

SIKKIM A HIMALAYAN TRAGEDY

NARI RUSTOMJI



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SIKKIM

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To the memory of
PALDEN THONDUP NAMGYAL

A moment, and time will forget
Our failure and our name
But not the common thought
That linked us in a dream.

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N. K. R.

Christ's College
Cambridge

Preface

Let it be understood at the outset, this is not to be a history of the erstwhile kingdom of Sikkim any more than a biography of Palden Thondup Namgyal, its last ruler. It was in 1942 that we first met while attending a course for the training of India's élite administrative corps, the Indian Civil Service, at Dehra Dun in the foothills of the Himalayas. The trainees were mostly probationary officers, like myself, who were being put through a condensed course to prepare them for posting in the Provinces to which they had been allotted. A few Princes of what were then known as the "Native States" were also deputed to the course so that they should have the benefit of some briefing in the fundamentals of administration. They would also be afforded the opportunity of meeting and establishing contacts with the future administrators of independent India, which would be helpful when the time came for them to assume responsibility as rulers of their own States.

Also attending the course was the Sikkim Prince's cousin, Jigmie Palden Dorji, son of Raja Dorji, Prime Minister of Bhutan. I knew no more of Sikkim and Bhutan in those days than do most of the people of the world today. Sikkim and Bhutan were, for me, airy-fairy kingdoms in the remote fastnesses of the Tibetan frontier, of no consequence to the world at large. But I was fascinated by the two cousins and their endearing mannerisms. Their Mongoloid features set them apart from the rest of the trainees, and my own sense of "foreignness", after an absence from India of fifteen years for schooling in the U.K., drew me more closely to them than to

my other fellow cadets. They invited me to spend my vacations with them in their homes in Gangtok, Sikkim's capital, and in Kalimpong, heart of the wool trade between Tibet and India, and thus started my Himalayan pilgrimage.

Just forty years after my first meeting with him in Dehra Dun, the Sikkim Prince died in the cold and alien environs of a hospital in New York. With him died also the last hope of survival as an independent entity of the country that was his life-blood. Sikkim is now a part of India, a minuscule drop of 300,000 inhabitants in the ocean of India's teeming millions. The detailed history of its past may not, therefore, be of much lively interest save to the specialist or research scholar. The struggle until death of its ruler to preserve, against all odds, his country's identity is, however, a human story and a story worth the telling.

NARI RUSTOMJI

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From Prayer-wheel to Kukri

Sikkim, as I first knew it in 1942, was a Protectorate of India, bounded on the north by Tibet and the west and east by Nepal and Bhutan. To the south lay the land of the protecting power. About 3,000 square miles in area, Sikkim is a mountainous country, dominated by the great snow-ranges of Kanchenjunga. Amidst their towering pinnacles lie hidden, according to Sikkimese belief, the most sacred treasures of the land, Sikkim's prosperity and destiny, watched over eternally by the legendary Snow-Lion of emerald-green mane. Amongst the most important festivals of Sikkim is the worship of the snow-ranges of Kanchenjunga, a ritual dance attended by villagers from the remotest corners of the country to do honour to the mountain as symbolising the abode of their protecting deity. I remember well the consternation with which the Prince received news in 1954 of Sir Charles Evans's plans to climb the sacred peak. This would be a sacrilege that would bring certain ruin to the Palace and people of Sikkim. I was Prime Minister of Sikkim at the time and my services were enlisted to evolve a compromise whereby the expedition would proceed only as far as would cause no offence to the country's protecting deity. The spirit of the agreement with Sir Charles was not, in the Prince's view, strictly honoured, and his feelings were not assuaged by the newspaper headlines that soon after appeared announcing the "conquest of Kanchenjunga". Whether or not Sikkim's protecting deities were angered by this trespass upon their sacred mountain may be a matter for argument. But it is no matter of argument that in the years that followed, the Prince was afflicted by tragedy after tragedy in

unending sequence – the loss of his wife, two of his sisters, his eldest son, and finally, the extinction of his kingdom. There could not have been a more cruel revenge.

Sikkim, in the days of the British raj, was regarded as the tourist's paradise. The Himalayan hill-stations of Mussouri, Simla, Nainital were for the more conventional holidaymaker. They were systematically geared with all the apparatus of popular holiday resorts of the day, such as dance-halls, skating-rinks, golf-courses and cinemas. Sikkim, on the other hand, was for the chosen few who were interested in nature or in Tibetan Buddhism. For there is no other country that offers such an abundance and variety of flora and fauna. In the higher ranges of the mountains are to be found the blue poppy and the rarest of *primulae*. In the lower ranges are secreted amidst the deep forests orchids of every hue, shape, size and family. The shy panda and the spectacularly-painted tragopan also inhabit this treasure-house of wild-life with its countless tribes of butterflies and birds. And above all, there is peace, quiet and enchantment amidst the lofty snow-ranges that turn away the mind from the mundane world to regions of philosophic contemplation.

While it had been the policy of the British to keep Sikkim within their own orbit of influence, the Chinese were generally too pre-occupied with problems nearer home to pay much attention to the affairs of what they regarded as a minor principality on their remote and extreme frontiers. It was much later, after the revolution and with the birth of the new China, that the north-east of India attracted notice as a live frontier. Until then, events took their leisurely course, and, save for the interest of botanists and students of Buddhism, Sikkim was virtually unknown to the outside world. This would explain to some extent the apathy with which the international community viewed the developments that led to its extinction as an independent entity.

The original inhabitants of Sikkim were a mild-mannered, gentle tribe, popularly known as Lepchas. They were mostly animists, having affinities with some of the tribes on India's

north-eastern borders with Tibet. They were few in number and the vast empty spaces and green valleys of their land attracted Tibetan immigrants from the north seeking comparative warmth from their bare and inhospitable mountain plateau. Sikkim is rich in forests and the valleys in the south are favourable for the cultivation of rice, whence the traditional name of Den-Jong or "Valley of rice". The Tibetans, who started immigrating into Sikkim from about the thirteenth century, became gradually amalgamated and practically assimilated in course of time with the indigenous Lepcha inhabitants. The Lepchas were attracted by the Buddhist faith of the Tibetan settlers and adopted many of their social practices. As the immigrants were few and land plentiful, the Lepchas had no apprehension of being dispossessed. The immigrants were made to feel welcome in Sikkim and reciprocated by respecting it as their home. There was free intermarriage between Lepchas and Tibetans and a minimum of cultural clash. The Tibetan language underwent a natural evolution in its new environment, but retained its essential, basic structure. The Lepchas soon became conversant with it and found its knowledge helpful for trade and other purposes, such as the reading of the Buddhist scriptures.

It was during the middle of the seventeenth century that the Namgyal dynasty was first established in Sikkim. The early rulers were Tibetan by stock, but the assimilation between Lepchas and the early Tibetan immigrants had proceeded so harmoniously that the former had no feeling of being dominated by a "foreign" ruler. The ruler's authority was enhanced by virtue of his being regarded as the embodiment of divinity. His traditional title was "Chogyal" or "King who rules according to the Divine Law". The Lepchas, a simple but highly superstitious race, became eventually even more fervent in their religious devotions than their mentors. The ruler was held by his subjects to be the repository of supernatural powers. He controlled the elements and his incantations could induce – or ward off – rain, sunshine or hail. In a land where

heavy hail-storms might at one stroke destroy an entire season's crops, the power to avert hail was of paramount value, and through his being possessed of this faculty alone, if for no other reason, the ruler was held in the highest awe and veneration.

Credulity in supernatural powers was of course far from the original essence of Buddhism as preached by its founder. But Buddhism had already passed through a radical transformation well before it impinged on Tibet. While the Emperor Ashoka had, in the third century B.C., made Buddhism the predominant religion in India, in Buddhism itself two leading schools had arisen, the Mahayana, or Greater Vehicle, and the Hinayana, or Lesser Vehicle. The Hinayana clung more closely to the older teachings of the Lord Buddha, while the Mahayana introduced deities, superhuman beings, ritual and magic practices. Sung-Yun, Chinese Ambassador to the king of Gandhara in A.D. 520, and the pilgrim-traveller, Fahsien, had found that Buddhism in Swat, the hill country lying between Afghanistan and Kashmir and reputed homeland of the Indian evangelist, Padma Sambhava,¹ had, by the time of their visit, already been given over to what they regarded as dubious tantric and magic practices. The pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet was akin to the great assemblage of Shamanistic beliefs and practices and comprised an amalgam of magical rites and superstitions practised by specialist priests, known as Bon. When, in the eighth century, Padma Sambhava was invited by the Tibetan King, Tri-Song De-tsen, to popularise Buddhism in Tibet, he was confronted with the vested interest of the local priesthead. Unless the new faith could be proved superior in its control of the supernatural, there was little chance of its acceptance by a people who would decide upon their preference on the basis of the virtuosity of the respective proponents in the performance of miracles. Padma Sambhava, having as he did his origins in Swat, was a tantric expert and magician of no mean power and more than

¹"Lotus born", known in Tibetan regions as *Gura Rimpoche*, or Precious Teacher.

equal, therefore, to his rivals in the Bon priesthood.

The happy co-existence of Lepchas with the early Tibetan immigrants illustrates that there can be a harmonious intermingling of divergent cultures without the tensions, suspicions, apprehensions and other ill-effects ordinarily attendant upon such intermingling. The evangelist, Padma Sambhava's presentation of Buddhism to the Tibetans in a modified dressing also points a significant lesson. The Christian missionary in India's north-eastern borderlands was somewhat rigid and dogmatic in the propagating of his faith. He was less prepared to make concessions to local beliefs and superstitions, with the result that a wide gap was created between converts and non-converts and serious tensions arose between Christians and others who held to their traditional beliefs and rituals. The assimilation of Tibetans and Lepchas was not a one-sided operation. The Tibetan immigrant was accepted by the Lepchas, as he posed no threat to the indigenous community. The immigrants entertained no territorial ambitions nor were they imbued with any sense of mission to "uplift the backward Lepcha". Lepchas and Tibetans lived as equal partners and it was by choice that the Lepchas accepted the Buddhist faith and became conversant with the Tibetan language.

There is no doubt that the Tibetan immigrants were, during the time of their original entry into Sikkim, at a higher level of cultural and material development than the indigenous Lepchas. The Buddhist religion, even in its adulterated form, had had a civilising effect upon the Tibetans over the course of five centuries. Numerous monasteries had been established providing facilities for various branches of learning, including medicine, mathematics and astronomy. The early Tibetan kings, while being warriors with territorial ambitions, had also been patrons of the arts. They had despatched scholars to the widely-famed centres of learning in India to seek guidance in devising a script for the Tibetan language. Learned treatises in Pali and Sanskrit were imported into Tibet for translation, study and research. The Tibetans were also inveterate

travellers, who thought nothing of embarking upon a journey of several months for trade or pilgrimage. By the time of their immigration into Sikkim in the thirteenth century, the Tibetans had moved ahead in manifold directions and could by no means be termed as a "primitive" people. They were advanced in culture and had acquired a wide knowledge and experience of the ways of the world.

The Lepchas, on the other hand, were still children of the caves and forests. Even when I moved amongst them as recently as thirty years back¹ in their original heartland of Jongu in northern Sikkim, they were simple, childlike folk who had seen and known nothing of the outside world. All movement was by foot, and even if horses or mules could have been made available, they would have been of no use to me in the absence of even the most rudimentary bridle-tracks. It was possible for me to hazard the risks of travel, as I had been an enthusiastic gymnast in younger days and was able to keep my balance on slopes where the only foothold might be merely a loose, decaying bamboo stump. There were not many outsiders who cared to tour in the land of the Lepchas and the villagers lived in an isolation that, if not splendid, was practically total. It is not, therefore, surprising that, until recent years, there were still in existence Lepcha settlements whose way of life was not very different from the time of the first Tibetan immigration. There have indeed been Lepchas who have spread out from their original habitat and moved southwards towards the plains in India. A number have fallen under the influence of missionaries and been converted to Christianity. But this has not been the uniform pattern and those who have preferred to adhere to their old ways have been able to maintain to this day their traditional institutions and carry on their lives according to the usages of their forefathers.

The main reason for the harmonious relations subsisting between the Lepchas and the Tibetan immigrants was that the latter did not presume to impose their culture upon their

¹Between 1954 and 1959.

Lepcha hosts. It may have been that many of the early immigrants were Buddhist monks (lamas), whose humble life-style appealed to the modest, nature-loving Lepcha. Or it may be that the happy, carefree temperament of the Tibetans was in tune with the Lepcha disposition of living for the day without overmuch concern for the future. At all events, there was an absence of cultural arrogance on the part of the immigrants that found its happy fulfilment in the natural and spontaneous fusion of the two cultures. Tibetan institutions and modes found their way into Sikkim, but it was by choice and not by imposition. And, most important of all, the Lepchas never had any apprehension that the immigrants would dispossess them of their land. Save in the case of the lamas of the old Red Sect of Buddhism, who entered much later in the fifteenth century under pressure from the new yellow sect founded by the great reformer, Tsongkapa, there was, in general, no reason for Tibetans to leave their country and emigrate to Sikkim. There was no shortage of land in Tibet and they would normally have preferred to remain in the cultural environment of their own country. It was one thing to set out on pilgrimage to the holy places of Sikkim and India sanctified through their association with the revered Padma Sambhava. It was quite another to divorce themselves permanently from their homes and start life afresh in a sparsely inhabited land where they had no deep roots or associations. Few Tibetans, therefore, were tempted to migrate to Sikkim, and as they practised polyandry, the size of their families was limited. They posed no threat to the Lepchas, cultural or territorial, but were on the contrary welcomed by them as torch-bearers of the Buddhist faith.

