the IFS officers perhaps would have graded as a Class "Z" station, if such a grade existed.

Before I come to my posting in Delhi, it would be appropriate to mention some of the important and interesting characters and colleagues with whom I worked in the Subansiri division during my two years there. One of my predecessors as political officer in Subansiri had been the late Mr R. G. Menzes, a tall, tough and popular officer married to a sweet Lushai lady. Koptemi had been the head political interpreter in the old days. He belonged to the foothill areas of Subansiri. In the headquarters, my assistant political officer-I was K. T. Khuma, who also served earlier with me in Siang division. Aliba Imti, APO-I, was a pleasant Naga officer from a good family of Mokokchung who, after his retirement, entered politics and is now president of the United Democratic Front of Nagaland. Then there were the political interpreters representing the major tribes. Some of these were Hage Ekha, Tabia Tat, Nikh Khopi and Nuri Tem, all simple, fine and loyal people. Amongst the village headmen, the *gams* or *gam budas*, the most prominent were Padeleilang, from the Apatani valley, and Jorum Bat and obdurate Jorum Khopi from the neighbouring Dafla villages. Last, and certainly not least, was my exceptionally loyal and able peon, Noorkhan. He hailed from the Pakistan-occupied part of Poonch (Kashmir) and was married to an Assamese lady.

I would also like to mention the generous and thoughtful consideration I received from the two governors whom I had the privilege to serve in the Kameng, Siang and Subansiri divisions. The first of these was Mr Jairamdas Doulatram, who kept particularly in touch with the problems of the NEFA tribals. He was Gandhian in his principles and actions, having been a freedom-fighter in the pre-independence days. He insisted on detailed tour reports from the lowest levels upwards, which sometimes resulted in a lot of bulky reports in which a lot of chaff got mixed with the grain. Although a strict teetotaller, I managed to persuade him to relax this rule in regard to the tribals, who like their drink. On one of his visits to Siang he spent most evenings interrogating the tribals on their customs and concepts of God, their ancestral history, etc., until late in the night. The tribals, nearest concept of God was Nature, that is, God as sun and moon (*Donyi Polo*). One evening, when the governor was interrogating them, the tribals started yawning. The governor asked me the reason and I told him that an offer of a drink would revive them. The governor perhaps did not like this suggestion but after some thought agreed to offer them a little rum which I had kept for use on such occasions, although normally I would encourage them to drink their own brew or *apong*.

The next governor, I served under, was the late Mr Fazl Ali. He was a shrewd, kind and thoughtful person, earlier a judge of the Supreme Court. On one occasion, when I was on a visit to Shillong, I called on him at the Raj Bhawan. While waiting for a few minutes to go into his room, I heard human voices nearby saying "Allah-O-Akbar," then after a pause, "He Ram" and again "Are Bhai lat Sahib ke liya cha to lao." Translated it means, "God is great," "O, Ram" and "Please bring some tea for the governor." It took me some time to discover the tiny *maina* in a nearby cage that was causing all the disturbance!

Before closing the chapter on the North-East Frontier, I must mention the feeling of a small and close family we had amongst us. K.A.A. Raja, from the army, was and continues to be a close friend and is the able and popular first licutenant governor of Arunachal Pradesh. Some others in this family who were near or distant colleagues of mine are R. Khating, P.N. Luthra, M. Ramunny, U.N. Sharma, G.S. Puri, Cecil Naire, Nosher Suntook, Harmander Singh, David Duncan, Bernard Dugal, M.L. Kampani,

Hari Dube, T.S. Murty and S.M. Krishnatry, besides those whom I have mentioned earlier in this chapter or elsewhere.

IV. FRONTIER AREAS AND TIBET

In the middle of June 1958, I took charge of the first appointment of my career in the South Block. I was allotted a small room and a job that had been unfilled for a year or so. My appointment was as a special officer frontier areas (SOFA) in the rank of a deputy secretary in the ministry of external affairs. This post was previously designated special officer border areas (SOBA). It was changed to SOFA because SOBA aroused funny reactions from colleagues because SOB in slang stands for a dirty idiom. Although SOFA was an improvement on SOBA, many perhaps associated it with a cushy (sofa) job, while in actual fact it entailed strenuous touring in the difficult hilly areas.

My establishment consisted of myself, my personal assistant and a peon. I always felt happier with a small staff rather than a hierarchical chain of officers and staff. I lost no time in extensively touring the frontiers and undertook long tours of remote areas of Ladakh, Lahul, Spiti and Kinnaur right up to the Tibet border. I also went to Uttarkhand (Uttar Pradesh) right up to Barahoti which the Chinese claim as their territory and have called Wuje. On this tour I went on foot beyond Chamoli to Joshimath, past the Rishiganga, emerging out of its famous gorge, Malari, Niti, and then up the 19,000 feet high Chor-hoti Pass. I returned by the equally high Marchauk and the smaller Damjen passes. On my return to Joshimath, I strayed on foot to Badrinath for the first time, a two days' journey each way. I paid two visits to Keylang in Lahul. These tours were lonely for me as I was always alone, with only a couple of porters from place to place. I had to go on foot because road communications had not been sufficiently developed

in the border areas. Until the early fifties there was only a seasonal *tehsildar* or a sub-divisional magistrate in these areas, now they have deputy commissioners. This reminds me of an old joker. During the British times there was a *patwari* with jurisdiction from Chamoli (now a district headquarters) right up to the border with Tibet, stretching up to the Mana and Niti passes. A British deputy commissioner, whose headquarters was way down in Pauri in Garhwal, in one of his tour notes commented that the *patwari*, named Nain Singh Rana, had not toured the whole of his area during the year. This tour note filtered down to the poor *patwari* in the course of a couple of months and the following reached the deputy commissioner at the same speed from the *patwari*:

"Kahan hai Niti kahan hai Mānā,
Kahan kahan pauhnche Nain Singh Rānā?"

Translated this means, "Where is Niti Pass and where is Mana Pass, where all can reach Nain Singh Rana?" Today road communications have gone far into the newly formed border districts of Uttarkhand, Kinnaur, Lahul, Spiti, Leh and NEFA.

My sophisticated colleagues in South Block saw little of me. I posed small yet difficult problems to them because of my T.A. bills relating to payments for ponies and porters in the remote mountain regions. I still receive queries from South Block regarding some bills due to the U.P. Roadways for short journeys made from 1958 to 1963!

One afternoon in July 1959, the foreign secretary, Mr Subimal Dutt, informed me that the ministry would like to post me as India's consul general in Lhasa (Tibet). The same afternoon I saw the Prime Minister and in a couple of weeks I left for Lhasa via Gangtok. This was about six months after His Holiness the Dalai Lama had fled into India in March 1959. I did not meet the Dalai Lama until my return from Lhasa in November 1961.

I had always been thrilled by accounts of the few Europeans like Alexander David Neel, William Montgomery McGovern, George Bogle, Samuel Turner and F. Spencer Chapman, or the Survey of India *pundits*, who had gone in disguise to Tibet, or of the expeditions of Younghusband and others to Everest via Tibet. At this time India had a consulate general in Lhasa, two permanent trade agencies at Yatung and Gyantse and a seasonal one during summer at Gartok in Western Tibet.

On my way to Lhasa I stayed for a week at Gangtok (Sikkim)

with our political officer, Mr Apa B. Pant. He is a fine man with varied interests and active and versatile. Apa Sahib, as he is generally known, has recently brought out his autobiography *A Moment in Space*. Apa Sahib believes in spiritualism and this is evident on going through his book. On one of my visits to Gangtok from Lhasa I found Mr Hugh Richardson, the last British representative at Lhasa, on a brief visit to Gangtok. One afternoon Apa Sahib took Richardson and myself for a short jeep drive on the north Sikkim road which was still under construction. Near a bridge, a big stone came hurtling down the hill and just missed hitting Apa Sahib who was at the wheel. I remember Apa Sahib later telling me that he had a premonition of impending danger but as usual some spiritual presence (perhaps his late father's) had averted this danger to his life.

The residency or the political officer's office-cum-residence at Gangtok is from the British times of Sir Charles Bell, Claude White and Basil Gould. It is a fine building in a large estate at the foot of a thick forest. With the formation of Sikkim as the twenty-second state of India in May 1975, it has been renamed the "Raj Bhawan" of the newly appointed first governor, Mr B. B. Lal, ICS. While passing through Gangtok, I came to know Sir Tashi Namgyal, the late Maharaja of Sikkim and the Prince, Lieutenant Colonel Palden Thondup Namgyal, who later succeeded his father in office. Sir Tashi Namgyal was a kind old man who spent most of his time in prayers and absorbed in the spiritual side of life. He was a fine artist and painted the snows and the spirits that he believed ruled the snow peaks. Whenever I met him alone he would talk to me of his meetings with the yeti whom he believed to be a guardian spirit of the snows. It is for this reason that he and his son permitted expeditions through Sikkim to Kanchenjunga and similar peaks only on the condition that they would not annoy the guardian deities by setting their foot on the summits of these peaks.

My journey to Lhasa was quite pleasant. Lucky in weather I left Gangtok early one morning in August. Crossing the 13,400 feet Nathu-la, I went on foot for the twenty miles to Yatung, staying on the way for half an hour in the rest hut of Chumpithang and at the Kargyu monastery. From my early morning altitude of 6,000 feet in Gangtok I found myself in the evening at an altitud of 9,000 feet at Yatung. Here my old colleague from Siang (Arunachal

Pradesh), K.C. Johorey, was the trade agent. Kay-cee, as I call him, kindly came to receive me six miles up the mountain. On reaching the Rinchengang checkpost at the entrance of Yatung I had the first taste of the Chinese checks and the day's journey was therefore not entirely uneventful. At the checkpost I was asked to declare any special items. I mentioned that I had a small transistor, a .32 pistol and some ammunition in one of my boxes, about which I had informed the Chinese embassy at Delhi.

Yatung had diminished appreciably in its importance as a trade centre after the Chinese occupied Tibet. The fifty odd Indian traders still there were in the process of winding up and trying to recover dues or encash their Tibetan currency which was no longer valid. Yatung is picturesquely situated on the banks of the Amo *chu* (river). The trade agent's house was more suitable for a spacious summer cottage than for the heavy snows of a Yatung winter. After acquainting myself with the problems of the trade agent at Yatung I drove up to Lhasa. There was no road from Nathu-la to Yatung, a steep twenty miles down by foot; a vehicular road has since been completed by the Chinese up to the Indian border. Three vehicles had been dismantled in India and transported as specially improvised porter-loads to be re-assembled for use at Yatung, Gyantse and Lhasa. An hour and a half's drive got me to the desolate plain of Phari called Phari Dzong. Phari is at over 14,000 feet and located at the foot of the Chomolhari mountain (23,997 feet). Chomolhari was climbed in 1937 by the late Spencer Chapman (author of *Memoirs of a Mountaineer*) and party while on his way back from Lhasa. Chomolhari in Tibetan literally means "goddess of the holy mountain." Chomolhari peak is on the boundary between Bhutan and Tibet. Many books have described Phari as a miserable and dirty collection of mud houses. I paid a visit to the so-called town and found three or four Indian traders in its stench and severe climate. An Englishman by the name of George Manning who passed through Phari in 1811, described Phari as "Dirt, grease, smoke, misery, but good mutton"! Rather an unkind verdict and yet quite true (from *Memoirs of a Mountaineer*, by the late F. Spencer Chapman). Beyond Phari most of the country is a plateau 13,000 feet to 17,000 feet high right up to Lhasa. Strong winds blow at Phari and the sandy plain of Kala beyond. The sun is strong and yet the wind is cold and biting; the skin cracks easily and exposed parts get sunburnt.

Until 1954 Yatung and Gyantse had detachments of the Indian army with the British/Indian trade agents. Prior to 1954 there was also a telephone line from Yatung to Lhasa along the caravan route. As a result of the Sino-Indian Treaty of 1954 with the People's Republic of China these rights were relinquished. While going on this route I could still see the remnants of the fallen telephone poles. The area between Phari and Lhasa figured in the Younghusband expedition of 1904. Until nearly after World War II, when Nepal was closed to foreigners, the Everest expeditions were through Tibet and along the northern face of the mountain. The great journeys of the early Everesters like Mallory, Irwine and others were through Tibet.

I drove past the plain and the marshy Kala lake and the big Dochen or Bam-tso (lake). It is an icy cold lake on the northern foothills of Chomolhari which abounds in fish and ducks. Beyond this the route passes alongside a stream right up to Gyantse, which was also the location of our trade agency. It was a six to seven hours drive to Gyantse from Yatung.

Gyantse fell victim to a disastrous flood in 1954. The flood swept away part of the Gyantse town and the whole of the Indian trade agency causing enormous loss of life and property. The trade agent, Major S. M. Krishnatry, was lucky as he had just come to Shillong on posting as APO-I to the newly formed Indian Frontier Administrative Service. When I visited Gyantse on the way to Lhasa in 1959 and later, I heard many accounts of the damage done by the flood and how several trade agency members had clung on to treetops for a number of days. The flood was caused by the bursting of a glacial dam up in the mountains. Even though Gyantse was at a height of 13,000 feet, willow trees were noticeable here and there.

On the outskirts of Gyantse, on the old caravan route to Lhasa, was the Taring Raja's estate. Two of the Taring brothers, however, were in India. Their father had once been the pretender to the throne of Sikkim but the British had got him out of the way by having the present Maharaja's grandfather as the man of their preference. The Taring Raja, as he was known, was given his estate close to Gyantse to live in.

I found Gyantse rather a dull place as there was no one or no place to go to because of restrictions on movement. Incidentally, I visited Gyantse and Yatung only three or four times during my

stay in Lhasa. More frequent visits were not allowed by the Chinese Foreign Bureau. Our trade agent at Gyantse was R.S. Kapur, with his brave wife who stood the isolation of Gyantse extremely well. After spending a couple of days at Gyantse I drove to a place beyond Shigatse. Shigatse was en route from Gyantse and the next biggest town in central Tibet, after Lhasa. It used to be the seat of the Panchen Lama and the Tashi Lhumpo monastery is located at Shigatse. I crossed the ferry over the Tsanpo (Brahmaputra in India) fifty miles beyond Shigatse at a place known as Taktuka. I had to stay in a traveller's hut, another fifty miles beyond this ferry. Next morning I drove up to the 17,000 feet high Shogula Pass, and then the five hours down to Lhasa, my destination for the next two and a quarter years. While driving the eighty miles up the Shogula Pass I got bored with sitting in the station wagon and took over the wheel. I was used to keeping to the left, whereas the traffic rule of the Chinese in Tibet was to keep to the right. When very close to the top of the pass a huge Chinese army truck suddenly appeared in the opposite direction. In order to avert the collision, I swerved to my extreme left from habit instead of to the right, with the result that I collided with the Chinese vehicle. Fortunately it was a minor accident and did not do any major damage even to my station wagon. We parted quite cordially and I gave the truck driver a note to say that the fault was mine and that was the end of it. The route to Lhasa passed through the Yangpachen plain, at a height of 15,000 feet, and then down along a stream to Lhasa. The route that we had to take was not the old caravan route which passed beyond Gyantse via Yamdruk-tso (lake) of the Sow Goddess who lived in the nearby Samding monastery. However, I drove on that route while returning to India from Lhasa in November 1961. It may be mentioned that the Sow Goddess of the Samding monastery was a maiden by the name of Dorje Phagmo. After I left Lhasa there were rumours that she had married a young incarnate lama who had taken to ordinary life under the Chinese administration. Yungpachen, mentioned above, is a vast expanse of undulating grazing land interspersed with snow-fed streams flowing through from the surrounding mountains. The plain stretches from the junction of the new route between Lhasa and Shigatse and the one leading north and east to Nagchuka-Gormo-Sining-Peking; on this latter route falls Damshung airfield, a part of the extensive Yangpachen pasture. These

grazing areas are inhabited by semi-nomadic tribes known as Dropas and the country is known as *Dre* in Tibetan. On one occasion, while travelling from Lhasa to Gyantse and driving over the Yangpachen plain towards the foothills of the Shogu Pass, I saw to the east what looked like smoke spiralling from the plain. Guessing that this was a hot spring, I decided to drive towards the spot despite the fact that I had a long journey ahead. There was no track and so I drove cross-country. However, after a mile, the ground became increasingly marshy and it was with some effort that we managed to drive back to the main highway. I was afraid that there was a Chinese post a mile away and if they found me stuck in the marsh off the main route, they would perhaps suspect me of prowling into their precious geological treasures!

Perhaps Indian readers are aware of a protest note received from the Chinese government by the Indian government in 1960. It related to an Indian *sadhu* on his pilgrimage to Kailash and Manasarovar who was thoroughly searched by the Chinese in the area of the Lipulekh Pass (on the Tibet border) and found in possession of some homeopathic medicines. The Chinese lodged a protest with the Indian government that the *sadhu* was carrying "poisonous matters" like arsenic (as one of the homeopathic medicines was arsenic album) in order to poison the Tibetan people! There were hardly any signposts on the four hundred and fifty miles of highway Yatung-Phari-Gyantse-Shigatse-Lhasa; there was not much need. Once our car driver was taking one of our staff members on transfer from Lhasa to Yatung early in the morning and on entering the open plain of Yangpachen he inadvertently took the wrong turn north on the road to China instead of the southern one to Shigatse. After he had been some sixty miles on this wrong route they saw the Damshung airfield just ahead of them and from this landmark they knew that they were on the wrong road. They turned back instantly and joined the main road south. Luckily they were not seen by any Chinese detachment or otherwise they would have been grossly misunderstood.

I reached Lhasa in the middle of August and took over from my predecessor, Major S. L. Chhibber. He had been in Lhasa during March 1959 when the Dalai Lama fled to India with many high ranking Tibetan officials. Chhibber is a tall, fat gentleman, always happy. His tiny bedroom, to which I succeeded, had a pillar in

the middle and it was with great difficulty that two beds for the Chhibber couple had been fitted on either side of the middle pillar; I was fortunately single! Chhibber, before March 1959, had enjoyed a nice social life amongst the Tibetans and was fond of indulging in the indoor game of *majong* which he was able to resume in Gangtok in his next posting as first secretary to the political officer there. He has since retired from government service. Here it may be mentioned that *majong* was a gambling game and a must for higher society. A lot has been written about the flight of the Dalai Lama into India and therefore I will not repeat the story.

Lhasa was not the dreamland that I had imagined in my boyhood when I was thrilled by the accounts of the pioneers who had managed to enter the forbidden city in disguise. Reading books like *Seven Years in Tibet* by Heinrich Harrer or *Out of This World* by Lowell Thomas, filled me with a longing to visit Tibet, and particularly Lhasa, which I imagined to be a delightful Shangri-la. Life in the town had depended on the gay society, most of whom were now refugees in India or in the jails of Lhasa, or puppets of the Chinese administration in Tibet. Tsarong Dzasa, with whose name readers interested in Tibet would be familiar, was imprisoned and had passed away under suspicious circumstances a month before my arrival in Lhasa. He, like many of his class, was due for public condemnation (*thamzi* in Tibetan) but he died before this was to materialize; some say he took poison (*zahar-mohar*) to kill himself. Tsarong was a man of humble origin, his name was Dasang Dadul and he was known as Namgang when he was a boy. He had found his way to Mongolia when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama fled there at the time of the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1904. There he came to the Dalai Lama's notice and served him as an attendant. Dasang Dadul rose from a sepoy to a captain and later rose to be commander-in-chief of the Tibetan army. When the Thirteenth Dalai Lama fled to Darjeeling (India) during 1909-10, at the time of the Chinese advance into Tibet, Dasang Dadul covered his flight by fighting a rearguard action right up to Chushul (not Chushul of Ladakh), which is forty miles south of Lhasa on the Tsanpo river. Dasang Dadul had served the great Tsarong Wangchuk Gyalpo (*Gyalpo* meaning royal), who was a *shape* (cabinet minister) in the Tibetan Cabinet. Tsarong Wangchuk and his married son were murdered in 1912 by an unruly crowd of monks in the streets of Lhasa, perhaps because he was

taken to be helping the Chinese, who had advanced into Lhasa. Dasang Dadul, as desired by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, then married the late Tsarong Wangchuk's widow and his widowed daughter-in-law. He thus succeeded to Tsarong Wangchuk's estate and acquired the name of Tsarong, we shall for convenience sake call him Tsarong-II. Tsarong-II also married three out of the four daughters of his late master, Tsarong Wangchuk. The names of three of these are: Pema Dolkar, Tsetin Dolkar and Rinchin Dolma. Rinchin Dolma later married Jigme Taring in her second marriage, with the consent of and at the request of Tsarong-II. Those interested in a more detailed account of Tsarong and the Tsarong family may like to read the extremely interesting book *Daughter of Tibet* by Mrs R. D. Taring which she wrote some years ago after her escape to India in 1959. Polygamy was quite acceptable to higher class Tibetans in those days, and Rinchin Dolma Taring explains this frankly in her book. Tsarong-II, who rose to be a *shape*, was later demoted to a *dzasa* due to others, but he was still an important and patriotic Tibetan official. He had a magnetic personality, and was perhaps somewhat like Henry the Eighth of England, in that he acquired so many wives!

One day I took a brief look into Tsarong House close to the newly constructed public stadium in Lhasa. Tsarong House was a nice Tibetan house which showed the Tibetan nobles' interest in raising flowers, particularly geraniums in pots. These could be seen on the balconies of almost all Tibetan houses. Rich Tibetans had glazed windows, but in the old days the majority resorted to white locally made paper or cloth on window frames instead of glazed windows. Tibetan houses were made of solid stone, mud and timber. No iron nails were used since they were not readily available, coming as they did over the nine hundred kilometres from India by pony.

Life for me, particularly as a single officer, in the consulate general premises known as "Deyki-lingka" or Garden of Happiness, was lonely. The only other foreign diplomat in the town was the Nepalese consul general who in my time was Colonel Upendra Bahadur Basnyat, followed by the late Yakthumba and preceded by Kaiser Bahadur. After Lhasa, Colonel Basnyat was the Nepalese ambassador to Peking and the United Kingdom and is now (1976) the chief of protocol to the Nepal government in Kathmandu. Basnyat's presence was a pleasurable relief in my isolation.

Since there were many restrictions on our movement in Lhasa, there was nothing one could see and enjoy. We couldn't meet any Tibetan gentry, they were too scared to be seen in our company.

The Deyki-lingka premises had been hired by us from Kundiling kalon, the lama owner of the neighbouring Kundiling monastery. Kundiling left for India with the Dalai Lama in 1959 and was until recently serving in the Dalai Lama's secretariat at Dharamshala. My residence-cum-office, though an old building, was located in the midst of a nice garden with a small stream running through it. There were lots of willow trees, a walnut tree and poplars. Apart from many flowers, mainly dahlias, there was a vegetable garden. Growing vegetables was, however, limited to the summer and vegetables like turnips and potatoes were preserved underground for warm storage to protect them against the severe cold of winter. Lhasa, though at an altitude of 12,000 feet, was dry and cold, and the rainfall was hardly a couple of inches a year. What little moisture filtered into the interior of Lhasa precipitated on the surrounding mountain tops. Lhasa therefore did not have any snow, although the temperature went far below zero. While the nights were extremely cold, the days were bright and sunny with severe cold winds. During winter most of the time was spent safe and snug inside a glazed room which was warm by day and protected against the winds. We also used a fire stove or electric heater during winter. I was lucky to have the benefit of electricity. Just prior to my arrival in Lhasa a hydroelectric power station was established eight kilometres outside the town at a place known as Nachen. The limited power supply was only available to a few. Deyki-lingka was situated just outside the crowded municipal town, midway between the Potala, the winter palace of the Dalai Lama, and the Norbu-lingka, the summer palace of the Dalai Lama, from where he escaped in disguise one evening in March 1959. Norbu-lingka means the Jewel Park. I was not allowed to go inside the Potala but from what I could see of it from outside, it was a huge, ancient fortress on a hillock on the outskirts of the town. At its foot is located the small village of Sheo. In contrast, the Norbu-lingka is a double storey modern cottage with glazed windows and a fine garden around it bounded by a wall. One could still see the damage done by the Chinese shells to the perimeter walls of the Norbu-lingka. The entrance to the Norbu-lingka was guarded by Chinese soldiers and some of the

detachments were located inside its outhouses.

Those who have read books on Tibet as it was before Chinese occupation in 1950, would have read the accounts of the merry life that Tibetans used to lead. At the slightest excuse the families went gaily dressed on four or five days excursions to the nearby *lingkas* (gardens) to play on their musical instruments, gamble, dance and consume lots of drinks and good food. Horse carts and bicycles were used to transport their light, colourful tents, mattresses (*bodens*), portable tables (*chokses*), other necessary equipment and their chubby children. Sadly all this was denied to me, nothing of this remained. Even to move from one village to another, people had to take written permits from the committees which had been set up everywhere for detailed vigilance and administration. Only three to four times a year did the new regime allow the public to celebrate their most important festivals. A couple of times a year the Norbu-lingka was thrown open to the public. In spite of the Chinese gate sentries I managed to get inside and spent a few hours there on one of these festive occasions. Towards the end of my stay in Lhasa the Chinese authorities were good enough to arrange for me to go inside the Norbu-lingka. The rooms remained almost as they were when the Dalai Lama left but without the precious wall scrolls (*thankas*) or similar decorations. I could see the huge painting of Nagarjuna in the main room which had been presented by our then political officer in Sikkim, Apa B. Pant, to the Dalai Lama on his visit to Lhasa in 1957. Although the Norbu-lingka still had a nice garden, flowers and lawns, they appeared to be somewhat neglected. I also went to the portion of the Norbu-lingka premises known as the Forbidden Enclosure of the Dalai Lama. It is a rectangular pond with a raised throne-like covered balustrade almost in its centre. This was meant to be the Dalai Lama's private corner for meditation or serious thinking inside the gardens. I could see hardly any of the zoo animals or pet birds that the Dalai Lama kept in the Norbu-lingka.

One other important old monument nearby was Chokpuri or Iron Hill, formerly the Tibetan Medical College, which was now in ruins. It had been shelled by the Chinese in March 1959. The area around our premises was partly swamp and there were a couple of lakes, one of which was the Serpent lake at the foot of the Potala. A hundred yards away was the river of Lhasa, the Kyi-chu, on which Heinrich Harrer had spent some of his time

trying to raise proper embankments. The bridge over the Kyi-chu was a mile further up. In spite of my efforts, I was unable to see or cross it as it came in the prohibited area.

The houses of most of the Tibetan aristocracy were now occupied by Chinese cadres and the PLA. Many new buildings and barracks had been constructed for their occupation. In Lhasa there appeared to be as many of them as the local population, about 30,000 of each. Now Lhasa, Shigatse and the country south of the Tsanpo, particularly bordering India, have large concentrations of Chinese soldiers. Nuclear warhead sites are being established to threaten the security of India and southeast Asia. We understand that nuclear and rocket testing sites have been established in the north at Lopnor and even further south. India and its neighbouring countries are not free from the threat of radioactive fall-out from nuclear explosions even in the testing stages.

It was unfortunate that I went to Tibet without first meeting any of the notables of Tibet. I met Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, a leading Tibetan then serving the Chinese as a puppet secretary-general of the PCART (People's Committee of the Autonomous Region of Tibet). Ngabo Ngawang Jigme is now known to be the puppet vice-chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee. I met Ngabo (pronounced Naphe by the Chinese) at one of the lunches that I had hosted. It is exceptional that a Tibetan was allowed to attend a party hosted by me or even the Royal Nepalese consul general, with whom the Chinese had better relations.