Sikkim was subjected to a very different kind of immigration at a later period of her history which altered the entire character of the country. The immigration of Nepalese into Sikkim since the last century has attracted more attention than the earlier Tibetan infiltration, partly because it took place in the more recent years of recorded history but more particularly because of its far-reaching repercussions. The earlier Tibetan immigration, however, though limited in extent, merits

attention for the much needed lessons it points in the art of living together. A comparative study of the Tibetan and Nepalese immigrations brings to light the salient factors that are of such significance in cultural contacts between peoples of different ethnic origin.

The practice of polyandry was, in earlier times, widely prevalent in Tibet. While explanations for the practice are manifold, polyandry is a logical sequence in a country of vast spaces and slow moving communications where the menfolk were required by their occupation to be absent from their homes for long periods at a stretch. Every year, during the winter months, the Tibetan herdsman took his yaks for pasture to the warmer valley regions where vegetation was fresh and more abundant. The most convenient arrangement for him was to leave his wife and children in the charge of his brothers during his prolonged absence. The Tibetans are realist enough to recognise that, apart from her need for household assistance, a woman has her natural physical urges and that it is wiser to provide for their release within the family circle of her brothers-in-law than subject her to strains that might lead her to seek for their satisfaction elsewhere.

The Nepalese on the other hand are a polygamous race and it is not unusual for a man to marry four or five wives. There is indeed an accepted nomenclature for each wife according to her ranking in the matrimonial hierarchy, the first wife being designated as *jethi* (Nepalese for 'eldest') and the last as *kanchi* (Nepalese for youngest). With such a multiplicity of wives, there is a corresponding multiplicity of children. The population can thus never be contained within its original territorial limits and there is a continuous overflow into adjoining areas or wherever else land can be found. Some of the most valuable forests of the Himalayan regions have been destroyed beyond redemption by Nepalese in their desperate need to bring additional land under cultivation to support their ever-increasing progeny.

The waves of Nepalese immigration into Sikkim became perceptible from as early as the last century, but caused little

anxiety as long as land was plentiful and the sparse indigenous population did not feel deprived or threatened. The flow came mainly from the Darjeeling district of India to the south of Sikkim and from the eastern regions of Nepal contiguous to Sikkim's western frontier. Darjeeling, originally part of Sikkim, had been ceded to the British in 1835 for the establishing of a sanatorium, since when it had become a refuge for Nepal's surplus population. The eastern regions of Nepal, which also originally formed part of Sikkim but were later taken over by Nepal after their wars with Sikkim, comprised tribal groups which were distinct in culture and language from the Rajputs, the forerunners of the present ruling dynasty of Nepal.

Unlike the Tibetans, the Nepalese were hungry for land, and, unlike the Tibetans again, they came in numbers and, being polygamous, quickly multiplied. It was not long before they started encroaching upon the forests of Sikkim and cutting down valuable timber. While there had not been much opposition in Sikkim to immigrants coming in from Tibet, there was a powerful body of opinion that foresaw the dangers of allowing unrestricted entry of Nepalese into the country. The ruling family of Sikkim was of Tibetan origin, with roots in Kham in eastern Tibet. One of the early chiefs of this family, Khye-Bumsa¹ had, in the thirteenth century, settled in the Chumbi valley on the Sikkim-Tibet border, from where he came into contact and established ties of friendship with the Lepcha chief Thekongtek. The first ruler to be consecrated (in 1642) as King of Sikkim was Phuntsog Namgyal, the consecration ceremony having been performed by three Lamas who had been associated with the consolidating of Buddhism as the established religion of the country. The subsequent rulers of the Namgyal dynasty continued to maintain close relationship with Tibet, spending the summer months in the more equable climate of the Chumbi valley, which, historically, formed part of Sikkim, but was subsequently incorporated into Tibet. The

¹ Meaning "possessed of the strength of a hundred thousand men."

princes and princesses of the dynasty generally contracted marriage alliances with the aristocratic families of Lhasa, with the result that Tibetan culture gained increasing influence in the country, modifying the ways and modes of the original indigenous Lepchas. The style of the Court became progressively Tibetan, although on a more modest scale, and the Nepalese influx was apprehended as an intrusion that might endanger and disrupt the established order.

There were some amongst the Sikkimese, on the other hand, who favoured the settlement of Nepalese. Sikkim was an underpopulated country of only about 30,000 inhabitants in the last century and manpower was needed for development of its resources as also for the construction of roads and portering of goods. The Nepalese were a tough, virile and industrious people who would quickly bring the vast, empty waste-lands under cultivation and so contribute to raising the revenues of the country. There were also opportunities open to unscrupulous Sikkimese landlords to surreptitiously settle land with Nepalese for purposes of purely private gain. Two parties thus emerged in the politics of nineteenth century Sikkim, one pro-Nepalese and the other pro-Tibetan.

While it would be an overstatement to hold that the British deliberately and actively engineered the Nepalese immigration into Sikkim, there is no doubt that, in the earlier years, and particularly so under the stewardship of Claude White, the first Political Officer resident in Sikkim, they encouraged and happily connived at it. Underlying British policy was the calculation – and expectation – that “the influx of these hereditary enemies of Tibet (i.e., the Nepalese) would be the surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence.¹ The Nepalese were mostly Hindus and their language was Sanskrit-based. Their culture and way of life had closer affinity with India than with Tibet, and they made no attempt to assimilate themselves with the inhabitants of their host country. It was assumed by the British that settlement of a large bulk of an

¹See Gazetteer of Sikkim (Oriental Publications, 1898) p. xxi.

essentially Hindu-orientated population in Sikkim would preclude the risk of its looking northwards to Tibet for direction and support.

The policy of the British was to wean away the ruler from Tibetan influence so as to bring him more securely under their own control, and it was to this end that they gave support to the pro-Nepalese lobby. They disapproved of the ruler's subservience to the Tibetan authorities and to the Chinese Amban (representative) in Lhasa, and, on his refusal to accommodate their wishes, did not hesitate to place him and his consort under detention in India (from 1892 to 1896) and take over the administration of the country. It was partly through the pressure of the British, who were insisting that the Sikkim ruler should break connection with Tibet and not reside in the Chumbi valley, that, on the death of Sir Thutob Namgyal in 1914, the succession passed not to his eldest son by his first wife, who was staying at the time in the Chumbi valley and had evidenced unwillingness to return to Gangtok, but to the younger son, Sidkeong Tulku,¹ who had been groomed for the throne by the British in the expectation that he might be more amenable to their guidance. Sidkeong Tulku, however, was also a man with a mind of his own. Although brought up under monastic discipline as a reincarnate of a high lama in Tibet, he later went up for studies to Oxford, where he remained in residence for two years. He was subsequently conducted, under British auspices, on a world tour, during which he availed of opportunities of meeting a wide variety of people with a view to yet further enlarging his horizons. His was, however, a brief reign and he died within less than a year of his succession under what appeared to be somewhat suspicious circumstances. It may be that the strongly entrenched vested interests in Sikkim disfavoured the accession of a ruler who, under the influence of new ideas picked up in foreign lands, might subvert the existing order. The Sikkimese suspicion was, on the contrary, that the British

¹Tulku, i.e., a high reincarnate lama.

were themselves having second thoughts whether the ruler they had so sedulously groomed would remain as amenable to their control as they had hoped.

Whatever may have been the circumstances of Sidkeong Tulku's death, in his successor, Tashi Namgyal, the British could safely count on a ruler who would raise no obstacle to their designs and they did not hesitate to restore to him the powers that had been withdrawn from the ruler during the reign of his father. Tashi Namgyal was Thutob's son by his second consort, a woman of exceptional ability and strength of mind from one of the most highly respected families of Lhasa. It is relevant to note the significant role played by the consorts of the ruler in the politics of Sikkim. Thutob's wife was no cypher, any more than was the wife of his son, Tashi Namgyal. Sir Thutob suffered from a curious morbidity and feeling of embarrassment arising, it seems, from the misfortune of his having been born with an ugly hare-lip. His wife, however, more than compensated for his diffidence, and had no hesitation, if so inclined, in brazenly upbraiding the British representative in Gangtok for the supposed injustices and humiliations inflicted upon Sikkim's royal house.

Sir Tashi Namgyal was a gentle, courteous ruler who wished well for the whole world. He had been schooled first in Gangtok and later in Mayo College in Ajmer, an institution especially founded for the education of Indian Princes. He had been brought up to entertain a respect amounting almost to awe for the British authorities, and I have known Sir Tashi to stand nervously at his Palace door-step, with eyes fixed at his watch, to ensure that he should not be a second late in receiving the Political Officer on arrival for a tea-party. Sir Tashi's principal interest was painting. He was a self-taught artist of the modern, western school and delighted in the portraying of the majestic snow-ranges of his mountain kingdom. He enjoyed showing his paintings to visitors, but only very rarely would he condescend to part with them. I considered it a very special honour therefore when once, early in the morning on my birthday, there was a tap on my bed-room door and Sir Tashi's

emissary entered carrying in Sir Tashi's latest creation as my first birthday gift.

Apart from painting, Sir Tashi spent much of his time in religious meditation. He left the administration of his country largely in the hands of his counsellors, rarely interfering with their recommendations. He was punctiliously conscientious, however, in his attendance at State functions, and despite his apparent unconcern over matters affecting the administration, was revered and loved by his people as a father-figure who would not wish harm to the slightest creature.

Sir Tashi married into the powerful and distinguished Rakashar family of Lhasa. His wife, Kunzang Dechen, was a strong-willed woman, much interested in religion and the administration of the monasteries. She bore him six children, three boys and three girls. Differences arose, however, between husband and wife on the birth of her seventh child and they decided they should live apart. A palace was built for the Maharani a few miles outside Gangtok, where she lived with her youngest daughter¹, maintaining a separate establishment from her husband.

Sir Tashi's sister, Chuni Wangmo, married Raja Dorji, Bhutan's Prime Minister, despite strong opposition from the Sikkim aristocracy, who felt this was a departure from past precedent and that it would have been more fitting for her, as a Princess of the royal blood, to marry into one of the great families of Lhasa. Rani Chuni's son, Jigmie Dorji, eventually succeeded his father as Prime Minister, while her daughter married Bhutan's Crown Prince. She never quite forgave the Sikkimese for opposing her marriage and looking down upon the alliance as derogatory to the prestige of Sikkim.

Britain's relations with Sikkim were transacted from 1889 onwards through a Political Officer stationed at Sikkim's capital, Gangtok. Prior to that date, there had been endless disputes between the Sikkim and the British Indian authorities over the extradition of criminals from the adjacent Indian

¹Lhazila, deeply interested in religious ritual and her mother's main support in organising the elaborate ceremonial of prayers on important occasions of state.

districts who sought refuge from justice in Sikkim. The Sikkimese had also been habituated to making forays into India for kidnapping villagers to take back to Sikkim as slaves. These were, however, relatively minor issues that did not rouse the Imperial Lion to show his paw. It was when, in 1849, the Sikkim authorities heedlessly arrested Dr. Campbell, Superintendent of the Darjeeling district, while he was accompanying the renowned botanist, Dr. Hooker, on a tour in Sikkim, that the British decided the time had come to take a firmer stand. Sikkim territory along the foothills bordering India was seized and an army of occupation despatched to Sikkim's then capital at Tumlong. A Treaty was eventually signed in 1861 underlining Sikkim's subservience to the British authorities.

Apart from disputes with the British regarding restitution of slaves and extradition of criminals, Sikkim had also become embroiled from time to time in wars with her neighbours Nepal and Bhutan. She thus lost much of her territory not only to India, but also to the two kingdoms on her western and eastern borders. Sikkim was, however, assisted, through British intervention, in regaining much of her territory lost to Nepal and Bhutan. The menace of Nepalese aggression southwards into India had led to the Anglo-Gurkha war of 1814-1816, in which the British had sought the alliance of the Sikkimese in the common cause of stemming Nepalese expansion. Although the Sikkimese contribution to the war-effort was only nominal, the British provided, by the Treaty of Segouly, concluded after the Nepalese defeat, that the Nepalese should "never molest or disturb the Raja of Sikkim in possession of his territories" and should agree "if any differences arise between the State of Nepal and the Raja of Sikkim, that such differences shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government." As a consequence of this Treaty, the British restored to Sikkim part of its territories that had earlier been taken by Nepal. The Chinese had also intervened, as early as in 1792, to protect Tibet from Nepalese aggression and, after defeat of the Nepalese, secured the restitution to Sikkim of some territories

previously lost to Nepal.