The occasional Tibetan like Ngabo or the Tibetan mayor of Lhasa were only allowed when Chinese Foreign Bureau personnel were present. The Chinese military generals rarely attended any of my parties. I made a formal call on General Chang Chin-Wu, who was the overall commander for Tibet, at the October 1 function, when I was introduced to him at the newly constructed sports stadium! Likewise I was only once introduced to General Chang Kuo-ha, second in command for Tibet and General Tan Kuan-San, the area commander for the Lhasa area. Readers may be familiar with the name of General Tan Kuan-San from the letters that were exchanged between him and the Dalai Lama before the latter's escape to India. Ngabo Ngawang Jigme was the governor in Kham or eastern Tibet during the Tibetan regime, just before it fell to the Chinese occupation forces, and he gave no oppo-

sition to them. Lahalu Shape had also been a governor in Kham and was known to have strongly opposed the Chinese. When I arrived in Lhasa, Lahalu had been subjected to a number of public condemnations (*thamzi* in Tibetan). He was imprisoned and was still in prison when I left Lhasa.

Many other Tibetan notables were never seen, they were either in jail, engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life or as subordinate officials under the Chinese. An example of these were the Samdup Phodrangs, father and son, and the two charming Tsarong (II) daughters educated in Darjeeling. They were known as Nancy-la and Peggy-la, names given to them by the Darjeeling teachers. In Tibetan, *la* is a normal honorific with a name which also means a mountain pass but the pronunciation is different. Peggy-la was engaged as a labourer in the town. Three more of Tsarong's daughters, not all from the same wife, were already in India. These were Betty-la, married to George Taring (G.N. Taring) and Daisy-la, later married to Nawang Gelek. The third daughter, though not the youngest, known popularly as Tess-la, was married to the late Jigme Dorji, Prime Minister of Bhutan. Both Betty and Daisy were in India in March 1959 and remained there. George and Betty Taring had come to India in 1958 to purchase tents for the Tibetan government. It was customary for rich Tibetans to indulge in trade in goods to and from India. They had left their four children under the care of the Tsarong house, and they remained in Lhasa undergoing indoctrination as the future Chinese citizens of Tibet. Betty and Daisy are living in India as Tibetan refugees and making a living in various useful jobs. Jigme Dorji and his widow Tess-la, were excellent nobles and friends. Tess-la Dorji is now living a quiet life in Mussoorie, away from the worries and petty intrigues. Her three sons are serving the Bhutan government in responsible positions. In March 1959 Jigme and Mary Taring came by separate routes under harrowing conditions from Lhasa to India. Although Tsarong-II had many daughters, he had only two sons. One of these, Dadul Namgyal, popularly known as George Tsarong, had come to India before 1959. He is now more or less settled in America. His son, Tsewang Gurme, an incarnate lama also known as Dekung Chetsang was left behind in a monastery near Lhasa at the time of the March 1959 uprising. He managed to escape to India through Nepal in 1975. He has since joined his parents in America. How he escaped is a story of patience and perseverance

which perhaps one day he will tell.

Two of the three famous monasteries of central Tibet, Drepung and Sera, which used to have a population of lamas ranging from three thousand to eight thousand, were on the outskirts of Lhasa. The third monastery, Ganden, was located two days' march outside Lhasa. I could go past the Drepung monastery but not enter it. One of my Indian assistants and his wife once strolled into the Drepung monastery without permission. They did not know that entry into Drepung was prohibited, although the general presumption was that movement into such areas was banned. On their way into the monastery they saw a few Chinese cadre and military personnel and a couple of lamas. Soon they were noticed and subjected to interrogation. Eventually, I received a telephone call from the Chinese Foreign Bureau saying that the couple had trespassed into the monastery. I informed them that whatever the facts may be they should be good enough to let them come back to the consulate general, which the Foreign Bureau kindly did.

Once I spent a day or two at Gyantse on my way to Yatung. Since the area did not appear to be prohibited I took a short drive along one of the roads. I had hardly gone half a mile or so when I reached an old house which I found guarded by a Chinese sentry. It turned out to be a Tibetan prisoners' camp. The Chinese commander of the place came out and was rather curt. He wanted me to sign his register which I said was not necessary in view of my visiting card and the Indian penant on my car. He reluctantly ate humble pie and that was the end of the matter. However, the poor Tibetan interpreter who was with me got a severe warning from the Chinese commander as he was still one of their nationals by virtue of the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Our trade agents at Gyantse and Yatung, R.S. Kapur and K.C. Johorey, often had a bone to pick with the local foreign bureaus. I was perhaps luckier. Although there were no Chinese sentries posted on entrances to the two trade agencies, there was always a sentry at my entrance gate in Lhasa. When I protested, I was informed that it was a security measure taken since my predecessor's time. The Government of India had no alternative but to ensure reciprocal security, particularly on the Chinese trade agency at Kalimpong, which was well-known to be a hub of intrigue and an information collection centre!

Social activity was limited to occasional formal dinners or lunches given by the Chinese Foreign Bureau. It was indeed a contrast from the diplomatic activity in other parts of the world, even though I have never been anywhere except India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet. In addition, there were two to three occasions in the year when the foreign diplomatic corps, consisting of the only two consul generals, were invited to public functions such as that on 1 October. At one of these functions I was introduced to the Panchen Lama by the Chinese Foreign Bureau with the hierarchy of generals close by. The Panchen Lama had a couple of young Tibetans with him who carried cameras. On one occasion I and my Nepalese counterpart were invited to a reception in the Norbu-lingka in honour of the Chinese "successful" team to the Everest.

This was in the summer of 1960. One of the climbers had frost-bitten fingers which were bandaged. The team had no photographs of the Everest summit to show. In May 1975 nine Chinese climbed Jomolunguma (Everest), or what is more recently called Qomolungma Feng in Chinese magazines. The team had a lady member (Tibetan), and this climb equalled the Indian record of May 1965.

The only outdoor recreational activity I could indulge in was doubles tennis with my staff within the consulate general premises. I often took lonely evening walks near our consulate general, outside the Norbu-lingka and along the road leading south out of Lhasa. I would occasionally, without attracting any special attention, stroll in the day time outside the Central Cathedral of Lhasa, known as the Jokhang by the Tibetans. This cathedral was held in the same reverence by both the Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhists. I would also see stray oldish Tibetans, both men and women, doing ritualistic circumambulation (*Parikrima* in Sanskrit) around the Jokhang. The *Barkor* circumambulation (inner circuit) was short and almost wholly through the town; the *Lingkor* (longer or outer circuit) circumambulation was mostly outside the town. In the old days it was customary for hundreds of Tibetans to do these holy circuits but now it was a rare sight. As is the religious custom of the Buddhists, this circumambulation was done from left to right. The more religious and older Tibetans did these circuits by lying flat on the ground and thus proceeding forward. Orthodox Hindus in India can also be seen proceeding for a holy dip in the Ganges in this arduous fashion.

On my afternoon walks I sometimes saw the only elephant in Lhasa, perhaps the only one in the whole of Tibet. It was the surviving elephant of the two that had been presented by the Maharaja of Nepal to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. This elephant was lodged in the royal (Dalai Lama's) stables at the foot of the Potala close to the Serpent lake temple. I always got the feeling when I saw this solitary animal that it was in exile.

The only Indian community in Lhasa consisted of the Kashmiri Muslims of Ladakhi origin, who had been in Lhasa, Shigatse and other towns for over a century. They were known as *Khachis*, that is Muslims. They had married Tibetan women and converted them to Islam and they used a dress slightly different from that of the Tibetans. The community, including children, totalled over a thousand people. The majority of these were most anxious to leave Tibet for India and after a series of dialogues and notes most of them were allowed to go. They were paid a nominal compensation for their two mosques and their premises in Lhasa. Few stayed behind of their own accord, and some were not allowed to come out. One Abdul Hamid who had been in Lhasa jail since March 1959 was still there when I left. Abdul Hamid's family came to Nepal at a very late stage but he is believed to be still languishing in Lhasa jail. In my time I also saw a couple of Kashmiri Muslims confined to jail and I understand a few more were imprisoned after my departure but goodness knows for what offence.

In 1959, there were dozens of Ladakhi lamas who were either students in the monasteries in Tibet or on pilgrimage. After a series of protests and notes to the Chinese Foreign Bureau a majority of them were allowed to return to India. A few were not even able to come and seek redress from us, since they were located in far-off places from where movement was very restricted. The *kushos* (head lamas) of Thikse and Phiang monasteries of Ladakh came to me in Lhasa to seek repatriation and we succeeded. Both of them are now living happily in Ladakh. I also had to take up with the Chinese Foreign Bureau the return of the Hemis lama, Stanzin Rispa, to Ladakh. After being installed in Hemis as a very young boy as is the custom, he had been studying in one of the three big monasteries (each 3,000 to 8,000 strong) around Lhasa. When the Chinese occupied Tibet his return to Ladakh became difficult. I saw him in Lhasa in a blue uniform working as a primary school teacher or sometimes selling vegetables. On one occasion

during my talks with the Chinese Foreign Bureau, a mock show was put up, when the lama was presented before me in full head lama's dress. I was informed that this was the lama; he spoke like a parrot, and what he said was translated to me. He said, or at least was taught to say, how free he was in his own land and that he had no desire to go to a land of serfdom in Ladakh, etc. I, of course, laughed it away as politely as I could. In fact, I had met Stanzin Rispa only a couple of days earlier in one of the streets when he told me he wanted to go back to Ladakh and sought my help to get him and his parents out. We, however, did not succeed in getting him to Ladakh. Yet another Indian national, Domo Geshe Rimpoche of the Darjeeling and Kalimpong monasteries, was a young lama who had been in Lhasa on monastic studies at the time of the March 1959 troubles. He is the incarnation of the previous lama of his name and is respected a lot in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong area by his followers. On the outbreak of disturbances there were indiscriminate arrests and he was one of the victims. He had been in jail for about two years. We took up his case with the Chinese Foreign Bureau. It was six months before we could get him released. After his release he often came to see me when he was on, a sort of, parole. He was a skeleton of a boy when he left the prison. One day he was allowed to proceed to India and he is now leading a peaceful life between Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Delhi. The largest number of refugees came to India. A few managed to get from India to America, Britain, Germany, Norway and Switzerland, etc.

The Chinese were trying their best to win over the Tibetans but their only achievement was that they had made the Tibetans afraid of them. The Chinese authorities in Tibet, or at least in Lhasa, appeared to me to be vacillating in some of their policies. For months after I arrived in Lhasa there were daily meetings of Tibetans arranged by the Chinese, through the appointed sector-wise Tibetan leaders (*chutangs*). The leaders and certain pre-selected Tibetans were tutored to make speeches. An odd poor Tibetan, often styled as an erstwhile serf, would get up and condemn the Dalai Lama's regime. They praised the new system which had "liberated" the "serfs" from the clutches of the so-called "wretched" landlords and monasteries. Though the Tibetans hated it, in keeping with the communist system, they were taught to keep a watch on their neighbours to bring to light any impro-

priety on their part. Although they were foxed by this drama which they were made to enact, they could not help but cooperate. Such puppets at these meetings also came out with so-called self-criticism of themselves saying how in the old days they had done things which were against communist principles. For some weeks the Chinese authorities even encouraged, through their cadres, condemnation of the Dalai Lama. Finding that this did not cut much ice and the people were not cooperating, the authorities slowed down on this but resumed the campaign after a few months. Similarly, propaganda against the monks and the monastic scriptures was started in the daily meetings. For a while the brass and clay idols of Buddha and similar deities were thrown into drains or in the river but the Chinese soon realized that they were wasting a lot of foreign exchange income like this. After some time, this practice was stopped and these precious things were collected in various Chinese offices. It was learnt that they were later transported to the mainland, even to Hong Kong, where they could fetch enormous prices.

The Tibetans were told not to keep gold or any form of wealth. Many of them surrendered their gold and silver to the local Chinese bank. Tibetans usually have two precious articles which contain gold or turquoise. A heavy gold ornament known as a *ghao* is worn by reasonably rich women in the form of a necklace. Like the Nepalese Gurkha women, most of the higher and even middle class Tibetan women took pains to acquire good gold ornaments and, therefore, a lot of gold flowed from India into Lhasa in the old days. Another ornament, the lady's head-dress was very ornate and lavishly embellished with turquoise. Outside the Chinese bank I saw small heaps of turquoise; apparently the turquoise had been thrown out and only the gold saved from these ornaments.

Until 1960 an attempt was made to form communes. It was soon realized that forming communes entailed, besides taking labour from the people, providing them with the basic necessity of food. The government was unable to do this and, therefore, the idea of communes remained only in theory. Lots of grain that had been stored in various monasteries by the erstwhile Tibetan regime was seized and used for meeting the needs of the army, the cadres, and the Tibetans through sale. The Chinese PLA and cadres were hardworking, indoctrinated and regimented and the majority believed in the ideals of communism. They were modest

during my talks with the Chinese Foreign Bureau, a mock show was put up, when the lama was presented before me in full head lama's dress. I was informed that this was the lama; he spoke like a parrot, and what he said was translated to me. He said, or at least was taught to say, how free he was in his own land and that he had no desire to go to a land of serfdom in Ladakh, etc. I, of course, laughed it away as politely as I could. In fact, I had met Stanzin Rispa only a couple of days earlier in one of the streets when he told me he wanted to go back to Ladakh and sought my help to get him and his parents out. We, however, did not succeed in getting him to Ladakh. Yet another Indian national, Domo Geshe Rimpoche of the Darjeeling and Kalimpong monasteries, was a young lama who had been in Lhasa on monastic studies at the time of the March 1959 troubles. He is the incarnation of the previous lama of his name and is respected a lot in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong area by his followers. On the outbreak of disturbances there were indiscriminate arrests and he was one of the victims. He had been in jail for about two years. We took up his case with the Chinese Foreign Bureau. It was six months before we could get him released. After his release he often came to see me when he was on, a sort of, parole. He was a skeleton of a boy when he left the prison. One day he was allowed to proceed to India and he is now leading a peaceful life between Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Delhi. The largest number of refugees came to India. A few managed to get from India to America, Britain, Germany, Norway and Switzerland, etc.

The Chinese were trying their best to win over the Tibetans but their only achievement was that they had made the Tibetans afraid of them. The Chinese authorities in Tibet, or at least in Lhasa, appeared to me to be vacillating in some of their policies. For months after I arrived in Lhasa there were daily meetings of Tibetans arranged by the Chinese, through the appointed sector-wise Tibetan leaders (*chutangs*). The leaders and certain pre-selected Tibetans were tutored to make speeches. An odd poor Tibetan, often styled as an erstwhile serf, would get up and condemn the Dalai Lama's regime. They praised the new system which had "liberated" the "serfs" from the clutches of the so-called "wretched" landlords and monasteries. Though the Tibetans hated it, in keeping with the communist system, they were taught to keep a watch on their neighbours to bring to light any impro-

priety on their part. Although they were foxed by this drama which they were made to enact, they could not help but cooperate. Such puppets at these meetings also came out with so-called self-criticism of themselves saying how in the old days they had done things which were against communist principles. For some weeks the Chinese authorities even encouraged, through their cadres, condemnation of the Dalai Lama. Finding that this did not cut much ice and the people were not cooperating, the authorities slowed down on this but resumed the campaign after a few months. Similarly, propaganda against the monks and the monastic scriptures was started in the daily meetings. For a while the brass and clay idols of Buddha and similar deities were thrown into drains or in the river but the Chinese soon realized that they were wasting a lot of foreign exchange income like this. After some time, this practice was stopped and these precious things were collected in various Chinese offices. It was learnt that they were later transported to the mainland, even to Hong Kong, where they could fetch enormous prices.

The Tibetans were told not to keep gold or any form of wealth. Many of them surrendered their gold and silver to the local Chinese bank. Tibetans usually have two precious articles which contain gold or turquoise. A heavy gold ornament known as a *ghao* is worn by reasonably rich women in the form of a necklace. Like the Nepalese Gurkha women, most of the higher and even middle class Tibetan women took pains to acquire good gold ornaments and, therefore, a lot of gold flowed from India into Lhasa in the old days. Another ornament, the lady's head-dress was very ornate and lavishly embellished with turquoise. Outside the Chinese bank I saw small heaps of turquoise; apparently the turquoise had been thrown out and only the gold saved from these ornaments.

Until 1960 an attempt was made to form communes. It was soon realized that forming communes entailed, besides taking labour from the people, providing them with the basic necessity of food. The government was unable to do this and, therefore, the idea of communes remained only in theory. Lots of grain that had been stored in various monasteries by the erstwhile Tibetan regime was seized and used for meeting the needs of the army, the cadres, and the Tibetans through sale. The Chinese PLA and cadres were hardworking, indoctrinated and regimented and the majority believed in the ideals of communism. They were modest

and austere in their habits. Although they were treated as a superior race by the Tibetans, they generally gave a helping hand in most work.

There is no doubt that it was not easy to improve the economy of a remote place like Lhasa in a short period. The ruling authorities were doing their best to set up small workshops which they called "factories." The theory of "walking on two legs" was advocated a great deal; it meant combining the best of the old and new techniques. Daily or bi-weekly talks on the principles of communism were given at the evening sub-sector meetings and the poor illiterate Tibetans were expected to come prepared the following day to talk about what they had learnt. They were scared and spent hours in their homes trying to memorize what little they could understand of the theories.

The land-link with mainland China was tenuous and remote. It was therefore not easy to transport materials in great quantities from the mainland. The Chinese believed in living off the land as much as possible and in the process depleted most of the fish and game that existed in the area. Both the PLA and the cadres worked hard on their kitchen gardens and human and organic manure were profusely used, no wonder the cabbages and turnips grew so big. The question of using chemical fertilizer in a place like Lhasa did not arise and even otherwise I understand that the Chinese preferred to stick to traditional methods.

The two main roads had already been constructed, one east-west via Chamdo and the other north, via Nagkucha to Gormo and thence east to Sining.

There was a lot of talk of bringing the railway to Lhasa but it was impossible at that time. It is only now that this is being considered as a practical proposal that can be implemented in the near future. With this northern rail link the Chinese would be able to transport oil from the rich wells of Gormo (also shown as Golmo on maps) and link up Tibet with the mainland of China for strategic and other needs. The four hundred and fifty miles road to Yatung close to the Indian border had been developed. Actually road building on the Tibetan Plateau was not as difficult as on the southern slopes of the Himalayas which fall into India, Bhutan and Nepal. The climate of Tibet is extremely dry, and maintenance of the roads over the vast plateaus is not very difficult. There is also no great hurry to tar the roads. Fairly long airstrips can be cons-

tructed over the huge plains outside the towns of Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse and Phari. The one permanent airfield that had already been in existence for a few years was the one at Damshung. This was about seventy miles off the road junction of the Lhasa-Shigatse link and the road north to Nagehuka-Gormo-Sining. I was not able to visit Damshung airfield, much as I would have liked to. Since 1960, central Tibet has many airfields and a good road network.

A lot has been read about the drive on mainland China to promote cleanliness such as in the trains where the compartments were cleaned and sprayed frequently. Similar campaigns related to bird and fly killing were also launched occasionally in the Lhasa schools. The school children were very receptive to these ideas. Those children who excelled were given Young Folks red cloth badges as a mark of distinction.

The ruling regime did some good work in putting up a double storey hospital and many barracks. Most of the building material came from India until these were declared as essential items in India. Most of the horse-carts with dunlop-tyre wheels were imported from India. It was strange to see that dunlop-tyre carts were not much used in India but were very common in the towns of central Tibet.

When I proceeded to Lhasa in August 1959 no official or private mail or newspapers had been sent there or to our trade agencies at Yatung and Gyantse since the troubles of March 1959. The courier service had been discontinued by the Chinese. I therefore carried with me the new cypher documents, accumulated official and private mail and some newspapers. After settling down for a month we managed to start an erratic thrice a month courier service for our mail. We provided petrol for this at Yatung and our own Indian couriers but with a Chinese (Russian-made) jeep with a Chinese driver. Sometimes the Chinese Foreign Bureau cancelled the service.

Rations and meat or chicken were in extremely short supply. Whatever came into Lhasa from the suburbs was intercepted at the entrances of the town and utilized for the needs of the Chinese PLA and cadres. We started a monthly service between Yatung-Gyantse-Lhasa for meeting our requirements of rice, *atta*, edible oils, petrol, etc., from India. The trucks for transportation were provided by the Chinese authorities and we provided the petrol.

The cost of living in Lhasa was consequently rather high but compensated by the fact that there were hardly any amenities, clubs, hotels or social life. In spite of this, we did not ask for a revision of the foreign allowance for ourselves during my two and a quarter years stay. When I returned from Lhasa I was only rich to the extent of my two months advance pay, which I repaid through the nose on assuming charge at Delhi in November 1961.

I almost insisted that my small ministerial staff of half a dozen personnel with their families should avail themselves of their earned leave to India every winter. In keeping with my philosophy of refreshing one's self from the stagnation and isolation of Lhasa, I was sanctioned three weeks leave in Delhi in the winter of 1960. In Delhi, I took the opportunity of calling on the Prime Minister, the foreign secretary and other concerned officers. When I called on the foreign secretary, he curtly told me that I looked hale and hearty and asked me why I had come to Delhi on leave. Frank as usual, I replied that I was there to "enjoy" a spell of earned and sanctioned leave. He said that he had sanctioned me leave as apparently he had been informed by the kind director, China Division, Mr J.S. Mehta, now Foreign Secretary, that I needed a medical checkup in addition to a recreational change. Not content with my reply, I then bluntly told him that I always believed in inducing people to avail themselves of each year's earned leave to refresh themselves and had applied the same principle in my own case, though to a lesser degree as my leave entitlement was forty-five days a year. In later years I discovered that he was an extremely kind soul—this is Mr Subimal Dutt who, after retirement became chairman of the Central Vigilance Commission and later our high commissioner in Bangladesh; I hold him in high regard.

Apart from the trade agents, whom I have mentioned earlier, I had efficient vice-consuls in Kazi Tashi Tsering followed by Kazi Tempo Namgyal Barphunga, both from Sikkim. The former served under me for only a short while. Kazi Tempo and his family were extremely charming. With the long and cold winters of Lhasa most of the staff were quite active in producing chubby rosy-cheeked children about once annually, regardless of the need for family planning! I must say that I was rather a strange boss who, though single himself, insisted on the staff having their families with them. There were only two staff members who, in spite of their efforts, were not blessed with a child.

As mentioned elsewhere, there was hardly any social activity for us. The Chinese Foreign Bureau in Lhasa invited me to three or four lunches or dinners in a year and I reciprocated this gesture. In connection with the celebration of Republic Day on 26 January we invited the Royal Nepalese consul general, U.S. Basnyat, and his family and a few dozen Nepalese traders and our Tibetan staff, to a feature film show in our small hall. As January was extremely cold in Lhasa, we used some coal stoves (*sigris*). Indian pictures were very popular. In the course of screening the film, the lights were put on to enable the operators to change the reel. I happened to look around and my eyes fell on a couple of children and an adult who appeared to be fast asleep, with some froth visible on their mouths. I immediately knew that this was the effect of coal gas poisoning and shouted for the show to be stopped and all the doors and windows were opened instantly. Our young doctor, who was also there, was taken by surprise. It took him some time to understand what was happening as apparently this was the first time he had seen cases of coal gas poisoning. We arranged for the six unconscious adults and a dozen children to be taken out into the open lawn. I did not worry about their catching chills or pneumonia. I was more concerned about overcoming the effects of carbon-monoxide. We used an oxygen cylinder from the medical inspection room. Looking at the faces of the victims, I thought three or four of them were already dead. Fortunately, within half an hour they had all started to recover. The tragedy had been averted just in the nick of time.

In November 1961, young Arvind Deo of the Indian Foreign Service came to replace me as my term was over. He was then a young, bright and cheerful officer who had got married hardly a month before leaving Delhi for Lhasa. They were a charming couple and prepared to face the challenges of their Tibetan adventure. He is now our ambassador in the German Democratic Republic.

Thus ended my exciting but fairly eventful stay in Tibet. I came down to Yatung by the alternative route, that is, the old caravan route up to Gyantse. This is a shorter route than the new route via Shigatse by which I had gone up on my first journey to Lhasa in 1959. It was with some difficulty and tact that I managed to get the permission of the Chinese Foreign Bureau to use this route. The drive to Gyantse took eight hours. Leaving Lhasa we reached Chushul, on the Tsanpo river. After crossing the river the road

went up a hill and then down to the huge Yamdruk lake, and the nearby monastery of the Sow Goddess. I passed the Taring estate near Gyantse. I stayed a couple of days in our trade agent's mud house at Gyantse. Thereafter, it was a day's journey to Yatung where I again stayed three or four days before ponying and walking up to Nathu-la. There is an old Tibetan saying, "If you do not carry him (rider) up a hill, you are no horse; and if you do not walk down the hill, you are no man." I am afraid that, since the hill ponies were usually slow and hard to manoeuvre, I did not make much use of them, especially on the steep ascent or descent. Fortunately, the weather was good and I was able to drive down from Nathu-la to the comfort of the political officer's "residency" at Gangtok. The political officer at that time was Mr I.J. Bahadur Singh. The previous political officer, Apa B. Pant, had recently left for an ambassadorial posting. In keeping with the tradition of all political officers, Bahadur Singh and his wife were very kind and hospitable and it was with reluctance that I left them to continue my journey to Delhi.

V. TIBETAN REFUGEES

In November 1961 I was again in the South Block at New Delhi. The desk of deputy secretary (Tibetan refugees) had been lying vacant for a month or so as the previous incumbent, Mr B.N. Nanda, had retired. I was immediately appointed deputy secretary Tibetan refugees (TR), at that time under the ministry of external affairs, but since transferred to the ministry of rehabilitation. In this job I came into contact with a larger cross-section of Tibetans than I was able to in Tibet, as there were about seventy thousand Tibetan refugees in India. The majority of the refugees were poor classes from the areas of Tibet bordering Bhutan, Nepal and India. A few thousand refugees from western Tibet also came into Ladakh and some came through the passes of Punjab, Himachal, Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim, while a lot came through the North-East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh. The settlement of Tibetan refugees in India was not an easy task. The Indian government tackled the problem sympathetically and, to some extent, a number of voluntary agencies also gave assistance. To start with, these agencies posed problems in that each wanted to help according to its likes and dislikes. Therefore, a coordinating agency, the Central Relief Committee (India), was formed. Its chairman was and still is Acharya J.B. Kripalani and the late Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani was its vice-chairman. Mr Kalyan Singh Gupta continues as the honorary general secretary. One of the relief agencies that came forward which I can remember was CARE (Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere). Just before I took over, CARE had stopped participating in protest against pooling its resources in the Central Relief Committee

(India). From AECTR (American Emergency Committee for Tibetan Relief) we received quantities of used clothing, medicines, bulgar wheat, etc., which were gifts from the American public. The chairman of AECTR was Lowell Thomas Senior who, with his son Lowell Thomas Junior, visited Tibet during 1947 and published the interesting book, *Out of this World.* Their local representative in Delhi was the late Mr T.L. Fletcher. Some of the other voluntary relief agencies which subscribed to Tibetan refugee relief were Catholic Relief Services (CRS), National Christian Council (India), Ockenden Venture, Swiss Aid for Tibetans, Swiss Aid Abroad, OXFAM, Thomas A. Dooley Foundation, Service Civil International and many individuals from Europe, the USA and India such as Navnit Parekh and Maurice Freedman.