The turning point in Sikkim's history was the appointment by the British of a resident officer in Gangtok. Claude White, the first Political Officer, was an officer of abundant energy and ability. An engineer by training, he seemed motivated to prove that he was as competent as any professional of the political service to bring Sikkim firmly under heel. He gave full support to the pro-Nepalese party and actively encouraged the settlement of immigrants, in pursuance of the policy of replacing the Buddhist prayer-wheel, the symbol of Sikkim's population of Tibetan stock, with the *kukri* (dagger), the badge of the martial Hindu-orientated Gurkha. Claude White laid solid foundations and it was not long before Sikkim's original population of Lepcha and Tibetan stock found itself utterly submerged under the incoming flood of Nepalese immigrants.

Although Claude White's successors took a more restrained and balanced view over the question of Nepalese immigration, the processes he had set into motion could not easily be stayed and the Nepalese influx continued unabated. The ruler, Sir Tashi, was too tolerant by temperament to place any restriction on Nepalese settlement, even if it had ever occurred to him that such restriction was necessary. Sir Tashi saw the Nepalese as the Protecting Power's problem, not his own, an attitude that his son also to some extent inherited. It had been the Protecting Power that had been responsible for bringing them into Sikkim in the first place and it was their responsibility therefore to keep them under control. It could never occur to either of them that the Protecting Power would ever shed itself of this responsibility, and it was this deep dependance on the Protecting Power as an unfailing anchor that seemed to inhibit the ruler from acquiring the true independence of judgement which should have come with maturity. When in trouble, his instinct was to turn to Delhi for refuge, even when such troubles were partly of Delhi's contriving. For full thirty years from Sir Tashi's accession in 1914 until 1944, when his son took over the reins as his principal adviser, the Nepalese were afforded every

opportunity to get themselves firmly entrenched in the country and established as the majority party.

The course of Sikkim's subsequent history, including its merger with India and extinction as an independent entity, stems directly from Claude White's initiative in formulating the British stance *vis-à-vis* the settlement of Nepalese in Sikkim. By 1947, the year of the transfer of power to India, the proportion of Nepalese in Sikkim had already swollen to two thirds of the population and it was only a matter of time before the small residue of Lepchas and Bhutias¹ would also be absorbed in the continuing Nepalese flood. Unlike the earlier Tibetan immigrants, the Nepalese made no attempt to assimilate themselves with the inhabitants of their host country. Due partly to the rigidities of the Hindu caste system, they could not inter-marry freely with the Lepchas and Bhutias, who did not fall within any of the traditional caste-grades. Few Nepalese cared to learn the languages of the land (Lepcha and Sikkimese), and, as they eventually emerged as the majority community, they took it for granted that Nepalese should, by right, be recognised as the official language of the country. Such was the weight of Nepalese influence that, whether officially recognised or not, the Nepalese language came in practice to be accepted as the *lingua franca* of Sikkim, save in the predominantly Lepcha and Sikkimese speaking areas in the northernmost tracts adjoining the Tibetan frontier.

While, however, the Nepalese had outnumbered the original population to the extent of over two thirds and Nepalese culture was, as a consequence, swiftly superseding the Lepcha-Bhutia culture of former times, political power remained still vested in the ruler and his principal advisers, who were mainly from the traditional Bhutia-Lepcha families. Most of the key posts in the Government were held by Bhutia-Lepcha officers and all State ceremonial was conducted in traditional Bhutia-Lepcha style. The numerous Buddhist monasteries

¹ Bhutias are to be understood as people of Tibetan stock who emigrated from Tibet to settle outside their original country. Not to be confused with Bhutanese, the inhabitants of Bhutan.

throughout the country received state aid annually for their maintenance, while the two national events of the year, the New Year Dance-Festival and the Worship of the Snow-Ranges of Kanchenjunga, were also Buddhist festivals subsidised from the coffers of the State. The Nepalese also felt a sense of grievance that, whereas their language was virtually the *lingua franca* of the country, it was not being accorded official recognition.

A feeling was growing amongst a section of the Nepalese population that, although they were the majority community, they were being treated as second-class citizens and would never be in a position to aspire to the highest offices of state under the existing ruling dynasty. With the imminence of India's independence and the agitations being fomented by the several Congress parties in the 600 odd Princely States of India, they saw an opportunity for promoting their own interests. If, in the name of democracy, they could replace the monarchy with a set-up that reflected more nearly the Nepalese majority, Sikkim could be transformed into a country in which the main voice of the government would be pronouncedly Nepalese.

The Miracle of Reprieve

The Prince invited me to spend a holiday with him in Sikkim during the summer vacation of our administrative training course, and, if for no other reason than to get away from the oppressive pre-monsoon heat of the Indian plains, I gladly accepted. Apart again from the thrill of visiting a Himalayan kingdom as a guest of royalty, I had grown to become fond of the young Prince and he, too, seemed to feel a sense of security and fulfilment in our friendship.

We lived quietly in the Palace, listening to music, reading, writing letters and, of course, talking to each other of the events of our so very different lives. He was eager to know about Cambridge, where he himself would have later proceeded for studies had it not been for the tragic death of his elder brother,¹ which necessitated his returning to Sikkim, as next in the succession, to assist his father in the administration of his country. I was no less interested to hear him talk of his early years as a lama student in a monastery in Tibet. As the reincarnation of his late uncle, Maharaja Sidkeong Tulku,² he was known in his country as Gyese Rimpoche, the Prince who is a Precious Jewel, and held in the highest esteem. He was also recognised as the spiritual head of two of the most revered of Sikkim's monasteries, Phodang and Rumtek, and was for some time schooled for the monkhood by his uncle, Lhatsum Rimpoche, widely respected as a high incarnate lama. His

¹His brother had joined the R.A.F. and was killed in a flying accident.

²See page 11.

had been an unusual upbringing. For although he had been recognised from childhood as a high reincarnation, it was realised that, even in the remotenesses of Sikkim, times were changing, and that it would be of advantage for him to have the benefit also of conventional western style education. Apart, therefore, from his monastic training in Tibet and Sikkim, he was sent at the age of six to St. Joseph's Convent in Kalimpong just across the Indo-Sikkim border and thereafter to St. Joseph's in Darjeeling and Bishop Cotton School in Simla.

The Indian Resident in Sikkim (designated as Political Officer) was Sir Basil Gould, who was an important influence in shaping the Prince's early foundations. Sir Basil took pains to see that the young princes and princesses should be well equipped to feel at home in western-style society as well as in their own, and took a personal interest in their upbringing. An English governess was engaged to supervise the children in the palace and they were invited frequently to the Residency so that they should grow out of any feeling of awkwardness or embarrassment in meeting people of a different culture. Sir Basil had himself lost his wife in a serious earthquake¹ at Quetta, where he had been serving as Political Agent, and no doubt found consolation in bringing up the young princes and princesses as members of his own family.

It was this strong western-style background of his upbringing that was partly responsible for the Prince feeling himself drawn towards me when I returned fresh from Cambridge after an unbroken absence from India of over fifteen years. He had a passionate craving to learn more of the west, its literature, art and music, and found in me an only too willing guide. For his part, he felt pride in taking me around his kingdom, to the lovely forests of north Sikkim and to the Nathu La Pass, the gate-way into Tibet. We lived and moved very simply, with none of the pomp and fanfare of the "democratic" leaders of today. We slept in bamboo shacks

¹In 1933.

erected within minutes of our arrival at our halting-place and ate the homely fare provided by the villagers amongst whom we happened to be travelling. The Prince was only nineteen years old, but it soon became evident to me that, despite his youth, he felt a deep sense of responsibility for the welfare of his people and that they in turn were already looking up to him for guidance.

On conclusion of the administrative course in Dehra Dun, we went our separate ways, the Prince back to Sikkim and myself to Sylhet¹ where I had been posted as Assistant Commissioner. We however corresponded with each other regularly, and his letters shed a revealing light on his pattern of life as an earnest young administrator. The following extracts from a letter sent to me soon after he had settled down to his work is evidence of his concern, even as a young man of nineteen, in the conscientious discharge of his state responsibilities. While his spelling and punctuation were somewhat erratic in those youthful days, I have not thought fit to make corrections, as they add a certain flavour to his style. It has also to be borne in mind that there was continual dislocation in his early education. He was moved from Sikkim as a child to Tibet and then successively to Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Simla and Dehra Dun. The curriculum followed while he was under training as a Buddhist monk was utterly at variance with that of the Western-style institutions to which he was later admitted and the lack of continuity in his educational upbringing is reflected both in the style and content of his letters. He was fully aware of his limitations and, as he himself so often notes, laid no claims to literary skill.

The Palace, Gangtok

4-2-1943

My Dear Rusty,²

Thanks a million for your letter, it was indeed welcome inspite of the la-di-da.

¹Then in Assam (in undivided India) and now in Bangladesh.

²The name by which I was called in my school days.

Yes you might be able to reply by return post but I just can't as the return post leaves in the morning at 10.30 a.m. and the incoming post comes only at about 6 p.m. and I come back from office absolutely fagged out. I have to attend to files dealing with forest, agriculture, police, education, keep in touch with the Revenue people and be not only the appeal court judge but also attend to Reviews and Re-reviews. My work is at present tremendous because I have got about two years appeal, Reviews and Re-reviews cases. Don't ask me, I don't know why these cases were left pending for so long, the man concerned was sacked about 6 months ago and it is no good calling for an explanation from his subordinates. . . .

So you have added about 4 or 5 more major works to your record collection and listen to them very often, do you? Well, blast me I thought all you people were overworked. Well, well well, no I get no time. I only heard the end of the 7th Beethoven sym from Berlin and that was before I really got started on my work. . . .

Our New Year is tomorrow and there is hardly any stir as we have a small affair here, it is only in Tibet that there is practically a rebellion. The only bother is we have to sit for about three hours and receive scarves.¹

Well there ain't no more news, so I shall end with New Year's greeting and love.

Yours very sincerely,
Thondup

P.S.: Please excuse this badly and mistake ridden letter, we all aren't Doctors of English.

The following month, he wrote of the visit to Sikkim of one of our officers of the I.C.S. from Assam, T.T.S. Hayley, with his fiancée, Audrey Cantlie² as also of his first tour in Bhutan.

¹According to Tibetan and Sikkimese custom, white (or cream) scarves are offered to persons as a mark of respect on auspicious occasions.

² Daughter of Sir Keith Cantlie, I.C.S., Chairman of the Assam Revenue Tribunal.

The Palace, Gangtok

4th March 1943

My dear Uncle Littleman,

I don't know whether I have to thank you for a letter or not, so I shall give you the benefit of the doubt, which is a very doubtful doubt, I thank you very much for the letter I don't think you wrote at all.

I suppose you have heard of us from your Under Secretary Mr. Hayley and his?, Miss Audrey Cantlie, and one of your snooping CIDs Mr. Lambert. They were all very nicely received and treated, but when Mr. Hayley wrote to Sir Basil Gould, he writes something to this effect 'well we were very interested in meeting something unusual', as if we were museum pieces or something unusual from the zoo. Anyway they have invited us to Assam to stay with them, which we hope to do in the near future, i.e., in about two or three months' time.

We left here for Bhutan on the 10th Feb....

.... at Deochu we met the Maharaja of Bhutan who is a very nice fellow. The thing that the Maharaja liked best was the cinema shows we gave him. (16 m.m. battery projector and some films "Rin-tin-tin", "Charley Chaplin" and Kodachromes of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet taken by the old P.O.). We left the Maharaja on the 26th and came back by train as far as a station called Mal and motored from there. We had to tranship our luggage near the Coronation bridge, as one of the small bridges were being repaired, and there were 11 cars waiting for us. On the whole it was a very pleasant tour.

I came home the day before yesterday and have found plenty of files waiting for me. Then again the Vicereen is going to come to Sikkim very shortly and I'll have to make preparations to receive her. There is an agricultural show due to start on the 26th March and I am supposed to be the President of the show. I have also to see George¹ fitted out for school, see to Jean's eyes and have my tooth settled, and above all that there is a talk

¹His younger brother. Jean was his younger sister.

of your Governor of Assam coming here as well, and I must have all these things done within 40 days or so.

... Well there is no more except I have ordered some records (Brahms Op. 77 with Heifetz and Mendelsshom Op. 64 with Kreisler) and I have an amplifier coming for me from Madras, and the weather here is foggy and damp like London (when I used to be there)¹.

With all the best,
Love from your little little nephew
Num
Thondup Namgyal

P.S.: Excuse the mistakes etc. but the writing is better than yours, so you can't complain.

The Prince was shortly afterwards invited to accompany the Vicereine of India who was due to visit Bhutan. On their return to Sikkim, he presided, on behalf of his father, over the inauguration by the Vicereine of the Paljor Namgyal Girls School founded in memory of his late brother. Being a Prince, he found, was by no means all beer and skittles!

Paro
Bhutan
1st June '43

My dear Rusty,

... Well I wish you were here chasing Vicereens in the wilds of Bhutan, it is not much fun I can assure you. Good manners my foot – the old P.O. Sir Basil tries to show me how to put on a tie, I wish he could see his own.

... My Dad left for Calcutta to have an operation the 27th. I hope he is pulling on well and will be back by the time I

¹In jest, as he had never yet been abroad.

return, as her Ex. on the way back is going to open the first room of the Paljor Namgyal Girls School and receive gifts sent to this new school. I will of course have to deliver a speech, which should be in the papers, so I will “count my chickens before they are hatched” and say my head is swollen a great deal. – I hope it does not have to come down again? . . .