Refugee rehabilitation, as has been the experience in the settlement of many other refugees in India and elsewhere, is not an easy job. I must say to the credit of the Tibetans that they were far less of a problem than they could have been. With the cooperation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, they showed a tremendous sense of discipline, tolerance, and endurance. Although all the Tibetan refugees were not from the agricultural class, most of the rehabilitation schemes had an agricultural bias. It was not possible to get agricultural land to suit the climatic needs of the Tibetans, who were used to living at great heights and in a dry climate. With the help of our Prime Minister, the late Jawaharlal Nehru and the cooperation of the various state governments, some jungle areas were made available for the settlement of the Tibetans. Agricultural settlements, combined with other subsidiary cottage industries, were gradually set up in Karnataka, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. To start with, since all the settlers were not used to agriculture, and particularly not in the hot climate of India, it looked like a losing battle. One of the best settlement areas that we were able to procure was three thousand acres at Bylakuppe in the Peryapatnam district of Karnataka (formerly Mysore State), fifty miles from Mysore town on the Mysore-Coorg road. This has proved to be the most successful settlement. In later years, more land in an adjacent area was kindly made available by the Karnataka government. I understand that at present there are four to five thousand refugees in this settlement who are fairly well off. To start with, the jungle had to be cleared and the shortage of irrigational facilities overcome as dependence on the rain

would not yield sufficient crops. Small irrigational schemes were evolved. Simple and cheap family hutments were provided and in a short time the settlement was a collection of small Tibetan villages. Eventually many of the settlers became rich enough to build their own improved huts. Various facilities like bullocks, ploughs and a few tractors were provided. Carpet-making centres were set up, and also other cottage industries. By tradition many Tibetans are good carpet weavers and from this source they earn a good income and foreign exchange. The settlers soon participated in various agricultural and handicraft exhibitions organized by the Karnataka government and won many prizes. Years later, another settlement in Karnataka was set up at Mangod and this is believed to be doing very well. Settlements were raised in the hill areas of Orissa at Chandragiri in the Parlekemedi subdivision of Ganjam district. The 2,500 acres settlement was at a height of 3,000 feet but very hot and the ground rocky. At first sight it seemed nothing could be achieved, but with perseverance and patience the Tibetans made this settlement a success. Small irrigation schemes have been introduced, combined with animal husbandry, carpet weaving and similar cottage industries. Another settlement was set up at the 3,000 feet high Mainpat Plateau in the Sarguja district of Madhya Pradesh. This 2,500 acres settlement initially appeared to have limited chances of success as the irrigation possibilities were few and tubewells were not feasible. The condition of the cattle in the area did not give one much hope for any worthwhile animal husbandry schemes. The settlers have had to depend more on cottage industries than on agricultural or animal husbandry but have made a success of their settlement. A small settlement was set up in the foothills of the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. In spite of the hot and humid climate the settlers were gradually settling there when the Chinese invasion of 1962 intervened. This was the end of the settlement, since the refugees were already half-hearted in settling there because of its adverse climate. One more settlement was set up in the lower areas of Lohit district very close to Tezu, the district headquarters. Although the climate was adverse, the Tibetans made it a success through their hard work. They were able to supply a major part of the vegetables, poultry and similar requirements of the town and earn a good income. Another settlement at Changlang in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh, has not proved very successful because there were no irrigation facilities.

While twelve to fifteen thousand people thus found rehabilitation on the land, most Tibetans resorted to other means for their livelihood. With the assistance of the Government of India, they set up big handicraft centres for carpet weaving and production of other Tibetan products at Dalhousie in Himachal and elsewhere. Tibetans are found in most hill stations and even in the plains, selling their handicrafts. The remainder initially found employment on road construction in the cool, hilly areas. With the passage of time, they have also been shifted to various agricultural settlements or absorbed in handicraft centres. A large number of Tibetans still make their own living through their handicrafts. Most of them have now got acclimatized to Indian conditions.

The Dalai Lama has been very concerned with the welfare of Tibetans. He has settled at Upper Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh. Tibetans from all parts of India and even from Nepal and Bhutan, come on pilgrimage to the various Buddhist centres of India and for *darshan* of the Dalai Lama. In the initial years, the Dalai Lama set up creches for the Tibetan orphans or those children whose parents were missing or working on road construction in the higher hill areas. The Dalai Lama's late elder sister, Tsering Dolma, and his younger sister, Pema-la or Pema Gyalpo, looked after the young children in the creche at Dharamshala. The Dalai Lama has also set up a library of Tibetan literature at Dharamshala. With the loss of precious Tibetan literature in Tibet, the Dalai Lama has collected whatever literature came with the refugees to India, Nepal or Bhutan, so that what is left may be preserved. With the assistance of the Government of India, he has set up an emporium for Tibetan carpets, scrolls (*thankas*) and antiques, etc., at Tibet House in Delhi.

Mr Gyalo Thondup, the Dalai Lama's elder brother, has travelled widely abroad and is taken by some to be the Dalai Lama's roving ambassador. He has been married for a long time to a K.M.T. Chinese lady who is dedicated to the welfare of the Tibetans. She runs an excellent handicrafts centre at Darjeeling, which gives employment to about five hundred Tibetan refugees. In the neighbourhood is a Tibetan school under an autonomous body of the Tibetan Schools Society which is financed by the Education Ministry of the Government of India.

During my three years as deputy secretary dealing with Tibetan refugees, I met the Dalai Lama and his family members several

times. Part of his cabinet (*Kashag*) and other important Tibetans who came with him or followed him to India were with him at Mussoorie, where he stayed when he first came out of Tibet, and later at Dharamshala, which has been the Dalai Lama's residence in India since 1961. Amongst the important Tibetan officials whom I met at Dharamshala were Phala Se, Tsepon Shakabpa, Kalon Kundiling, the Taring brothers and many other patriotic young Tibetans like Rinchin Sadusang and Tethong-la. The latter has since married a foreign volunteer who came to Dharamshala in 1962 or 1963 and he was until recently in charge of one of the settlements. Later on, some of these important officials were deputed by the Dalai Lama to look after the Tibetan groups abroad. Phala Se is currently looking after the Tibetan village near Zurich. The Tibetans now wear varied forms of dress in order to adapt to the climate of India or abroad. Generally, the older generation still wears Tibetan dress but the younger generation has taken to European dress.

During my assignment I came across all kinds of people interested in Tibetan relief. Some of these were the late Pearl S. Buck, who had stayed a large part of her early life in China; Sir Olaf Caroe, who before partition had been the foreign secretary of the British Indian government, and after partition the governor of NWFP, came to India representing OXFAM; and Lady Alexander Metcalfe, daughter of the late viceroy, Lord Curzon, came as the chairman of the Save the Children's Fund (SCF) which established a couple of schools for Tibetan children at Simla. The Government of India set up several schools for Tibetan boys and girls to cater for the special curriculum which would quickly bring them up to the Indian college standard. Many of them had lost a year or two of their studies on coming to India as refugees or they did not have adequate schooling in Tibet. These schools were set up at Mussoorie, Simla, Dalhousie, Pachmari, Darjeeling, Mount Abu, and a few other places and are doing well. Prince Peter of Greece, George N. Patterson, and Colonel Ilia Tolstoy of the U.S. airlift to Lhasa during World War II, also paid visits to India in connection with Tibetan relief. Dervla Murphy, a young Irish woman, came all the way on her bicycle. She travelled to most of the Tibetan refugee centres on her bicycle and brought out a book *Tibetan Foothold*, the proceeds of which, I believe, she gave for the relief of Tibetan refugees in India. She wrote a

similar book on her visit to Tibetan refugee settlements in Nepal which she entitled *The Waiting Land—A Spell in Nepal.* Through the UNHCR office, I met its dynamic officer, the late Mr Jamieson, who had a fund of wit and humour. Maurice Freedman and Navnit Parekh helped in finding land for the settlement of Tibetan refugees and the latter at one time offered his small estate near Almora for their settlement.

The settlement of the ten thousand Tibetan lamas was somewhat of a problem. When asked to do agriculture, there was some opposition because the lamas do not believe in killing any living beings and agriculture would entail ploughing land and many insects would be killed in the process! With the cooperation of the Dalai Lama, this problem was overcome. The lamas agreed to combine agricultural and handicrafts work with their religious occupation. There were several interesting and reputed lamas like the Gyalwa Karmapa of the Rumtek monastery in Sikkim, who had a large following of Tibetan refugee lamas. The Dujom Rimpoche of Kalimpong had his refugee followers to look after. The Kamtrul lama, who had a small following, set up a handicrafts centre and a printing press to earn a living for his followers. To start with, his small centre was at Kalimpong but later was moved to the hills near Palampur to a place known as Bir. Mention has already been made of Domo Geshe Rimpoche of the Darjeeling and Sikkim monasteries who has a good following. Mrs Freda Bedi, wife of Mr B.P.L. Bedi, both of whom were popular youth leaders in pre-partition India in Lahore, also got involved in Tibetan refugee rehabilitation. Having come into contact with the Tibetan refugees, she was attracted to Gyalwa Karmapa as her *guru.* To start with, she set up a small school at Green Park, New Delhi, and educated and trained a small group of young lamas. Some of these lamas were believed to be incarnates or *tulkus.* Although they were actually young, intelligent boys Mrs Bedi treated them as incarnates. Some found good occupations abroad and of these a few returned to India and are suitably employed. One of these young lamas was Tulku (incarnate) Nawang Gelek who later travelled abroad and took to a married lay career. He married Daisy-la, a daughter of Tsarong-II (Dasang Dadul) by one of Tsarong-I's widows. She is now the director of the Tibet House (emporium) at Delhi. After some years, Mrs Bedi set up a small rehabilitation centre for young Tibetan lamas and nuns in a villa

close to Dalhousie. Later on, she more or less renounced all this and set up a small nunnery in the seclusion of the Dharamshala hills. She has now taken to nunhood under her *guru*, the Gyalwa Karmapa of the Rumtek monastery of Sikkim. One of her sons, Kabir Bedi, is a well-known film actor.

While on the desk dealing with Tibetan refugees I paid a four-day visit to Bhutan in February 1963. I was able to see Thimpu and Paro and make a courtesy call on the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. I also met some of the important Bhutanese officials. Lin or Lhendup Dorji, an important office-holder of Bhutan and younger brother of Jigme Dorji, was not in Thimpu at that time. I had very briefly met his able sister Tashi Dorji once in India and met her again briefly in Nepal during my posting there. The road to Thimpu and Paro from the foot hills town of Phuntsoling was still under construction and not tarred and there were frequent landslides. After a couple of sunny days at Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan, and Paro it suddenly started snowing heavily and we foolishly started to drive back down to Phuntsoling. Halfway down, the snow turned to a downpour of rain with lightning and thunder throughout the day. We miraculously escaped many of the landslides and reached Phuntsoling in the evening. My colleague Kalyan Singh Gupta's suitcases and mine arrived a day later. We could not make our flight from Bagdogra (Siliguri) to Calcutta and Delhi early the following morning. We took an afternoon non-scheduled flight in a freighter Dakota from Coochbihar to Calcutta, wearing borrowed bush shirts and trousers from Mr P.N. Mathur, the kind superintendent engineer at Phuntsoling!

I had a couple of opportunities of visiting Sikkim, which I had earlier visited on my way in and out of Lhasa. The Government of India had arranged for five to six thousand Tibetan refugees to be settled in the cooler climate of Sikkim and Bhutan. In April 1964 while I was on one of these visits to Gangtok, I took a tour of North Sikkim. I went beyond Chungthang to Lachung, a picturesque area close to the Tibet border. On my way I stayed at the comfortable government rest house at Mangan from where I got a magnificent view of the Kanchenjunga. On the morning of 6 April, when we had just started for the Lachung valley from Chungthang, we heard the very sad news over All India Radio of the sudden assassination of Mr Jigme Dorji, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, the previous evening at Phuntsoling. Having earlier

met him twice I had the impression that he was a great patriotic Bhutanese, extremely outspoken and a friend of India. He had his own direct methods of achieving results for the development of Bhutan. His mother is the sister of the late Sikkim Maharaja, Sir Tashi Namgyal. We dejectedly decided to cut short our planned tour of the Lachung and Lachen valleys. I, however, made a quick dash to Lachung, and returned to Chungthang the same evening. While having a cup of tea in the rest hut at Lachung I met a gentleman with a heavy mountaineer's load on a trekker frame and a pack on his back. He joined us for tea. He turned out to be the late Sonam Gyatso who had apparently been practising for his climb of Everest which he achieved a year later as a member of the first successful Indian team to climb Everest in 1965.

VI. BORDER HOME GUARDS: A HIMALAYAN PILGRIMAGE

After an interesting three and a half years with the Tibetans I became deputy secretary dealing with emergency affairs in the cabinet secretariat. At the beginning of 1966, I found an interesting field assignment as a commissioner for a Home Guards organization for the border areas of Uttar Pradesh. This was connected with creating an awareness amongst the remote villages of the need for vigilance against intruders and anti-national elements. I found that while there was an urgent threat to our borders, people naturally responded with great enthusiasm. However, during the dull periods it was difficult to keep the people enthused about their responsibilities. Only lecturing did not cut much ice and one had to devise ways and means to stimulate their interest. This was done by organizing village uplift and self-help programmes, through interesting lectures and audio-visual aids, etc. To attract villagers to participate in such activities was not easy as they would rather while away their idle time than indulge in such unremunerative pursuits. However, on the whole, I and my colleagues felt that we had been fairly successful in our mission. One of the blessings attached to this assignment was that it gave me ample opportunity to trek in the remote and fascinating areas of Uttarkhand in Uttar Pradesh. Peaks like Panch-chuli, Nandakot, Nanda Devi, Trisul, Kamet, Choukhamb, Nilkanth, Kedarnath, Satopanth and Bunder-punch (monkey's tail), were familiar friends which one could see many times when touring these areas.

My tours took me to interesting places like the Narayan Ashram, a couple of days trek up beyond Dharchula on the route to

the Lipulekh Pass in Tibet. I was able to see many of the lower retreats like the Mayadevi Ashram, Mirtola, Binsar, Kausani, etc. I visited Munsiari at the foot of the Panch-chuli peaks. Strolls along the Pindar river to Ghona lake, then full of fine trout and since silted by the unprecedented floods of 1969, were most rewarding. Further rewards came to me in my visits to the glorious Valley of Flowers (13,000 feet) in the Bhundyar valley in Garhwal, and to the Sikh pilgrim centre nearby at Hem Kund (14,000 feet).

In the Valley of Flowers, I was touched to see the grave of a European lady in the lonely yet scenic wilderness. Her tombstone had a befitting epitaph:

> "In loving memory of Jean Margaret Leage
> February 21st 1885—July 4th 1939.
> "I will lift mine eyes upto the hills
> From whence cometh my help."