We have had quite a nice tour so far, except that we have to give presents that run into thousands, – very expensive these tours, people insist on bringing you a present and you have to return 1½ times to 2 times the value. Sir Basil is going to give a show tomorrow – a free public show – and the people are coming like flies from all over the place. Yes that reminds me there are so many flies here that the fly paper just beside me has over 300 flies no exaggeration. I hope to be home by the 11th or 12th. So I shall be expecting to have a letter from you waiting for me. I shall now close as I have not a proper table to write on and it is about 9 p.m. and I have not had my dinner and “an army marches on its stomach”.

Please excuse the spelling, writing, English and everything
Fondest Love,

Yours
Thondup Namgyal

It was about this time that I received news in Sylhet of my father's sudden death during the German air-raids over London. As I was alone and feeling depressed, the Prince suggested that I come over to Sikkim for a few days change and I was glad to avail of his invitation.

The Palace, Gangtok
6-7-43

My Dear Uncle Rusty,

Thank you ever so much for your letter and I am glad you are thinking of coming up this way during the Puja holidays. Yes, the grapes are coming on and should be ripe in about another

two months. What you will miss are the plums, they are not very good or large, but this year with my chicken manure there are thousands on one tree and the branches have started to break because of the load. . . .

Well you have asked for a full account of what happened at the opening ceremony of the Paljor Namgyal Girls High School. So I am enclosing a copy of the programme and the speeches. They will be able to explain themselves better than a long account written by me. There was no laughter or rotten eggs, as the ceremony was a solemn one and a great success. My father was not able to attend because of his recent piles operation, but is back at work now, although his anus muscles have not started to function as normal as yet. I was not bothered, as I happened to make my speech quite-well – no boasting and no long words – and did not stutter more than twice¹. . . .

By the way, when Her Ex was leaving, she gave me a silver cigarette box and a lighter as “buckshish” for all the trouble I had taken to make them comfortable, and was nearly in tears when leaving this beautiful part of the world for the third time and perhaps the last. They enjoyed their trip very much and were very nice as well, but let us see what Wavell has in store for us. Now I close this long letter with love and kisses to uncle, hoping that he will not be lazy and reply by the return post.

Yours,
Thondup Num

P.S.: Did you meet Sir Basil Gould? He was down that way only a few days ago. Please excuse the mistakes in this letter, and I can't rewrite it as there is a paper shortage here as well.²

I spent a brief holiday with the Prince in Sikkim and he later paid a visit to me when I was posted to the delightful hill-station of Shillong, then Capital of Assam. But we were both too involved in our own affairs to be able to keep up a regular correspondence. It was not until June 1947 that I had a letter

¹The Prince suffered, in his early years, from a very severe stutfer.,

²These were war-time years.

from him intimating that he and his cousin, Jigmie Dorji, were conferring together for “deciding the future of Bhutan and Sikkim. And how about making a trip to Sikkim on a holiday with your people? Don’t forget, you and yours are all most welcome any time any day so long as old Num’s not given the order of the boot”. Although his letter was written in light hearted vein, he was evidently having apprehensions about the future consequent upon the ensuing transfer of power from British to Indian hands and was feeling the need of friendly counsel.

I myself had by now been appointed as Advisor to the Governor of Assam for the north eastern frontiers, the twenty-five Khasi Statelets and the erstwhile Princely States of Manipur, Cooch-Bihar and Tripura. Government of India’s policy was either to take over and constitute these frontier regions as Union Territories to be administered by the Central Government or to merge them with the adjoining Provinces of Assam and Bengal. We had manipulated the merger of Cooch-Bihar with Bengal and of the twenty-five Khasi Statelets with Assam. There was not much opposition to our taking over Tripura and constituting it as a Union Territory, but the ruler of Manipur had virtually to be coerced into signing away his kingdom. It was evident from the Prince’s next letter that pressures of various sorts were being placed upon Sikkim and that he was keeping himself more closely in touch with my problems than I was with his. His main suspicion was that India’s representative in Sikkim, the Political Officer, was giving indirect, if not direct encouragement to the people to subvert the existing order and surrender Sikkim to the Protecting Power.

The Palace, Gangtok
12th April 1949

My dearest Uncle Rusty,

It was indeed a very very pleasant surprise to get your letter. I

had given you up as a hopeless case as so many of my letters went unanswered. Your letter was as if from the dead. Anyway it was great. I expect you are very busy these days, specially as I see from the papers that you are trying to bully some of your Assamese States and Cooch-Bihar. I am glad at least we are out of your greedy clutches. Well "barah sahib", on the whole you must be having a jolly time from what one hears. I am in a hell of a spot as you must have learnt from your Intelligence people. Sikkim is not what she used to be. These damn exploiters are raising hell. I am all for fulfilling the wishes of our Bhutia and Lepchas, real wishes. But I will be sooner damned than let these mean conspirators and job-hunters have their way if I can. We are on the verge of getting independence of sorts like Bhutan and I think we have achieved a miracle in not having had to accede. Our greatest drawback is that the P.O. and the Government of India seem to favour the other side, and we have to proceed so that we give you people no chance to butt in. The second trouble, which I have a feeling is common, is the unruly Nepalese element against whom I cannot take action as I would like to have. So far for nonsense, I will not bore you any more.

.... Give my love to your old Governor¹ when you go to bluff him next that you are really working or trying to rob the freedom of some poor State. I had met him once with Pt. Nehru in Delhi.

Well you must now be satisfied with this letter, it is long and you must consider it an honour as it is the first private letter that I am writing since Nov. 48. I know you are busy but I hope you will write me more than the hello you did last time and take it for a letter, soon. Don't forget, I am a busy man as well, specially at present in the middle of conferences.

With love and kisses
Your one and only,
Thondup Num,

¹Sri Prakasa, later Governor of Madras (now Tamil Nadu), who finally retired as Governor of Bombay (now Maharashtra).

His next letter was to announce his impending marriage and to advocate the same mixture for myself. He had been keeping hitherto, according to the accepted custom in Sikkim and other royal households, a very lovely Lepcha girl as his mistress. He later built a small house for her below the palace and continued to visit her after his marriage. She was a level-headed young lady, who, unlike the usual run of royal mistresses, assumed no airs and did not take advantage of her position as a receiver of royal favours. She was rarely to be seen at state functions, except as one amongst the crowd, and it is to her great credit that she was never to be the cause of embarrassment to the Prince. She bore him two children a boy and a girl, and I remember the deep grief with which the Prince wrote to me of the unexpected death of the boy while I was on tour in north Sikkim some years later. The Prince arranged for their daughter to be sent for higher education in the States, where she is now happily settled with her American husband and very charming children.

The Palace, Gangtok
14th April, 1950

My dear Uncle Rusty,

Thank you very very much for your letter, it came as a very pleasant surprise. No, I am not married as yet but my parents have at last caught up with me and they have made me agree to marriage and I am engaged to a young lady in Lhasa. . . .

Now to come to you, I think your mother is most wise and you should get married, soon. You will need children to look after you in your old age and I do not approve of marriage at an advanced age, like our old P.O. B.J. Gould who is over 60 and has a child of one year. Fortunately he is well off, otherwise who is going to look after the child? Then again a man of your position should have someone to entertain and look after the house. So old boy my advice and earnest request to you is to get

married. It is not because I am being put through it and want to see you hooked up also. . . .

Our talks in Delhi went off quite well and I am happy that there is going to be a Sikkim on the map and outside the grip of Sardar Patel etc. You seem indeed very busy with the North Eastern tracts, and if ever the Reds get into Tibet I can see you having lot of worries.

Yours v. sincerely,
The one and only,
Num

The problems arising from outsiders infiltrating into under-populated and undeveloped areas are to be found world-wide. The American Indians are now conscious of the extent to which they have been exploited in the past and are, at long last, being awarded compensation by the courts for the expropriation of their lands. The infiltration of outsiders into the sparsely populated regions of India's north-eastern frontiers is no new phenomenon, though it has been highlighted in more recent years after the heavy influx of refugees consequent upon the emergence of East Pakistan and, later, Bangladesh, as independent countries. Assam and the north-eastern hill states have somewhat belatedly woken up to the long-term implications of the continuing influx of outsiders into their territories and its effect on their cultural identity. The young Prince, however, was, as early as in 1950, fully alive to the problems created by unrestricted immigration and the settlement of outsiders in his little kingdom. His initiative came, unhappily, too late, and there was little that could be done to set back the advance of processes that had been set into motion since the time of Claude White over fifty years earlier. But he was determined to make a stand in defence of the Bhutia-Lepcha communities that were in danger of being engulfed by the extraneous influx.

The Palace, Gangtok
Camp: Calcutta 22-1-51

My Dear Uncle Rusty,

Rusty, now be a good uncle and do me a favour, don't let me down as it is very important to us and we are banking on you. Could you very kindly have copies of your Provincial-State-laws on domicile and how you differentiate an Assamese, Tribal and non-Assamese sent as soon as possible to my home address. I know Domicile is a central subject, but I gather there are quite a few local laws also defining domicile in regard to acquisition of land etc. Thank you in anticipation, don't forget uncle.

It is a long time since we have met and a long time since you have been to Gangtok, so why don't you and yours come and pay us a visit. Sikkim is still pulling on, but the good old happy days have gone. Although we have been able to save ourselves from merger etc., at present we are being led by the nose by the Indian Govt. We are however going to have our elections soon, as we have overcome a lot of trouble a fortnight back when I got the parties to come to an agreement. Why bore you with all that here, we will talk it over when we meet. One thing I would like to discuss with you is border checking and registration, as we have it but there is pressure to adopt certain ineffective steps that is only going to recoil on us and also put the Indian Govt. at a disadvantage.

Well I should now be closing. With best wishes and love and kisses to you and the mem sahib.

Yours one and only
Num

The Prince was, in character and temperament, a diametric contrast to his father. He had a mind of his own and took his own decisions. As he had been schooled in India during the critical years preceding the transfer of power, he could sense the

pulse of Indian nationalism and shared the apprehension of the rulers of the Indian Princely States that the new order would see no place - or justification - for their continued existence. Sikkim was admittedly at the extreme periphery of India and, both culturally and politically, outside the mainstream of the Indian sub-continent. It was in recognition of this and of her status being regarded as different from that of other Princely States that the Sikkim desk had always been located in the Foreign and not the Political Department of the Government of India. There was risk however that these fine distinctions would be lost sight of in the overall national upsurge and that Sikkim would also be merged, together with the "Native States" as they were called, within the new India that was shortly to be born. Despite his youth and inexperience - he was only in his early twenties - the Prince was determined to stand firmly against any attempt to coerce Sikkim into surrendering her independent identity. It was his good fortune that India's Prime Minister at the time was Jawaharlal Nehru. For whatever his failings as a practical administrator, Nehru was a statesman of wide, liberal and essentially human outlook. Nehru had always had a soft corner in his heart for the hills and the people of the hills. He saw no advantage in territorial aggrandisement for its own sake and had no desire to shape the laughter-loving hill people, with their freedom from inhibitions, in the image of the Hindu plainsmen.

Had it not been for Nehru's sympathetic and generous outlook, Sikkim would have been engulfed much earlier in the all-absorbing Indian system. India's strong man, Sardar Patel, who as Home Minister had been responsible for liquidating India's Princely States, was not likely to listen kindly to pleadings in favour of perpetuating Sikkim's independent identity. If States of the population and revenue of Hyderabad were to be merged with India, what possible justification was there for sparing Sikkim, with her negligible population and with resources far less than a sub-division, the smallest unit in the Indian administrative system? But despite all, Sikkim was

granted an extended lease of life. Sikkim's treaty of special relations with the predecessor government was renewed with independent India and India's Prime Minister approved a substantial financial grant to enable her to launch upon a plan for economic and social development.

But all had by no means been smooth sailing. As in the Princely States of India, a political movement had been fomented for the transfer of power from the ruler to a popular, elected Government. The Prince saw in this movement the hidden hand of intriguers planted to betray his country to India. His main suspicion and apprehension was of the Nepalese. He had long sensed the dangers of Nepalese immigration and had no doubt that, unless a halt was called to the spread of the Nepalese contagion in every sphere, cultural, political, administrative and religious, there was no hope of survival for the Lepcha and Bhutia minorities.

A series of measures was accordingly initiated for the protection of the minorities. There was to be parity of seats in Sikkim's Council for the Lepchas and Bhutias on the one hand and the Nepalese on the other. A quota of nominated seats was also reserved in the Council for the safeguarding of what were termed as "special interests" (e.g. the monasteries) and these nominated seats were in the gift of the ruler. By this strategy of parity and reservation of nominated seats, it was possible to avert Nepalese predominance in the Council and to enact measures to protect and advance the interests of the minorities. The Nepalese on their part pressed that their representation in the Council should be in proportion to their population and resented the heavy weightage in favour of the minorities. It was their grievance that the ruler was interested only in bolstering up the minorities and regarded the Nepalese as second-class citizens. Unqualified Lepchas and Bhutias were being appointed to posts to which Nepalese had a stronger claim by virtue of their higher qualifications, and the Nepalese language was also not being accorded its due importance. Although the Nepalese were the majority community, the ceremonial of state

functions was based on Lepcha and Sikkimese cultural traditions and Buddhism was being accorded the status of the official state religion. The State Ecclesiastical Department concerned itself exclusively with the Buddhist monasteries and showed no interest in Hindu temples, the places of worship of the majority of the Nepalese.