While I very much appreciated the epitaph, and the serene atmosphere, I would not like to be left in such utter loneliness. Although I would like to be in the peace and cool of the Himalayas, I would also like to be not too far from the madding crowd! As one gets older, despite an appreciation of the loneliness of such high places, one craves an earned rest in contact with at least a modicum of society.

Though not a Hindu hermit, I was able to visit the shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Jamnotri and travel far up on the tracks of the sacred rivers of Uttarkhand: the Pindar, Alaknanda, Dhauli, Mandakini, Nandakini, Bhagirathi, Jamuna, Tons, etc. I appreciated the silence of the Himalayas and the sweet music of the gushing snow-fed rivers.

This was a life of both rest and action. My headquarters were at Ranikhet and my residence commanded a view of an arc of the Kumaon and Garhwal peaks, from Panch-chuli to Nanda Devi, Trisul, Kamet and Chaukhamb. I also had the satisfaction of having my aged father and my young son with me here.

Besides pleasurable strolls in the Kumaon and Garhwal Himalayas I also stole opportunities to pass through the Jim Corbett National Park in the U.P. Terai and some other game sanctuaries.

After spending three years in this post I found, much to my

dislike, that I was transferred to the secretariat at Delhi. This was at the end of 1968 and my task now was the same at directorate level that I had discharged as commissioner of Border Home Guards for Uttarkhand in Uttar Pradesh, except that now I took care of all the border areas of the north and north-east. I was able to visit the fascinating border areas of Himachal Pradesh, North Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Ladakh, etc. These visits were in many cases revisits because I had been to these interesting areas while I was special officer frontier areas during 1958-59, district head in the erstwhile North-East Frontier Agency, and as an army officer in Ladakh from 1949 to 1951.

In my assignments from 1962 to 1971 connected with the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees, followed by the assignments with the Border Home Guards, on one pretext or the other I managed to go to the trouble spots. Soon after the Chinese invasion of 1962 in NEFA and Ladakh I managed to visit these areas to see what had happened. Immediately after the cease-fires with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 I visited the areas of Jammu, Akhnoor, Chamb-Jaurian, "Chicken's neck," Shakargarh, etc.

While still connected with the Border Home Guards at Delhi in 1969 I went for another jaunt to Kumaon and Garhwal in U.P. I tagged on to a senior officer who was to visit one of the places on the border of Kumaon and Garhwal. We flew from the foothills in a helicopter. The weather was cloudy and the visibility near our destination was poor. Close to our destination I could see the place from the passenger cabin. Presuming that the pilots in the cockpit had also seen it, I occupied myself by reading a magazine. After about fifteen minutes I looked out again and saw that we were now far away from our destination and our altitude was about 13,000 feet. Having been in these areas earlier, when I was serving in the same organization in Uttarkhand, I knew we were nowhere near the destination. I wrote a note to the captain to ask where we were heading for. He replied that he was making for a particular location on the Alaknanda river in Garhwal, leaving me to infer that he had missed our destination, which we in the passenger cabin had spotted a short while ago. Knowing the area well, I could see that we were not heading for this location either; in that case we should have been flying over the Pindar or Alaknanda rivers. I knew by now that we had lost course, but I

could not exactly locate where we were. While I was trying to locate our position, the helicopter suddenly swooped down and landed in a harvested field in a village. We had landed a mile away from the right bank of the Ramganga river, while the nearest motorable road was along the left bank of this river. We came out of the helicopter and had a laugh, partly at the expense of the captain. The villagers who came to us were a cooperative lot. The captain informed us that he had force-landed in the fields because he only had a little fuel left in the tank. I, therefore, suggested that we hop across to the other side of the river Ramganga and land at a suitable place close to the road so that we could take a lift in one of the passing buses. We took off but the captain was tempted to go on to Ranikhet, which was a town where we could have lunch; incidentally Ranikhet had also been my previous headquarters while I was in Uttar Pradesh. In doing so, just when we had crossed the road axis Ramnagar (Corbett Park area)-Ranikhet, the captain saw the fuel indicator was at zero and landed again in a field on a hill slope. Here the villagers were not as cooperative as in the previous village. We had to walk five miles in the hot sun across the hills to reach the nearest road, Kathgodam-Ranikhet. We struck the road where there were a couple of tea shops, and assuaged our thirst and hunger with tea and delicious sweets fresh from the frying pan. From here it was quite easy to reach Ranikhet by bus and an odd jeep. To cut the story short, we flew again the following morning and eventually reached the border station, although a day late.

Yet another incident is that of a colleague of mine from Delhi while I was commissioner of the Border Home Guards at Ranikhet. He telephoned me one morning saying that he was likely to take a helicopter flight to a hill location and could give me a lift from Ranikhet en route. I informed him that I was already scheduled to go by road the same morning to that place. We decided that I would wait for him until 10 a.m. the following day and that in case he did not turn up I would adhere to my programme of going by road, a distance of approximately one hundred and twenty hill miles. The following morning, seeing no signs of the helicopter, I started off in my jeep. While I was about thirty miles on the road to my destination, I was stopped by the post-cum-telegraph master of a wayside village to say that there was a trunk call for me. I was informed that my colleague from Delhi was at

Ranikhet and that I might drive back to take a lift with him. I hated the idea of driving all the way back to Ranikhet and said I would rather meet him at the destination unless he could spot me en route and give me the lift. I reached the destination in the Garhwal hills in the evening, presuming that my colleague would have decided to go back to Delhi as he had not yet reached the place. Lo and behold, after I had been there a couple of hours, my colleague from Delhi turned up in a jeep. We discovered that his helicopter engine had failed at a place along the Alaknanda river, five minutes after I crossed the same point on the road across the river. To add to their troubles, the only landing place they could find in the narrow Alaknanda gorge was on the right of the river in a wheat field, whereas the road was along the opposite bank of the river. After a difficult landing they had to walk down the right bank of the Alaknanda to find an inter village bridge across the river. Crossing the bridge they struck the road and were given a lift by a passing vehicle; and thus they joined us for a well-earned drink late in the evening. I had proved to be the wise tortoise by sticking to travel on *terra firma.*

VII. A SPELL IN NEPAL

In May 1972 I was appointed director of the Indian Cooperation Mission, Nepal, Kathmandu. Although I was familiar with the enchanting land of Nepal through the books I had read, it was only now that I was able to fulfil my dreams of visiting it.

My job required directing the utilization of Indian assistance to Nepal towards the building of a developmental infrastructure. The Mission had been in existence since 1953 and I was the sixth director. My predecessors in office were the late K.B. Bhatia, ICS; the late H. Lal, ICS; D.R. Kohli, ICS, at present defence secretary, Government of India; M. Ramunny, ex-IAF officer and my colleague in the Indian Frontier Administrative Service, later merged into the IAS; and Rajeshwar Prasad, IAS, of the U.P. cadre. The Indian Aid or Cooperation Mission had done very good work in building several roads, including the first road to connect Kathmandu with India and the outside world. This road, named after the late King Tribhuvan of Nepal during whose time it was constructed, passes through the very beautiful Churia and Mahabharata hill ranges and still carries the maximum road traffic into Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Other roads that followed were the Siddhartha Rajmarg linking the U.P. border town of Nautanwa with the tourist centre of Pokhara, a distance of two hundred kilometres. Other important roads built with Indian assistance have been the eastern sector of the Mahendra Rajmarg which links the Terai area from the border of West Bengal at Mechi to Janakpur, with a link road to the Indian border in Bihar. We are at present engaged in the construction of three hundred more kilometres of the same road in the mid-western sector from

Butwal to Nepalganj which it is hoped will be completed in the course of two to three years. Thus, out of a total of eleven hundred kilometres of the Terai life-line of the Mahendra Rajmarg or the East-West Highway, from Mechi in the east to Mahendra Nagar in the far western terai of Nepal, India has helped in constructing six hundred kilometres.

The first major hydroelectric power station was constructed under the Indian cooperation programme at Trisuli with a capacity of 21,000 kw of power. Apart from the mutual benefit irrigation-cum-power projects of Kosi and Gandak, India has constructed the Chatra Canal Project, which irrigates a hundred thousand acres of land in Nepal. In the 1960s, India helped in several minor irrigation projects and with community development in Nepal.

Together with other countries, India has also helped in developing Nepal's economy in the fields of horticulture, education, health, small-scale industry, post and telecommunications, etc. In the educational field, under the Colombo Plan, India has been providing teachers for Nepal's only university, the Tribhuvan University, in the fields of science, humanities, and recently in other technological fields. The maximum number of Colombo Plan scholars received in India for training came from Nepal. The number of scholars taken from Nepal to India has been on average one hundred and fifty a year and so far a total of three thousand five hundred have received training since the early fifties. Under the Indian assistance programme were also constructed the five major airports of Nepal. It helped in forestry development and the setting up of the Diploma College for Forestry at Hetauda. India has so far been the foremost participant in the development field in Nepal.

Nepal has now come to the stage where it can undertake bigger projects which, besides meeting its own needs, will enable it to sell power to neighbouring countries like India. Nepal is gifted with vast water potential which, if properly harnessed, will enrich it enormously. The UNDP, World Bank and other friendly countries are now helping Nepal develop its economy on a much larger scale than was possible in the early stages of its development. Nepal is about to start construction of a 60,000 kw hydroelectric power project at Kuleikhani near Kathmandu. This is being achieved with a soft loan from the governments of Kuwait, Japan, the IDA and UNDP. The total estimated cost of the project is U.S. $ 95.5 million.

During my tenure in Nepal we had the privilege of meeting our Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, during her three-day visit in February 1973, when she somehow found time to visit the office of the Indian Cooperation Mission. She had earlier visited Nepal in 1966 at the time of the inauguration of what is still the biggest drinking water supply scheme in Nepal at Sundarijal (Kathmandu). Nepal is now, in keeping with its increased needs and with the assistance of UNDP and other agencies, launching a bigger drinking water and sewerage scheme for Kathmandu and its twin towns of Bhaktapur and Patan. In January 1976 we had the pleasure of receiving in the Indian Cooperation Mission Mr Y.B. Chavan, India's minister for foreign affairs.

During my pleasant three and a half years stay in Nepal as head of the Indian Cooperation Mission, I had the opportunity of acquainting myself with politicians, journalists, poets, writers, artists, etc. After the practically non-existent diplomatic life in Lhasa, Nepal appeared to be a change for the better as here one met the resident ambassadors and their officers for seventeen countries. In addition there was the resident representative of UNDP. Amongst other UN aid and specialized agencies in Nepal are WFP, UNICEF, UNIC, WHO with its various special programmes; and other aid agencies like USAID, IBRD, ADP, UPU, ICAO, IMF, British Council, SATA, and several volunteer services. I met Nepalese government officials of all ranks and I had excellent relations with them.

I also met the interesting community of Ranas, even though Rana oligarchy was overthrown in 1951 when King Tribhuvan, "the King behind the clouds," became the effective king after getting out of the overlordship of the last Rana prime minister. Many of the Ranas in Nepal have marriage relations and investments in India. It is quite a job to study and understand the intricate relationship existing between the different close and distant Ranas. The protocol of hierarchy is still maintained amongst them. I found them to be cultured and friendly. Many Ranas still live in their spacious palatial houses and some have rented these to diplomatic missions, etc. The Rana's palatial houses are often furnished with Venetian ivory table tops, large mirrors and chandeliers, all brought in the old days by improvised porter loads before the start of the first road and air links in the 1950s. The local Godavari marble is relegated to use as room flooring and for stair-

cases. Their gardens have fountains and imported statues and one feels as if one is living in a French chateau. The bathrooms are spacious like the ones in the old princes' palaces in India. This account of the Ranas would not be complete if I did not mention General Singha Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, who at eighty-two is one of the oldest Ranas, the son of the late Chandra Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana and brother of the last Rana Prime Minister, the late Mohan Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana. Singha Shumsher is most cordial and cultured and was the first royal Nepalese ambassador in India. He has a good library-cum-museum, no doubt after the Kaiser Library of the late His Highness Field Marshal Kaiser Shumsher Jang Bahadur Rana, who was his brother. The Kaiser Library has now been gifted to the government and people of Nepal.

The King of Nepal and Royalty maintain strict protocol. The thirty-one year old King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev is modest and simple in his dress. Members of the royal family like appearing in military uniform on appropriate occasions and are smartly turned out at all the parades and official functions. Queen Aishwarya is dignified and charming and four-year old Prince Dipendra is sweet and promising.

During my tenure in Kathmandu I had the privilege of working with two Ambassadors: Mr L.P. Singh, a veteran of the Indian Civil Service, and Mr Maharajkrishna Rasgotra of the Indian Foreign Service. Mr L.P. Singh has a brilliant record as a civil servant. For years he has been fond of long walks; in Nepal he also did a good deal of trekking. He preferred walking to golf and often said he considered walking superior to golf, which he defined as only interrupted walking. Mr L.P. Singh reminded me of an experienced mountaineer who had taken to mountaineering in the Alps, but with utmost planning, thoughtfulness and without rushing into a situation. It was said of him that he always succeeded in all the moderate assignments which he undertook in the mountaineering field and he never committeed a serious mistake. The mountaineer was well-known for his extreme thoughtfulness in appreciating a situation before undertaking a major climb in bad weather or over bad terrain; he never allowed his heart to throb fast and took his climbs as leisurely strolls into the mountains, often smoking a pipe. After leaving Kathmandu, Mr L.P. Singh assumed an onerous and important assignment as the governor

of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur and Nagaland.

The next ambassador, Mr Maharajkrishna Rasgotra, is a career diplomat of the Indian Foreign Service. He has vast experience of foreign assignments and had served in Nepal as a second secretary in the Indian embassy twenty years earlier. He, therefore, has a good understanding of the problems, people, and geography of Nepal, having trekked extensively when there were hardly any road or air communications. He is a product of the elite Government College of pre-partition Lahore and was a brilliant student. He speaks extempore excellently in flawless English and Hindi. He is interested in both Hindi and Nepali poetry and has composed some good poems. He has a genuinely warm and friendly heart and is unassuming and frank.