There was a growing feeling amongst the Nepalese that it was the ruling family, which was of Bhutia and Lepcha extraction, that was responsible for this discrimination against the majority community. If the powers of the ruler could be curtailed and the principle of parity in the Council eliminated, the Nepalese would have free rein. Legislation could be passed in the Council prescribing Nepalese as the Official Language for all administrative and educational purposes and it would not be long before Bhutia and Lepcha culture would be wiped away from the face of the country.

The young prince was convinced that the Nepalese demand to divest the ruler of his powers and establish a constitutional monarchy was not based on any ideological principle or on any genuine and disinterested concern for the rights of the people. It was a political expedient for getting ultimate power vested in the Nepalese and converting Sikkim into a Nepalese State. He was determined to resist the demand and came therefore to be identified by the Nepalese as the main obstruction to their designs and aspirations. A stage was reached, after the British handing over of power to India in 1947, when relations between the Palace and the power-hungry politicians became so strained that the ruler found himself compelled to request the Government of India to intercede and depute an officer to restore order in his country. The terms of appointment provided, however, that, in the event of any disagreement between the ruler and the officer deputed by the Government of India,¹ the matter should be referred to the Government of

¹Designated as Dewan, i.e., Prime Minister.

India for decision. Such a provision cut directly at the root of the ruler's authority, virtually setting India's nominee over the ruler's head and the implications were not lost upon the Prince, as can be seen from the tail-piece of his next letter to me.

The Palace, Gangtok
21st April, 1951

My dear Uncle Rusty,

It is great to hear that you are engaged. Well, well, high time too. I must congratulate you and must put it down that I was very happy to hear the news from Jiggs.¹ When is the wedding to be old man? I must make it a point to be present although I am very hurt that you do not write these days and did not come to my wedding. Your plea I suppose is that you are over-worked, as usual. We hear reports that the Reds are near Assam and sometimes cross the border – sorry correction, the *Chinese* Reds, as you have quite a lot of your own brand of Reds. Well when they catch up, they are not going to accept over-work as an excuse, you would have to be eliminated straightaway.

My sister Kula is just back from Tibet – you know her, she came with us to the Nathu La Pass. Well all the people that ran from Lhasa are going back, but the news of what is happening in Tibet is not good. It seems that the situation has turned worse than it was several weeks back. Anyway you must be well up in all that, but don't let the Reds catch you old boy.

Here in Sikkim things are not so good and the Government of India is pretending that we rule while they rule through a Dewan. We are at present trying to get the two major parties to come to an agreement on the formation of the future Council – sort of an assembly.

¹i.e., his cousin Jigmie Dorji, later Prime Minister of Bhutan.

Well that is about all the news from here and I do expect and hope I will be hearing from you.

Love and all the best and congratulations once again,

Your one and only
Num

Journey to Lhasa

The first Dewan was J.S. Lall, an experienced and able officer of the Indian Civil Service through whose energetic initiative and drive the administrative norms prevalent in India were progressively applied to Sikkim. Sikkim, as we have seen, was no stranger to foreign rule. The British Political Officer had, earlier in the century, superintended the administration of the country in the absence of the ruler who had been deported to India.¹ The first Political Officer in Sikkim, Claude White, had been instrumental in getting Sikkim to adopt the filing system and other administrative procedures of British India. Lall added the finishing touches—and he functioned with a flamboyance that left nobody in doubt that, while Sir Tashi Namgyal was the titular ruler, the essence of power rested in himself and, through him, in the Indian Government.

Although Lall was an officer of keen aesthetic sensibilities with a deep and affectionate regard for Sikkim's art and culture, his tenure signalled the beginning of the end for Sikkim as an independent entity. In introducing administrative changes, he was not an innovator, as Claude White had already pointed the way. It was the conception, under Lall's dynamic stewardship, of Sikkim's seven-year plan for economic development that turned the scales of Sikkim's future destiny. The scope of the plan was of a dimension that necessitated the induction of a heavy presence of technical personnel from outside Sikkim for its implementation. It was not long before every key department of the Sikkim Government was headed

by an Indian. All these newly appointed officers had to be housed and provided with transport. Gangtok, which had been not much more than a sleepy village a few years previously, became cluttered all of a sudden with bull-dozers, trucks and jeeps. The mule-trains of old, with their gay saddlery and jingling bells, were seen no more, save as a dream of the past.

Lall's tenure continued for six years. A well-intentioned officer, he was inspired by a genuine sense of mission, as he supposed, to clear the Augean stables before vacating office. In the result, much of the old and traditional of Sikkim was swept away. Although, constitutionally, Sikkim continued to survive as a separate entity outside India, her administrative structure was progressively shaped along the lines and pattern of an Indian district. It was a pattern that Sikkim, with her limited revenues, could not afford to maintain out of her own resources, and her economic dependence on India was bound to lead, 'sooner or later, to political dependence also.

As the Prince and I had been old friends and he was aware of my interest in the people and problems of the hills, he advised his father, on termination of Lall's tenure in 1954, to request the Government of India to spare my services for appointment as Lall's successor. The Government of India readily agreed to the request, particularly as my tenure of the post of Advisor for the north-eastern frontiers was also coming to an end. Within a few months of my assuming office in Sikkim, I communicated my assessment of the general situation in a report to the Government of India which, in the light of subsequent developments twenty years later, is of more than merely academic interest.

Gangtok
30th November, 1954

"I was somewhat surprised, on my taking over charge last April, at the degree of distrust felt in certain quarters towards India and I have been endeavouring to investigate the grounds for this distrust and the means whereby it might be removed or at least diminished. The sanction of funds for the Development

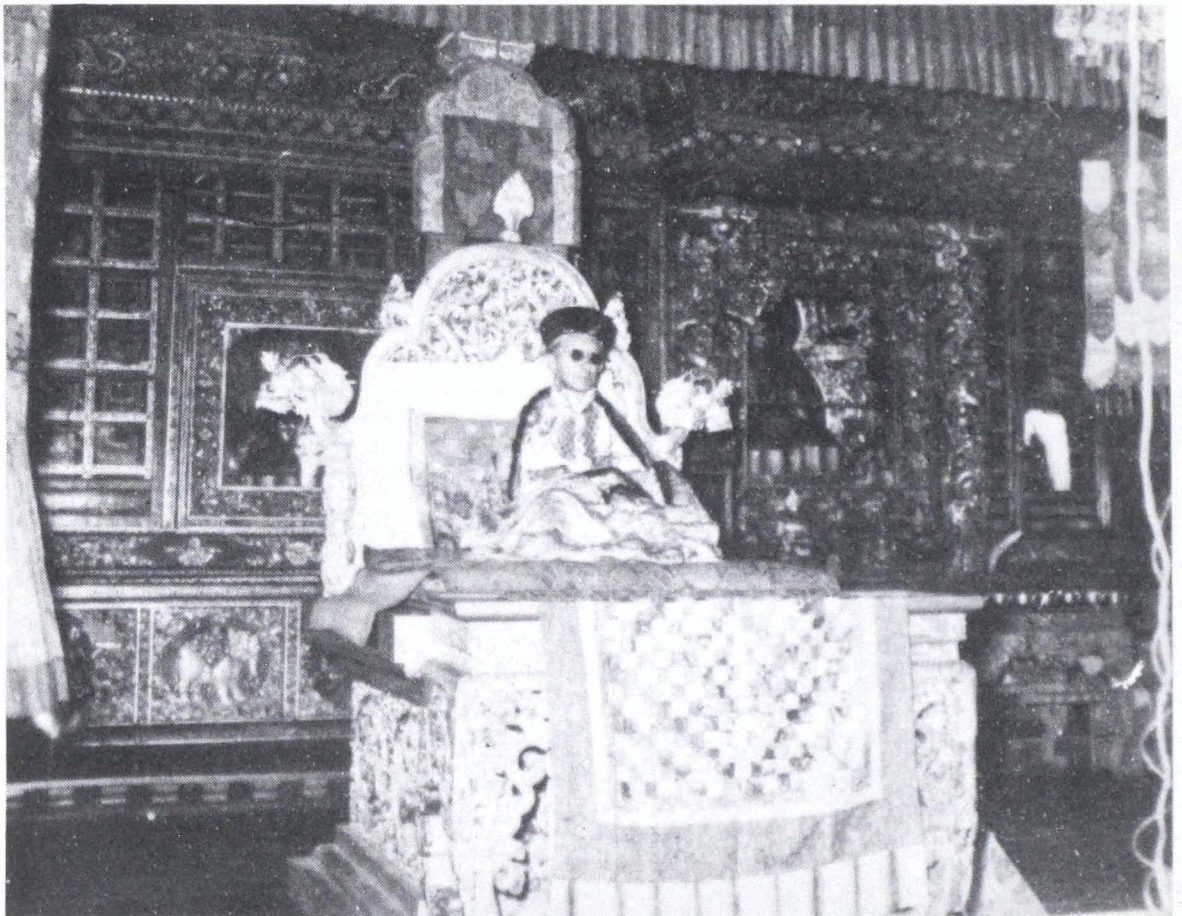
Plan, which has since been received, has improved the atmosphere. But there are still undercurrents the motives for which will require careful watching for some time to come. Constitutionally, Sikkim enjoys a higher status than during British days. This is recognised. But there has been a feeling of apprehension and suspicion that the present arrangements are merely a temporary expedient, the ultimate aim being to take over or merge the State completely. It is this apprehension and suspicion that are at the root of what sometimes appears as a feeling of unfriendliness and distrust towards India.

“If people here could be convinced that India means to stand by the treaty and not merely to manoeuvre things towards the ultimate taking over of the State, the entire atmosphere would be altered and it would be possible to establish a firm and lasting bond of confidence. There have been certain acts, however, that have given the impression that India may not be really serious in her assurances of internal autonomy for Sikkim. The appointment of a Dewan by the Government of India is, in itself, in this view, regarded as an encroachment on the State’s internal autonomy, and when, even after the deputation of an Indian Officer, there are indications of further moves for the effecting of a tighter and sharper control, there is uneasiness and people are encouraged to ask themselves, “what next?”

“Apart from apprehensions regarding the ultimate shape of things to come, there is also a feeling that, in many matters, the self-respect of the State is not sufficiently regarded. Our policy seems to have been to follow, too often, the technique of British days in our relations vis-à-vis these frontier States. People in Sikkim, however, have been equally affected and influenced by the changes that have been brought about throughout India since Independence, and their own feeling of self-respect has also been raised. They know that India is big and Sikkim is small, but their self-respect is hurt if we make too much of a parade of our bigness or make any show of “talking down” at them. There have been occasions where people here have felt a deep sense of hurt at some of our actions, and this has not



Hasting's House, Calcutta, 1906. Claude White (at centre), with (on left) Sir Thutob Namgyal and the Maharani of Sikkim, and (on right) Sir Ugyen Wangchuk of Bhutan



Sir Tashi Namgyal enthroned



The Chogyal as a young novitiate with brothers and sisters





Visit of Sir Basil Gould to Bhutan, 1943. (From left) Jigmie Dorji, late Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tessa Dorji, the Chogyal of Sikkim, the King of Bhutan, Sir Basil Gould



The Chogyal, with his first wife Sangediki and their two sons



The Chogyal offering a ceremonial scarf to the President of India, Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi, 1956



The Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok

contributed to the building up of friendly relations between Sikkim and India.

“I believe that one of the main reasons on account of which the appointment of a Dewan has been resented in Sikkim is that, in many ways, the appointee was considered to be acting more arbitrarily than ever did the Ruler himself. It is not my intention to criticise any person. I know that my predecessor came at an exceptional time and that it was necessary for him to adopt exceptional measures. But it is essential that the Government of India should have a clear idea of what is fairly widely thought and felt in responsible quarters in Sikkim.

“I could give examples of the ways in which the Darbar has felt itself to have been slighted. Under the existing arrangements, the Ruler is not competent to invite a personal friend, who is a non-Indian, to his own Capital for even a few hours without permission having first to be obtained from the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, in India and/or India's representative, the Political Officer in Sikkim. While there may be grounds for placing restrictions on movement along the remoter frontier regions, it is felt that no security reasons could justify such restriction of movement along the main National Highway to Gangtok itself. This may appear to be a small matter, but it is precisely such matters that have given rise to the feeling that the Sikkim authorities are not being trusted.

“I feel that we can have in Sikkim a loyal State, that will stand by India in her time of need. But if the right sort of relationship is to be built up, it will have to be on a foundation of confidence and trust *on both sides*. I am writing at some length on this aspect, as the future of our relationship with Bhutan will also hinge, largely, on the approach we adopt towards Sikkim. Surprise has sometimes been expressed that Bhutan should not have welcomed the overtures that have been made to her by India from time to time. Bhutan's connections with Sikkim are close. The Maharani of Bhutan¹ and the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim are first cousins. Bhutan's attitude

¹Vide p. 13.

to India is likely to depend very largely on what she sees that India is doing in Sikkim. If the idea is allowed to grow that India will use "the big stick" without much compunction on her smaller neighbours, the chances of bringing Bhutan peaceably within India's fold will pretty quickly recede. The view may, of course, be taken that these are little States, and that, if they open their mouths too wide, India has the means of bringing them to heel. That, however, is a matter of larger policy. I have been assuming that India wishes to act as friends.

"I have had long talks with the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim and Jigmie Dorji of Bhutan, both of whom are old personal friends, and I feel sure that, provided it is India's intention to have Bhutan and Sikkim as friendly neighbours and not necessarily to merge them completely, we can have grow up in these States a loyal people, upon whom we shall be able to depend with complete confidence. But such confidence and loyalty will not be built up in a day, any more than personal friendship can be built up in a day. Nor will they be secured merely by financial grants. Sikkim has realised already, and Bhutan will also come to realise, that it is not possible for a little State to stand entirely alone in the present context of world developments. Neither of these States would, of choice, turn to China. They have had close economic and other relations with India for generations past and would be anxious to further strengthen such relations and look to us for support, provided they are not led to have the feeling that India has any ulterior motives. We are dealing, in Bhutan and Sikkim, not with primitive communities as in Nefa.¹ We have communities here with a rich, cultural tradition, as also people of education, on whom the significance of our actions is not lost. A relationship founded on trust, friendship and mutual respect will be more valuable to India, in the long view, than any arrangement imposed by force. It may take a little longer to achieve, but it will be worth the endeavour.

¹i.e. the North East Frontier Agency, the frontier tracts skirting the north and east of Assam and bordering Tibet and Burma.

“I have known the Maharaj Kumar for over 12 years. He is a person of exceptional ability, whom we can and should utilize to the fullest extent possible in the administration of the State. He has been deeply hurt through a sense of having been eliminated from the affairs of the State—sometimes even humiliated, although that may not have been intended. But I feel convinced that the full weight of his support can be secured for India, if he can be brought to feel that we are prepared to handle Sikkim’s problems with sympathy and friendliness.”

The Prince had married, according to the convention of the Palace, into a renowned and highly respected house of Lhasa. Relations and friends of his wife’s family paid frequent visits to Gangtok and resided at the Palace as the ruler’s guests. The Palace was thus a cultural amalgam of old and new. When first I visited Sikkim in 1942, the Prince was still unmarried and his mother was living separately from the ruler in an estate of her own. Although the furnishings and mural paintings adorning the Palace were mainly in the Tibetan tradition, the running of the establishment was on European lines, with meals prepared and served in western style. It has to be borne in mind that, despite the cultural link with Tibet, Sikkim was no less shy of Tibetan encroachments than of Indian, particularly as the Sikkimese belonged to the Red Hat sect of Buddhism as against the reformist Yellow Hat headed by the Dalai Lama. After the Prince’s marriage, however, and the consequent visits of his wife’s relations and friends from Lhasa, the cultural climate of the Palace underwent a distinct change. Mahjong parties, Tibetan cuisinerie, sumptuous dresses of the finest Chinese brocade – all these were index of the change. For the Nepalese, this development augured no good and they disapproved of what appeared as a cultural slant towards Tibet in a country whose population and religion were predominantly Hindu.

I sensed, soon after joining in Sikkim, that the Lepcha and Bhutia minorities were gravely apprehensive of the future. The Nepalese leaders were playing upon India’s suspicions that border people of Tibetan stock or with close Tibetan affinities were unreliable allies, who might quickly switch loyalties.

whereas the Nepalese, being brother – Hindus, would be more likely to stand by India in an emergency. This was a carry-over of Claude White's doctrine that, as hereditary enemies of Tibet, the Nepalese were "the surest guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence in Sikkim".¹ But whatever the justification, the Nepalese made capital of their assumed loyalty to India and succeeded, through the image they had projected of themselves as the more reliable of the communities competing for favour, in ingratiating themselves with the Indian authorities. The Lepchas and Bhutias became, as a consequence, doubly fearful. Their initial fears had been only of the Nepalese. They now apprehended that India was also siding with the Nepalese in the expectation that they would prove safer and more loyal allies.

It was obvious that the incidence of Nepalese immigration had been so heavy and the period so protracted that there was no alternative but to accept the situation, with all its implications. There could be no going back at this late stage nor any possibility of prevailing upon the Nepalese to change their ways and adopt the habits and culture of the earlier settlers. If anything was to have been done about bolstering up the culture of the Lepchas and Bhutias, it was already fifty years too late. The Prince, on the other hand, was a strong-willed man and not prepared to yield. In the Nepalese presence, he saw a threat not only to the throne and to the age-old culture of the land, but to the survival of Sikkim as an independent entity. His deep-felt nostalgia for the traditional values of the Sikkim of his fathers gave rise to an apprehension amongst the Nepalese that they were not only not wanted in Sikkim but that they would be denied full citizen rights.

The aim of the Prince was to call a halt to fresh immigration. He appreciated that it would be unjust and impracticable to evict Nepalese who had made Sikkim their home since the early years of the century. The old Nepalese settlers, however, were encouraging their friends and relations, even distant relations,

¹ See p. 10.

to leave Nepal and the Darjeeling district of India and join them in Sikkim. Unless firm action was taken to keep away fresh entrants, the influx would continue until the Lepcha and Bhutia minorities would be utterly wiped out. But any suggestion to take firm action against further immigration gave rise at once to indignant outcry, not only within Sikkim but in the only too willing ears of the Government of India, that the Nepalese were being discriminated against and treated as second class citizens.

There was indeed need for allaying the apprehension of the Lepchas and Bhutias that their culture was in danger of being eroded away. They were justified in feeling aggrieved that sufficient attention had not been paid in the past to protecting Sikkim from the Nepalese influx. But while the past could not be undone, some amends could be made by providing opportunities for the minorities to resurrect a feeling for the ancient culture and traditions of their land. Nepalese song and dance had, with the increase of Nepalese influence, come to predominate at festive occasions, save State functions, to the neglect of the traditional Sikkimese musical forms. In order to counteract this trend, educational institutions were encouraged to organise, as part of their normal curriculum, classes for instruction in the traditional dance and song forms of the country and to include such items in their periodical school functions. The most significant venture aimed at reviving the roots of Sikkimese culture was the establishing at Gangtok of an Institute of Tibetology. With the Chinese entry into Tibet, it was feared that invaluable Tibetan texts – historical, religious, literary and scientific – would be destroyed or pillaged from Tibet's monastic libraries. Tibetan refugees took pains to salvage such texts from the archives of the monasteries and were prevailed upon to make them over to the Institute of Tibetology founded in Gangtok for the promotion of Tibetan studies in various branches of learning. The Institute was set up as a focus for Tibetan-based research and was eventually inaugurated under the joint auspices of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet and India's Prime

Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. There could have been no firmer assurance for Sikkim's minorities of India's rejection of the traditional policy of seeking for a "guarantee against a revival of Tibetan influence" For it was the Government of India itself that was now providing the resources for the Institute's establishment and taking a major initiative in the promotion of Tibetan research.

For the Bhutia and Lepcha minorities, religion was a prime factor in their lives and there was need to relieve them of their apprehension that the growing Nepalese pressures might eventually oust the Buddhist faith from the country. Special attention was therefore paid to provide financial support for the religious dances performed annually at the important monasteries of the country. These were masked dances depicting not only saints and deities of the Buddhist pantheon, but all animal creation in colourful robes and guises. They were widely attended, and, apart from their religious aura, were occasions for villagers from surrounding areas to gather together for merry-making, as at a *fiesta*. A festival of particular significance celebrated every year at the Palace monastery was the "Worship of the snowy range of Kanchenjunga",¹ the towering mountain revered as the abode of Sikkim's Protecting Deity. As further token of Government's concern for the ancient faith of the land, a shrine of the Lord Buddha was built alongside the Secretariat, encircled by a garden in which deer freely roamed, reminiscent of the deer-park at Sarnath where the Lord Buddha preached to his disciples upon first attaining enlightenment.

The Prince was gifted with a keen aesthetic sense, which he inherited from his father, an artist of exceptional skill and talent. We were both appalled at the prospect of unsightly multi-storeyed buildings of cement-concrete desecrating the lovely hill-slopes to accommodate the multifarious projects envisaged under the development plan. We therefore worked out architectural designs that would harmonise more happily

See p. 1.

with the natural landscape of mountain and forest. I knew we were fighting a losing battle. The targets set in the blue-print of the plan necessitated a pace of construction that was far too ambitious and did not allow for well-considered town-planning and architectural niceties. Between the two of us, we could attend to the architectural features of only the more important public institutions, and in the result, these emerged as jewelled islets amidst a clutter of barrack-like hutments. The preparation of a systematic town-plan providing for all the amenities essential to a growing capital is a serious exercise and time is needed for the carrying out of detailed surveys and for the collection and assessment of statistical material. Time, however, was the one ingredient that was in short supply, and the politicians dared not think of keeping their constituents waiting overlong for the lavishly-promised fruits of development.

The Cabinet consisted of the Dewan, as President, with two Executive Councillors, each representing the two major parties of Sikkim, i.e., the Sikkim Congress and the Sikkim National Party. The pattern was based on the system of dyarchy tried out by the British in India prior to the introduction of full responsible Government. It offered an opportunity to the people's representatives to gain experience of administration in all but the most vital sectors, which were kept "reserved" with the ruler. The Executive Councillors were responsible for the "transferred" subjects, which related mostly to the Seven Year Development Plan financed by the Government of India (e.g. Health, Education, Forests, Public Works and Agriculture), while the more sensitive "reserved" subjects (e.g. Finance, Home and Appointments) were the responsibility of the ruler advised by the Dewan. The ruler was constitutionally the fount of all authority but the Cabinet was responsible to an elected Council that was required by statute to be summoned at intervals not exceeding six months. The broad objective of the Sikkim State Congress was to press for full responsible Government (i.e., abolition of any reservation of subjects), while the National Party, which was popularly regarded as the

King's party, favoured maintenance of the *status quo*. It was for the Dewan to keep the balance.

While the Prince had no statutory role in the Government, it was known and accepted that his was the ruling voice. His father was temperamentally not interested in attending to administrative details and the ruler's decisions were in fact the decisions of his son. My efforts were directed towards bringing the Prince to concede that the *status quo* could not, and should not, be frozen in perpetuity and that gradual devolution of responsibility must necessarily be brought about. The Prince's reluctance was due not to an abnormal thirst for power. It was due to his genuine conviction that, as heir-apparent, he had been born with a bounden duty to his people and that he would be failing in such duty if he were to divest himself of his right to rule. It has to be remembered that democracy as understood today was comparatively new to Sikkim, and that, in the Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, the Divine Right of kings was still very much a live concept. The king of Nepal is venerated to this day as a re-incarnation of the Deity, Vishnu. Until the early years of the century, the Head of State of Bhutan was designated, in Bhutanese, as *Shabdrung* ("the Eminence at whose feet all must submit themselves"), and, in Hindi, as *Dharma Raja* ("the King who rules according to the Divine Law"). The office was not hereditary, and succession was, as in the case of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, by reincarnation. Similarly, in Sikkim, the traditional title of the Head of State was *Chogyal*, corresponding to *Dharma Raja* in Bhutan, and members of the Bhutia and Lepcha communities instinctively prostrated themselves before him as embodying the divine spirit, even though the succession was, as in Nepal, hereditary. Further, the Prince had in his own personal right been identified as a high reincarnation,¹ quite apart from the divinity with which he was held to be vested as heir to the throne. In spite, therefore, of his education in western-style schools, he was deeply imbued with the spirit of the past and

¹See p. 18

the traditional institutions of the country. He saw grave danger in the disintegration of Sikkim's entire social structure if changes were brought about too rapidly in the cause of so-called economic development and democratic ideology. By divesting himself of effective control, he would be affording ambitious politicians unlimited opportunities to initiate projects whose objective was the capturing of votes and not necessarily in the interests of the country. It was his prognosis that, once the politicians tasted power, there would be no holding them back, and that the compromise I was endeavouring to bring about between himself and the political parties would, in fact, be the beginning of the end.

But if we had differences on the politics of Sikkim, we had none where the development of his country was concerned.¹ We worked shoulder to shoulder for the improvement of Sikkim's educational and medical institutions, we toured to the remotest corners of the country to ascertain and redress the people's grievances, and, most important of all, we tried to ensure that, in all the hurry and enthusiasm for change, Sikkim's essential values were not eroded away. Because, with Sikkim being a small country, our canvas was comparatively limited, we were in a position to give personal guidance, and the institutions we set up, whether a Research Institute for Tibetology or a Power-station, were designed with care and artistry so that they should blend with, and not mar, the environment of the hills and forests.

It was the custom in Tibet and Sikkim for a bride to be taken by her husband for a visit to her parents' home on the birth of her first child. The Prince had married into the house of Samdu Phodrang, amongst the most aristocratic families of Tibet, and decided to fulfil his family responsibilities by paying a visit to Lhasa. Such a visit would enable him also to feel the pulse of the Chinese and assess their attitude to Sikkim and Sikkim's relationship with India. "All went well" he wrote to

¹See in this connection the author's *'Enchanted Frontiers'* pp. 224-230. (Oxford University Press, 1971).

me from across the Sikkim-Tibet border at Yatung, "and we were received in great style, being met by the Tibetan officials and the local headmen. Then suddenly at Chumbi, the Chinese checkpoint people said we could not proceed with arms and that they should be deposited there. Then, in spite of the Tibetan officials offering to give my particulars for registration, my presence was required at the checkpoint. I thought it was to sign some paper but it was only for particulars which anyone could have given. They knew it was I, for the whole town knew, and they tried to put "Kumar" in front of my name in spite of the fact that no one mentioned the word."