I would be failing in my loyalty to my colleagues in the Indian Cooperation Mission and our embassy if I did not at least say that I received their fullest cooperation and respect in my work; for this I cannot but feel most grateful.

My association with the Nepalese has been most enjoyable. They are a proud and humble people. Although the majority of middle class people in the government are not very affluent, they are full of dignity. Even with a small income they take pains to come properly dressed in their official dress. The Nepalese always remind me of the people of my native Kashmir, particularly of the small community of Kashmiri Pandits there who are similar to the Nepalese. In the past both Nepalese and Kashmiri Pandits lived in humble dwellings of more or less the same basic design. Now in both places they are taking to modern ways of living in better houses.

I started my service career in the mountains of Baluchistan, Khyber and Waziristan, and it is satisfying that I have ended my career in the highest Himalayan region of Nepal in early 1976. Because of advancing age, I could not make the very best of my stay in Nepal by trekking in the high mountains. I had, therefore, to content myself with keeping in touch with the movements of some of the tourists trekking to the Himalayas, such as Mount Everest, the Kanchenjunga—whose summit divides the border between Nepal and India, Makalu, Cho-Oyu, Himal-Chuli, Manaslu, the Annapurnas and the Dhaulagiri, etc.

Before my posting to Nepal as head of the Indian Cooperation Mission, my interest in it had been in the numerous expenditions

to Mount Everest (29,028 feet) and its surrounding mountains. Mr Nehru was very interested in mountaineering and similar activities and I would like to narrate an interview that one of the leading Indian mountaineers, Captain M.S. Kohli (Navy), had with him, and in later years also with his daughter, the present Prime Minister. When he met Mr Nehru he listened to Captain Kohli with rapt attention. According to Captain Kohli, when he was going through the signals that used to come in about the progress of various Indian mountaineering expeditions, particularly to Everest and Annapurna-III in 1961, Mr Nehru remembered that some message had arrived during the progress of the expedition to Annapurna-III to the effect that the Indian party had been held for ransom by the unhelpful people of the Manang area in Nepal. Although the Nepal government immediately intervened and sent a police party to take the recalcitrant Manang Bhots to task, I am told by the leader of this expedition that Panditji insisted, even after the expedition returned to India, that this money be remitted to them, which the Nepal government naturally would not do where punishment was called for instead.

India had sent three expeditions ably led by Brigadier Gyan Singh in 1960, then by the late Major John Dias in 1962. The latest and the only successful Indian expedition so far, was under Lieutenant Commander (now Captain) M.S. Kohli, AVSM. Until April 1975 this expedition was the only one that had sent nine to the top of Everest in May 1965. The Italians sent eight to the top of Everest in 1973. The Indian record has recently, on 27 May 1975, been equalled by the Tibeto-Chinese team which also succeeded in sending nine to the top, including one Tibetan lady; this was soon after the all women's Japanese expedition to Mount Everest which succeeded in sending its woman deputy leader, Mrs Junko Tabei, and the Nepalese guide, Ang Tsering, to the summit on 16 May 1975. Mrs Tabei was the first woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

While on this subject, it would be relevant to say that Captain M.S. Kohli and his two colleagues, the late Sonam Gyatso and Sherpa Sonam Girmi, were the first to reach the top of Annapurna-III in 1961. Other Indians connected with successful or unsuccessful attempts on Everest, Cho-Oyu (climbed by the late Sonam Gyatso and Pasang Dawa Lama in 1958) are the pioneer of Indian mountaineering, the late Major N.D. Jayal (known more

familiarly as Nandu Jayal), the late Major John Dias, Keki Bunsha, Hari Dang, young Suman Dubey and Gurdayal Singh, Martin and Gibson of the Doon School and Lieutenant Colonel Narendra Kumar of Neelkanth (Badri Himal) fame who, in August 1975, tackled the rapids of the Indus in a rubber boat in Ladakh. Narendra Kumar was also the deputy leader of the Indian 1965 Everest expedition. He is now (1976) the Commandant of the Skiing School at Gulmarg (Kashmir). Those who had the honour to greet the summit Everest in May 1965 in Captain Kohli's team, were Captain A.S. Cheema and Nawang Gombu (the only one to have been to the Everest summit twice), the two Sonams, Sonam Wangyal and the late Sonam Gyatso, C.P. Vohra and Ang Kami, Captain (now Major) H.P.S. Ahluwalia, Harish Chandra Singh Rawat and the late Phu Dorji. Harish Rawat was left to go alone from the last camp to the top because at the last minute his pair, the late Major Harsh Bahuguna, had to withdraw because of a sudden rash he developed, Harish Rawat therefore had the distinction of being perhaps the only mountaineer who went without being roped to another in the last lap to the top, although en route he managed to catch up with Captain Ahluwalia and Phu Dorji and all the three stood together at the summit. Poor Harsh Bahuguna had been with a number of expeditions very high up Everest. He attempted it again with the unsuccessful international expedition of 1971 by the south-west face. He lost his life hanging on a rope connecting two snow spurs, presumably due to some negligence on the part of his colleagues. It was late in the evening and the inclement weather continued for several days before his dead body was retrieved.

I should mention the names of Messrs S.S. Khera and H.C. Sarin, both of the Indian Civil Service, who have supported all the Indian expeditions to Nepal and elsewhere. Shri Sarin is the President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation and continues to have an unfailing interest in Indian mountaineering.

While I have digressed into mountaineering in Nepal, I must mention the first successful pair to climb Everest, Edmund Hillary, later knighted, and Tenzing Norgay, both of Sir John Hunt's British expedition of 1953. Sir Edmund Hillary has made the Solukhumbu area his second home and he has engaged himself in building schools, hospitals and bridges for the Sherpas. After his successful attempt at Everest he married Lucie Hillary. Their two

daughters and son also got deeply involved with Sir Edmund's activities. Unfortunately, Lucie Hillary and her daughter, Belinda, were killed on 31 March 1975 when their STOLS aircraft crashed soon after take-off from Kathmandu. They were on their way to join Sir Edmund in Phaplu. Sir Edmund is obviously now a broken hearted man but he has not lost his devotion to the cause of the Sherpas.

Some of the others who have made Nepal and the Nepal Himalayas their home or permanent interest are J.O.M. Roberts, MC, popularly known as Jimmy Roberts, who had earlier been to the Ladakh Himalayas and to Nanga Parbat, etc., and Chris Bonington of South Annapurna fame who succeeded in the British expedition in the post-monsoon period of 1975 up the unusual south-west face of Everest. Two members of Bonington's team, Dougal Haston and Doug Scott, followed by Peter Boardman and Sherpa S. Pertemba reached the summit while B.B.C. cameraman, Mike Burke, lost his life. The Japanese are showing increasing interest in the mountains of Nepal, have started a modern hotel in the Everest area and are financing medical aid work in the region through contributions from voluntary agencies.

Other distinguished personalities connected with pioneering work in Nepal, who are almost institutions in themselves, are Doctor Bob Fleming and his son, Junior Fleming, both ornithologists. Senior Fleming first came to Tansen and the upper reaches of Kali Gandaki in Nepal with his wife, Bezel Fleming, in 1949. In 1954 they set up a hospital in a Rana palace in Kathmandu known as Shanta Bhawan, under the aegis of the United Mission to Nepal. Father or Marshal Moran is a contemporary of Dr Fleming in Nepal who had adopted Nepal as his home and is devoted to the cause of the Godawari School and similar activities. Tony Hagen did extensive touring on foot in Nepal and produced a fine pictorial book. Heinrich Harrer of *Seven Years in Tibet* fame spent a lot of time in Nepal. Boris Lissanevitch of the Yak and Yeti and of the erstwhile Royal Hotel, Kathmandu, is yet another personality long associated with Nepal and hoteliering. People like Michel Peissel have indulged in sporting activities like hovercrafting in the rapids of the Kali Gandaki gorge. Some have indulged in kayaking in torrential rivers like the Trisuli and Sunkosi and in the underground caverns of the Seti river in Pokhara. Jim Edwards, his warm-hearted wife from cold Iceland,

and their small clan of the Tiger Tops game sanctuary indulge in rafting over the rapids of the Trisuli, miraculously escaping drowning and still determined to repeat the performance. Another of this family is Elizabeth Hawley, *Times* and *Reuter* correspondent in Kathmandu for the past sixteen years; and H.M. Weatherall, the British Colombo Plan engineering adviser who has been in Nepal in various capacities for over thirty years and speaks Nepali like a Nepali, like his colleague, Dudley Spain. It is said that he walks ahead with a bulldozer following him to make a hill road. Weatherall's big caravan goes with him wherever he is. Z.M. Wiedner of HMG's survey department takes weekends off with his wife to drive to the upper reaches of the Sunkosi or Trisuli river, then floats down in his boat to join his wife down stream to go home by car, with his boat on top of it.

Amongst the Nepalese the young pioneers of the Royal Nepal Airlines and the King's communication flight are pilots like Captain R.P. Rana, A.S. Rana, Bobby Shah, and R.P. Shah, naming only the few I came to know. Captain R.P. Rana was awarded the De Havilland (Canadian) Gold Medal in 1971 for being the first to land a twin-engined Otter aircraft on the precarious STOLS of Lukla on the Everest trek close to Namche Bazar. Of late, Nepal has organized Nepalese mountaineering on a sounder footing under the aegis of the Nepal Mountaineering Association whose chairman is Kumar Khadga Bir Bikram Shah. This will enable the Nepalese, with the traditional Sherpas and young people of the middle and lower regions, to organize and undertake expeditions to the high summits by themselves. Dr Harka Bahadur Gurung, an able minister of state of the Nepal government, is an active member of the Nepal Mountaineering Association. He is a geographer and has been in many expeditions to the mountains of Nepal.

Lastly, Nepal abounds in beautiful peaks like the Machhapuchare (Fishtail Peak), which is the reigning deity of Pokhara and casts its reflection on the pretty Phewa lake at its foot. Machhapuchare, though only 22,958 feet high, has defied attempts to climb it. Then there are the peaks and flanking sentinels of Everest like Ama-dablam, Lhotse, Nuptse and Pumori. Nepal is the land of the picturesque Rara and Phewa lakes and of the holy and healthy pilgrim heights of Muktinath and Gosain Kund; of the holy Gauri Shankar, associated with the Hindu god and goddess, Shiva

and Parvati; of the rugged yet picturesque Langtang Himal and the relatively easily accessible beauties of Helembu; and of the one time unhelpful Manang Bhots, with their equally helpful women whom the Indian expeditionists of the successful 1961 expedition to Annapurna-III called "The Manang Bhot Memsahibs."

Nepal, with its holy temple of Pashupatinath in Kathmandu, is also the land of the deepest gorge in the world. The Kali Gandaki gorge is flanked by the Dhaulagiri (27,810 feet) and the Annapurnas (26,000 feet). It reminds one of the Rishi gorge, at the entrance to Nanda Devi (25,645 feet) in the Garhwal (India) Himalayas.

My service in the mountain regions of Pakistan, India and Tibet would not have been fruitful unless I had tasted, at least in some measure, of the best of the Nepal Himalayas as well. I started in the defiant spirit of Hazlitt's *Immortality of Youth* and now end my service career with appropriate humility and reverence for the high frontiers. In youth one revels in conquering high peaks; in mature and mellowed middle-age one should approach them in a spirit of humility and reverence. The German mountaineers to Nanga Parbat before World War II came to "conquer" it and almost all of them were defeated by the mighty peak. When one reaches the stage when one can no longer excel in physical achievements, it is only proper to relax and enjoy the natural beauty of the frontier heights. The famous mountaineer Frank S. Smythe says:

> "Youth demands a greater output of activity than middle age, but as the mountaineer gains in age and experience he finds that in order to enjoy himself it is no longer necessary for him to climb as many peaks as possible in a season of mountaineering. He learns that the joy of mountaineering lies as much in the contemplation of mountains as it does in the climbing of them. For this reason men do not tire of mountains. With experience their devotion becomes more reasoned, less dependent on a tumultuous outpouring of physical energy. They are content to apportion a period of their holiday to rest and contemplation and they find that their holiday loses nothing by this; instead it gains immeasurably. The pleasures of mountaineering are adjustable by age and experience, as the years progress they

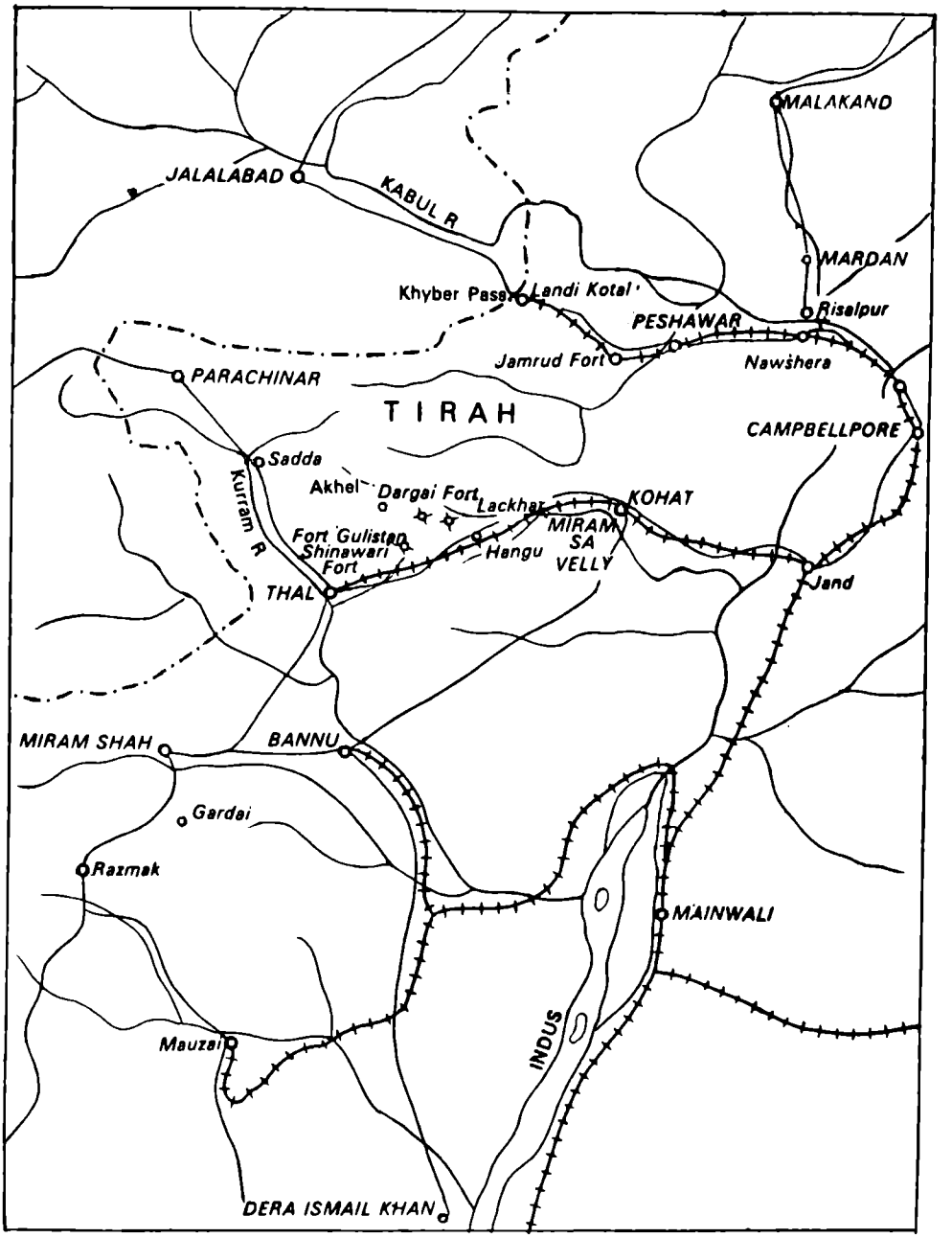
do not become greater or less but different. The first leaping flames are withdrawn but the fire burns steadfastly and in effect as hotly as before."