His cold and unfriendly reception by the Chinese must soon have disabused him of any idea he may have entertained of being able to play off the Indians against the Chinese. The Prince used often, in jest, to draw attention to his own physical resemblance, as a Mongoloid, to the Chinese, insinuating, by way of banter, that, if India did not treat Sikkim fairly, there was another "big brother" to whom she might turn for redress. The Prince had for some years been pressing the Government of India to provide financial aid for building a rope-way between Gangtok and the Sikkim-Tibet border near the Nathu La Pass. The grounds he advanced were that it would be more economic to transport the heavy wool consignments being despatched from Tibet to India via Sikkim by rope-way than by mules and trucks, apart from the constant wear and tear on roads and the dislocation caused to normal traffic by the interminable mule-caravans and trucks passing back and forth between India and the Sikkim-Tibet border. While these economic considerations certainly weighed with him, the existence of the rope-way would also have been the symbol of some kind of link between Sikkim and China, and he perhaps had ideas, in the early years, of consolidating Sikkim's position by calling in a Chinese interest to balance the Indian. The distressing plight however of the Tibetan refugees, many of whom were his relations through his first marriage, was clear foretaste of what would be Sikkim's fate under Chinese tutelage, and the discourtesy shown to him

by Chinese officials at the border would certainly not have endeared to him his northern neighbour. If the Prince had, in the earlier stages, passed through a "Chinese" phase, subsequent developments left him in no doubt whatsoever where his sympathies lay as between his Tibetan kinsmen and their Chinese usurpers. Although India eventually agreed to provide financial aid for the rope-way's construction, the deterioration of Indo-China relations resulted in its early disuse, thus symbolising the cutting off of more than just a commercial venture.

If the Chinese showed little respect for him at Chumbi, there was compensation in his audience with the Dalai Lama on his arrival at Tibet's Capital a few weeks later. It seems incredible that he should have had time, energy and inclination to personally type and despatch me a four-paged letter on the eve of the Independence Day Celebrations to be held at the Indian Consulate, giving his first impressions of the forbidden city.

Camp: Samdu-Phodrang
Lhasa
15th August, 1954

My dear Rusty,

A personal letter from Lhasa for the first time, I did not write earlier as you were away in Delhi. First my salaams and I send my thoughts to you and Mummy, let me pause while my heart tarry with you

I had a very good interview with the Dalai Lama before he left for China. He has the head of a statesman in spite of his youth and the place being Lhasa. I was treated with more honour before him than a Shapay,¹ while Tibetan officials are not prepared to give me the same honours as a Shapay (cabinet minister) in spite of the precedents created in Darjeeling when the late Maharaja Sidkeong² was Maharaj Kumar. However, I

¹ Tibetan Cabinet Minister.

² See p. 11. The reference is to the previous Dalai Lama's flight from the Chinese to India in 1912. The Indian authorities offered him asylum in Darjeeling, where he granted audience, amongst others, to Maharaja Sidkeong of Sikkim.

do not insist on it and it is not because the grapes are sour. As I put it to some friends, since Tibet is part of China with a regional government and Sikkim a Protectorate of India, Sikkim comes before Tibet now. More about all that when we meet.

We sent our transport across the Kee-chu the Lhasa river a few days after our arrival when one State pony – black one – died crossing. Now with the floods and what not, we cannot get them back and I went to Talung¹ with borrowed mules. The ponies and mules are eating more than one load of grain per day and grain costs more than Rs.100 per load, so we have handed over the grain we received as presents to the father-in-law who is doing the feeding, or rather forking out the stuff. The cost of living is very high in Lhasa and the only thing that is cheaper here than in Gangtok is Tibetan wool. Example: Butter sells at about Rs.18 per seer. All this works up to one point, that is finance. I have written to Tseten,² and in view of the late arrival of the P.O.'s licence³ there is nothing but to juggle some money out of you on loan. As things stand we have little more than Rs.5,000 in hand and we expect to get about Rs.2,500 more from sale of Tsampa (flour) and butter that have come as presents. On the expenditure side we still have to visit the three large monasteries⁴ which will cost these days about Rs.12,000 (this is a conservative estimate given the minimum that the Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim would be expected to spend). Then we go to Samayay and Mindolling monasteries and home via Gyangtse. Even with our own mules the feeding when we take over from the in-laws will come to about Rs.150 per day. So Rs.20,000 at least is called for here which will make the total Rs.45,000. You will remember that I

¹Talung was the seat of an incarnate Lama and Labrang (chapel) long connected with the Prince's mother's family (Rakashar), whose secular head was accorded religious honours during his visits there.

²Private Secretary to the Chogyal.

³i.e. import licences granted by the Government of India to members of the royal family to help supplement their income.

⁴i.e. Drepung, Ganden and Sera, the three most renowned monasteries in the environs of Lhasa.

thought Rs. 50,000 or so would be required. I am sorry to worry you but you will be able to see the details when I return.

Talung is about 12,500 ft., much colder than Lhasa, full of beautiful flowers. But the Gods were not in my favour and so it rained the three days I was there and on the journey there and was dull weather on my way back and hence no pictures.

Speaking of pictures, the Chinese are not in favour and I can take pictures of the country and monasteries etc. but not military buildings, Chinese in government service or the Dalai Lama and the interior of monasteries. The whole place is full of Chinese, so pictures of and in Lhasa are near impossible.

Lhasa is like Gangtok, it rains every day and sometimes it is as heavy as the rains in Gangtok. The floods have caused a lot of damage in Tibet. The Gyantse¹ affair has been very sad specially when there has been so much loss of lives not only Tibetans but also of Sikkimese. But that has not been the only flood. Sometime before that, there had been floods in Po, S.E. Tibet. It is said road workers, both Chinese and Tibetans, have lost their lives in considerable numbers.

Here the party is in good shape but I am sorry to say two of the officers have not been behaving too well in their official duty; their personal behaviour, like the rest of the party, has been good. (This is for your personal knowledge and I will let you know the details on my return.) The most serious matter, however has been that they have imported into Tibet about 50 or 60 loads of prohibited stuff in my name and the same were sent to Lhasa at the expense and trouble of the Phari Kutsap,² who came to know of the facts only in Lhasa and recovered the carriage here. However, please keep this under your hat. I have not received my permit for the Motor-cycle and the 12 bicycles for which I had requested P.O. who assured me that there would be no trouble. So since the stuff have been purchased, I have had them sent for in anticipation of sanction in view of the P.O.'s assurance. I only hope they reach before I leave Lhasa.

¹Gyantse, a trading post on the route to Lhasa, was practically washed away by unprecedented floods.

²Sikkim's representative in Phari in the Chumbi valley of Tibet.

So much from this end. I hope you have had a successful visit to Delhi and the Plan has been given sanction. I also hope you have successfully paved the way to closer co-operation and less distrust on the part of the Government of India. Nepal is at last coming round and I gather they are not going to allow any more attempts on Khangchendzogna – I presume the hand of Rusty or the Rusty hand?

Well I must close now as I am late for the party Mr. Sen is giving us on Independence Day, today, and their mail bag is also being closed today. So again I leave my heart with you all and send you my love and all good wishes.

Yours most sincerely,
the only
Num

P.S. My own typing and spelling, so you can guess the words, that have mistakes.

The Prince paid a return visit to Lhasa a year later, but charged on this second occasion with an especially delicate mission. The 2,500th anniversary of the Lord Buddha's Enlightenment was planned to be celebrated in Delhi on a grandiose scale in 1956, and it had been proposed that the Dalai Lama should also be invited to grace the occasion. It was apprehended however that an invitation through routine diplomatic channels might prove abortive, as the Chinese would not favour the Tibetan pontiff leaving his homeland and establishing over-friendly contacts abroad. An invitation conveyed by the Prince in his capacity as President of the Mahabodhi Society of India would on the other hand carry special weight and it would be embarrassing for the Chinese to stand in the way of its acceptance. The Prince proceeded accordingly to Lhasa, but this time, apparently, without his typewriter, as his periodic reports to me were penned in his own hand.

Lhasa
January 1956

My dear Rusty,

Am still alive and still in Lhasa trying to get through my return calls and presents. I have had my audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and presented the Invitation (for 2500 Buddha Jayanti celebrations). He seemed keen to come but much depends on the Chinese and how they move. The general opinion here is "how can the Chinese refuse?" and none but the pro-Chinese younger officials seem reluctant to let him go to India.

I am trying to be back in Gangtok for Durbar Day¹, but if I cannot make it I thought I may as well see Kongbu (above Nefa). I had told Ongkit² to pass on the case files to you which I suspect she has not done and I am going to send a wireless telegraph reminder to the Private Secretary. I hope you do not mind my passing the BABY: I hope I will not have to rear up a family in Lhasa, as it will add to Tibet tour expenses!

Old Menon³ has been good to have me so long. From things it looks as if we are here with him for my whole stay in Tibet. He is not a bad sort but he is certainly cut off from Tibet even if he is in the capital of Tibet. His only visitor is a Chinese or two. The G of I's past policy of hob-nailing the small and kow-towing to the big is of course to blame.

Yours,
Thondup Num

There followed another letter from Lhasa shortly before his projected tour to the Kongbu area near the Tibet-Nefa border.

¹A Durbar was held annually at which decorations for distinguished service were conferred by the ruler upon officers and other deserving gentry.

²His personal assistant.

³India's Consul-General in Lhasa.

Shakarlingpu

Lhasa

8-2-1956

My dear Rusty,

I have been allowed to go as far as Temo in Po. So I will be away from Lhasa for about two weeks starting on the 11th and then will not tarry but go soon as possible home. The Chinese however insist I have a Chinese guardian angel all the way there and back. We have shifted to Lhasa and I have sent my jeep to Shigatse to get petrol. The G of I want to help but they give me very little or no help. I am going out of my way because of Apa Sahib and T. Kaul,¹ always bearing in mind, of course, that Sikkim will be at least a little better of as a result.

Poor old Menon, sometimes I feel he is not for Tibet. The Consulate General is in a very bad mess. There are only 2 people, really 2, who get on. On Republic Day, last month, celebration, I gather, people (guests) had to slip away as all the staff was drunk and fighting among themselves and the CG could not control them. The Chinks seem to get the better of old Menon every time, if it is something important, and no Tibetan sets foot in the Consulate unless it is to talk on the wireless telegraph. The Vice Consul cannot control even the menial staff, he has lived with nearly every woman on the compound. He seems to be more of an expert than me.

One third of Lhasa is Chinese and it looks as if soon it will be one half. They have built hundreds of new houses. Compared to the last time I was here, they have built twice as many houses and the city has become nearly 50% larger than two years ago.

Well I will close now as it is well after dark, and although I have no lady or not quite lady visitors, I have a little work, believe it or not, With best wishes, love and kisses.

Yours sincerely

Thondup Num

¹Political Officer in Sikkim and Joint Secretary Foreign Ministry of the Government of India, respectively.

The Prince's mission to Lhasa had evidently borne fruit and the people of Sikkim were electrified when a wireless message reached Gangtok one evening announcing the impending visit of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas to Gangtok. As far as Sikkim was concerned, the Development Plan and everything else could be safely shelved and all that mattered henceforth was to ensure that the "Living Gods" were accorded a befitting welcome. Within a few weeks of the announcement, Gangtok was transformed, every man, woman and child determined to do their utmost so that Gangtok should look her fairest for the auspicious occasion. On their eventual arrival at the Sikkim-Tibet border, the Prince and I escorted the Precious Jewels to Gangtok, where it seemed that the whole population of Sikkim had congregated to welcome them and receive their blessings. From Gangtok, the two Lamas proceeded to Delhi for the main Buddha Jayanti celebrations, after which they were shepherded around India to visit the principal centres of Buddhist pilgrimage.

For Bhutan and Sikkim, the visit of the Tibetan pontiffs to India was of more than passing significance. If the international community was to connive at China's aggression in Tibet, it was not likely that it would raise protest in the event of India seeking to tighten her control over Sikkim and Bhutan. The Prince's support of the Dalai Lama and of Tibet's struggle to remain independent of China was by no means disinterested or motivated by purely religious or humanitarian considerations, though the latter naturally played their part. Jawaharlal Nehru was delicately placed during the Lamas' visit, as he had not as yet been disillusioned as to China's ultimate ambitions and was still hoping to maintain and strengthen the friendly ties subsisting between China and India. While extending all courtesies to his august guests, he had at the same time to avoid any impression that he was interfering in what China considered to be her internal affairs by attaching undue importance to the Lamas' mission. Matters were not made easier by China's Prime Minister, Chou en Lai, deciding to visit India at this crucial juncture. There were Tibetans in

India who were hoping that Nehru would take a stronger line during his meetings with Chou en Lai and even persuade the Dalai Lama to stay back in India rather than return to Lhasa as a puppet of the Chinese. For the Dalai Lama too, it was a difficult choice. He would not wish to appear to be deserting his people by staying back in India, apart from the embarrassment he might be causing to his hosts by overstaying his welcome. But above all he felt his place was with his people in Tibet at this time of crisis, whatever might be the risk to his own person. The international community, moreover, was lukewarm to his tentative overtures, and he decided the wiser course to be a return to his country.