A stage comes in life when one must accept one's lessening capacitites. It is only proper that one reconciles one's self to the sobering effect of advancing age. I cannot resist quoting Dr Paul Brunton from *Reminiscences of a Hermit in the Himalayas*:

"The ultimate message of Himalaya is silence,
That silence that carries the breath of God in its hush,
If the world stands bewildered and confused in the face of its troubles,
It is partly because we have made a God of activity;
We have yet to learn how to be, as we have already learnt to do."

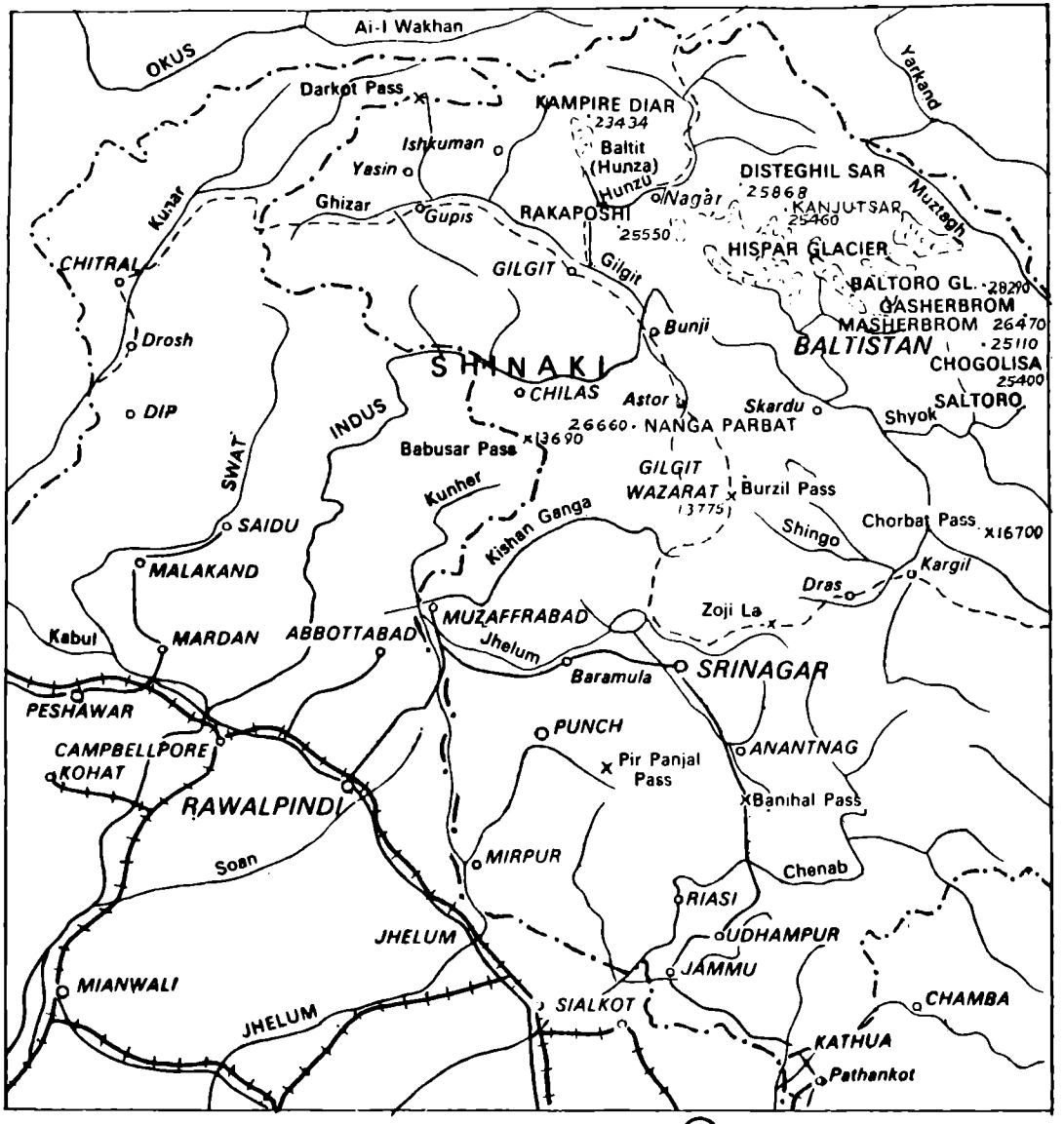
I have had the fullness of my life, in my own modest measure. It is high time that I took some rest to contemplate my past in the protective apron of the Himalayas which I now consider a proper place for my home. All the hectic activity of my sojourns in the frontier areas utltimately leads only to the belief narrated in the *Skanda Purana:*

"I could not tell thee of the
glories of the Himachal (Himalayas),
As the dew is dried up by the morning sun,
so are the sins of mankind by the sight of Himachal."



SKETCH MAP OF Waziristan Miramshah Kohat & Peshawar

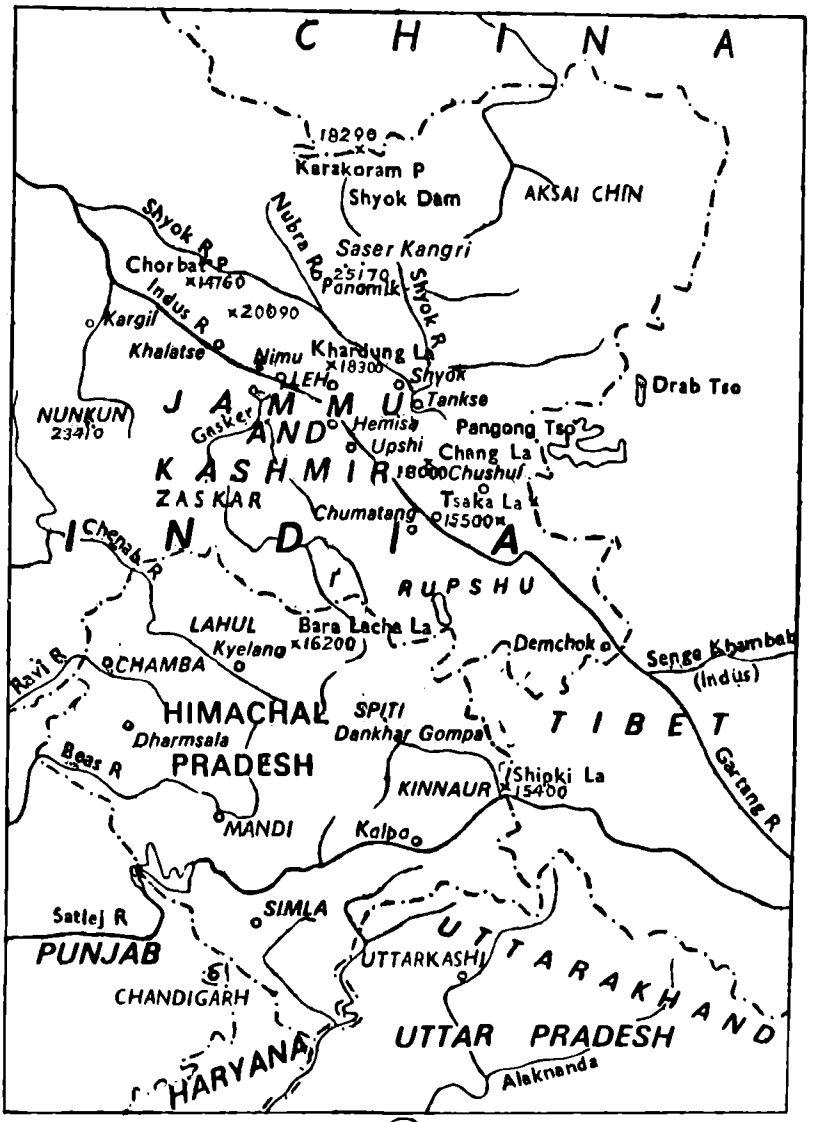
Scale 1 : 40 miles



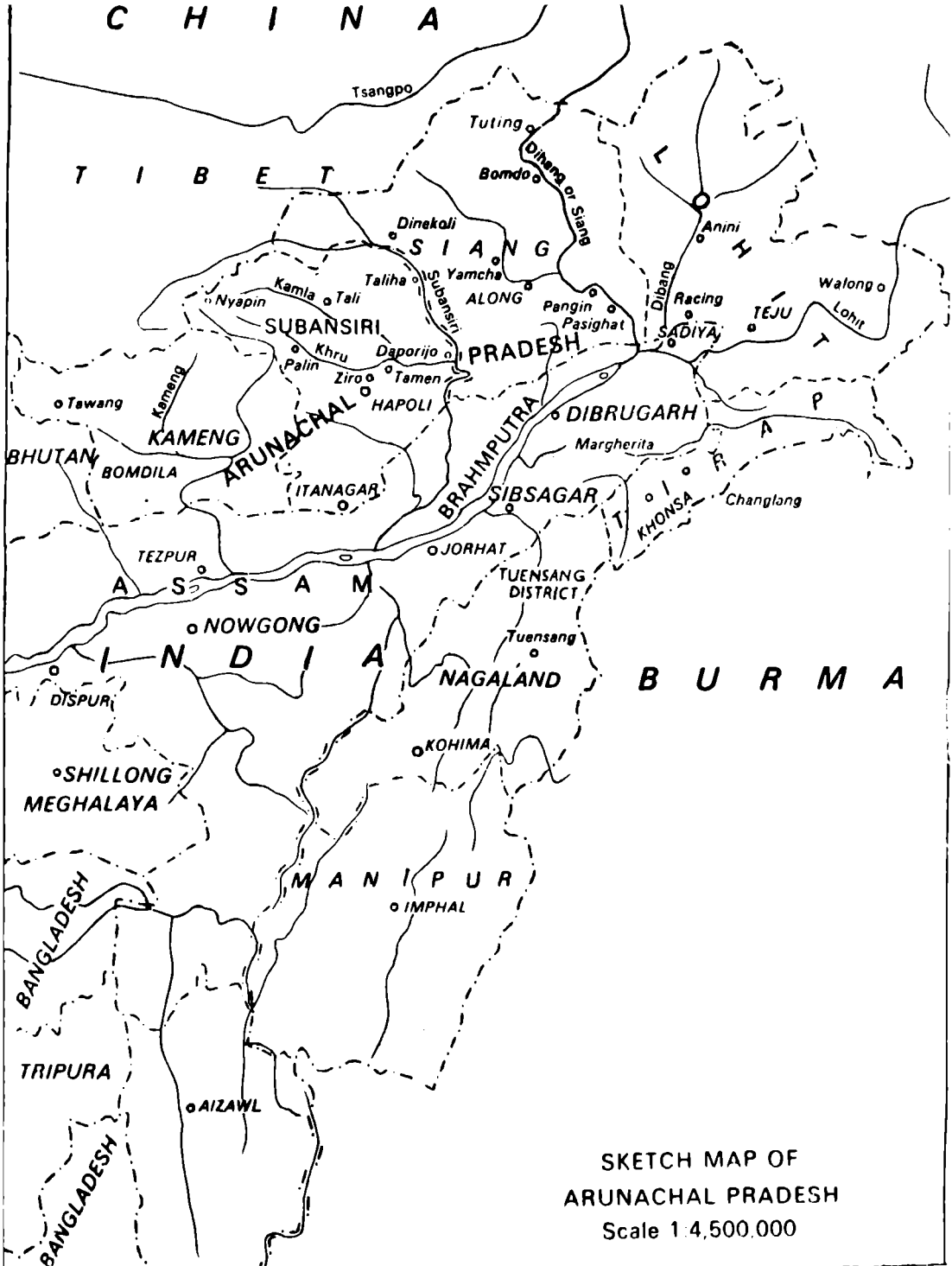
Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.

SKETCH MAP OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR AND SURROUNDING REGIONS

Scale 1:4,500,000



Based upon Survey of India map with the permission of the Surveyor General of India.



SKETCH MAP OF
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
Scale 1:4,500,000

The boundary of Meghalaya shown on this map is as interpreted from the the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 but has yet to be verified

INDEX