It was not long after the Dalai Lama's final departure for Lhasa through Sikkim in 1957 that the Prince suffered the first of the many tragic blows of his life in the sudden death of his lovely young wife, Sangedikila. This was more than just a personal tragedy. Though Sangedikila came of one of the most powerful and aristocratic families of Lhasa, she was a modest young girl, who won respect from her innate dignity of bearing. She did not say very much, but she was possessed of some very essential quality of practical common sense which would have served as a much-needed stabilising force to the Prince if she had lived. It was the loss of this, as much as any positive influence of his second wife, that led him sometimes to swerve from what might have been a more politic course in subsequent years.

To add to the Prince's distress, his younger brother, a charming and intelligent young man who had been sent for further studies to Delhi, Bombay and Oxford and was being groomed, on his return, to assist the Prince in running the administration, also suffered a serious nervous breakdown necessitating psychiatric treatment abroad. These two blows, coming at a time when he needed all the support available to steer a steady course amidst the increasingly turbid political waters, gravely undermined his mental equilibrium and he took recourse for a time to alcohol for solace in his sorrows.

He was fond of me and respected me, and as long as I was near at hand in Sikkim, I was able to exercise a restraining influence. But here too, there were limitations. Despite his affection for and trust in me, there lurked always, perhaps in his sub-conscious, the apprehension that, as a senior officer of the Government of India, I must be influenced to some degree by my prime loyalties. I was, after all, a bird of passage in Sikkim and would be reverting, after my tenure, to serve as a cog in the mighty machine of the Government of India. Nobody wants to blot his copy-book and I still had too many years ahead of me to risk jeopardising my career. It was only natural that such considerations must be weighing on his mind.

I saw it as my task to keep smooth the Prince's relations not only with the political parties but also with the Government of India. For all his outward charm, he would at times be infuriatingly obstinate, and these were the occasions when my mediation alone could be effective in keeping him on an even keel. On conclusion of my tenure in Sikkim and return to my former assignment in Shillong in 1959, there was nobody left with the authority, or concern, to counsel restraint and his relations both with the politicians in Sikkim and the Government of India steadily worsened.

Although physically at a distance, however, the Prince continued to consult me, by telephone, letter or by arranging personal meetings, on every matter of importance in his private or public affairs. For several years after my departure, I offered guidance by a sort of remote control, but he came eventually under pressure of other hands nearer home and moved out of my effective influence.

Within less than a year of my leaving Sikkim, I was distressed to learn from his letters of the deterioration in his relations not only with the political parties within Sikkim but also with the Political Officer and the Government of India.

The Palace, 1960
Gangtok

My dear Mummy,¹

... They have formed a new party, the Sikkim National Congress, and are at present shouting on loudspeakers all over the place against the Durbar and Dewan. They have used some strong language also. They seem to be following the popular communist tactics of trying to make people feel they have a grievance, and that they are the martyrs with the object of breaking down the established system and social order. At the same time they are, through the press, making out that Sikkim is on the verge of revolt and the Chinese are about to invade it. We are not getting any co-operation from the Government of India. May be it is because personalities are involved. I have already had one really big blow up with Apa² but at present we seem to be friends again. . . .

The army is moving in more and more and they are going to have a large cantonment at Living, below the Chorten,³ and all the area above Tadong Bazaar, about 260 acres. Our little bands of Guards⁴ are increasing slowly. Three have returned from training and 10 more have been sent for training. I am thinking of an officer. There is one chap that way in the 4th Maharattas, a Major Kumar. If Rusty ever meets him I would be grateful for his opinion. The police is still infiltrated with one group who are not so good people and try to recruit that way only.

I think I have written enough so I shall close now. Love to all and please remember that we now have a Guest House and you are most welcome even if we have to turn out some Japanese or Union Minister from it.

Yours
Thondup La

¹i.e., my mother, of whom the Prince was very fond.

²Apa Saheb Pant, the Political Officer in Sikkim.

³The Buddhist Stupa constructed on a hillock near the approach to Gangtok for ensuring the good fortune of Sikkim and the Palace.

⁴The Prince was recruiting a small para-military force for palace security duties as also for association with the Indian army towards Sikkim's defence in case of need.

I was particularly alarmed at his acrimonious reference to Apa Pant, who had been the Political Officer during my tenure in Sikkim and whom I had thought to be an officer sympathetic to Sikkim's interests. "Old Apa" he complained, "is now morbidly out after my blood. He is trying to appropriate anything he can of Sikkim affairs, ranging from Nepotism in Sikkim Durbar appointments to claiming rights to interfere in internal affairs. I see an entirely different Apa from when he first joined. The comparison becomes more acute when he talks of his association with Mahatma Gandhi and the high philosophy which guides him." It appears from a letter written a short time later that some progress had at one juncture been achieved by him in mending fences with Delhi, only to be nullified by the Political Officer's indignation that he had been by-passed.

The Prince had for some time past been feeling that the proliferation of Government of India offices in a small country like Sikkim would indirectly, if not directly, undermine the authority of the Sikkim administration and in this he was not far wrong. Salaries of Government of India posts were higher than of posts under the Sikkim Government and loyalties of the people tended to veer towards where their material interests appeared brighter, i.e., the Indian Residency. The Political Officer, Apa Saheb Pant, for all the façade of friendliness towards Sikkim, was building up a strong power centre that the Prince saw would overshadow and overwhelm his own authority unless curbed in time. With the increasing presence of the Indian Army in Sikkim, the Prince was also anxious to constitute a modest militia under his own control, designated as the Sikkim Guard, if only as token that, although defence was, under the Treaty, the responsibility of the Government of India, Sikkim had nevertheless a share in the discharge of such responsibility.

The Prince's next letter was from Delhi, where he had proceeded in order to represent his problem at the highest political and official levels.

New Delhi

My dear Rusty,

How are things going with you? The Nagas, the Chinese, the roads, the Tribal customs etc. I suppose many are still Top Secrets so please do not answer, classifying is a difficult business.

Surprised I am here? Well, it looks like I will have to come back again in another 6 weeks or 2 months. Since our (You & I) last meeting I had a very successful visit here. The P.M., F.S., J.Ss. etc. were all most understanding helpful. We asked for nothing that was not proper and I got all that we requested, e.g. Militia of sorts, stopped the growth of the Political Officer's press, all Public Works Department projects in Sikkim must be done by us and, only when we cannot deliver the goods, the Indian Govt.'s Public Works Department should come in – this may mean our Sikkim Public Works Department will have to be increased to 3 Divisions; the Police checkpoints shall be completely ours and the Indian I.B. will post their men separately – no dual control, administration of Tibetan Refugees to be ours and the P.O. to be the only channel from the Government of India etc., etc. We were all so happy but “in flew the wicked witch in terrible anger”,¹ and things are being upset or bogged down. So far we have made some progress but our intentions and I are being poisoned in the minds of important people and wrong impressions of past practices have been given. It is now not sure if our P.M. can be put on the rails again. I miss you so, Oh for our fights and filthy words!

Thank the Lord you have a good P.M. and some nice people (e.g. yourself?) in Delhi. You must be fully aware of the great advantages of having P.O.s *under* you unlike us. I wish I could meet elusive you to talk some things over. I am very much engaged with VIPs and Planning Commissions for the next 2 months, so if mountain would condescend to come to Gangtok to meet Mohammad, it would be of great help and most welcome.

¹ Presumably Apa Saheb Pant.

New Delhi.



THE PALACE,
GANGTOK,
SIKKIM.

12-3-61

My dear Rusty,

How are things going with you? The Nagas, the Chinese, the roads, the Tribal Customs etc. I suppose many are still Top Secrets so please do not answer, classifying is a difficult business.

Surprised I am here? Well it looks like I will have to come back again in another 6 weeks or 2 months. Since ^(10m+9) our last meeting I had a very successful visit here. The P.M., F.S., J.Ss, etc were all most understanding & helpful. We asked for nothing that was not proper and I got all that we requested. e.g. Militia of etc, stopped

Father and we all had an interesting tour and the Government of India fed us so well that we all put on pounds (now kilos) by the time things came to an end. The liaison officer was put to much difficulty in trying to solve the whisky problem as supplies were thoroughly miscalculated. They did not know the capacity of four champion tipsters – viz. Yuthok, Baleswar, Chibber¹ and myself. You must have read the reviews on Father's paintings, the exhibitions went off well.

With much love,

Yours as ever,
Thondup

¹i.e. his brother-in-law (Yuthok), the Dewan (Baleswar Prasad) and the Ex-Consul-General, Lhasa (Chibber).

An American Queen

It was while the Prince was seeking relief in Darjeeling from the mounting tensions with the political parties and the Government of India that he met and fell in love with Hope Cooke, a shy American girl scarcely out of her teens. Hope Cooke's had been a lonely childhood. Her mother had died in an air-crash, probably suicidal, after a brief and unhappy marriage. Hope was only two years old at the time and was brought up by her maternal grandparents, good people of sound and solid stock, but who looked upon the rearing of their grandchild more as a necessary duty than a happiness and joy. Hope's father had never been fully accepted by her mother's family, as he was, in their opinion beneath themselves in the social scale. If he had a modicum of love for his daughter, he was not given encouragement to give it expression and it was not long before he remarried and lost interest in her.

Hope was a girl of above-average intelligence. Sensitive perhaps even to excess, her talents lay in many directions, including music, drawing and literature. But it was her solitary childhood and rejection by her father that probably account for her inclination towards philosophy and the mysticism of eastern lands. When, therefore, her uncle, who was her legal guardian, was posted as, his country's ambassador to Teheran, Hope was only too happy to join him and have an opportunity to be at closer quarters with countries and peoples whom she had studied up to now mainly from books. Her reading of Asian

history and culture at the prestigious Sarah Lawrence College, where she subsequently graduated, was extensive and thorough, and her thirst for travel and first-hand experience took her eventually to India and the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim. For India, she had feelings that were deep, if not passionate. "Unlike Russia", as she observed in her autobiography¹ written some years after her final departure from the east, but in which she recalled her first encounter with India after her flight over Russia, "which seems to me long ago to have ceased being idealistic and, ironically, remains interesting only for its national character, India is aflame with ideas as well as national spirit. Among all the world leaders only Nehru seems to keep all values together: a respect for the past soul of India and its continued vitality today, a profound dedication to the physical and economic uplift of his people, and a crusade for the freedom and dignity of people everywhere. It is an honour to be going there even briefly to witness India's past and the great strides being taken toward its future. My heart quickens as we fly down over the heartlands of central U.S.S.R. toward Tashkent and eventually Delhi."

But it was to Sikkim that she lost her heart. For during her stay in the hill-station of Darjeeling bordering this little Himalayan kingdom, she met her husband to be, the heir to the Sikkim throne. He was then forty years old, just twice her age, but still youthful in appearance and spirit. His first wife, as we have seen, had died a few years earlier, leaving him two sons and an infant daughter. He was in need of a helpmate to bring up his children and run his home; but, above all, he was in need of love and companionship. His, too, had been a lonely and difficult childhood, and their shared feeling of loneliness acted as a bond that drew them closer together.

The Prince was, essentially, a traditionalist, and did not look kindly upon Sikkimese marrying outside their own community. His had been a life dedicated to the preservation of

¹"Time Change—An Autobiography" by Hope Cooke. Simon and Schuster, New York 1980.

his country's identity and integrity. There was thus unhappiness in some quarters in Sikkim when word went round that he proposed to marry an American. It had been the custom since time immemorial for the Sikkim ruler to seek his bride, as indeed had the Prince in the case of his first marriage, from Tibet, and there were many who had grave forebodings of the implications of a change in this time-honoured practice. There had been some talk earlier in the century of the Prince's uncle, Maharaja Sidkeong Tulku,¹ who had been educated in western ways and read at Oxford, marrying a Burmese princess, but the more orthodox amongst the Sikkimese were not in favour and the proposal was dropped. In the case of Hope Cooke too, there was at first strong opposition. The proposal was, however, eventually accepted by the *Lhadimidi*, the Council of Elders, which, by tradition, was summoned by the ruler to tender advice on vital issues of customary usage.

The Prince consulted me before taking a final decision and invited me to meet Hope Cooke both at Gangtok and at Calcutta. I gave my blessings to the marriage, aware as I was of his deep need for companionship and for someone to mother his children and keep house for him, and they were married in a blaze of publicity in March 1963. By a strange coincidence, my own second marriage took place at Bombay within the same week as his and we could not therefore participate in each other's nuptials. I came to know later, however, of the scale and style of the Sikkim celebrations and was becoming somewhat apprehensive of the implications of this new alliance. The guest list was indication enough of the "New Look" that his American bride was fast bringing to Sikkim in her train. Sikkim was making her debut on the world stage. This was the first occasion in history that foreigners from distant continents were being invited to grace a Sikkimese royal wedding and it was important that they should carry back with them the impression not of a mediaeval, feudal backwater but of a progressive, enlightened country capable of standing on its

¹See p. 11

own feet and deserving of being given a chance to do so. The plethora of foreign diplomats and relatives, however, with their old-world morning coats and western-style regalia, almost outnumbered the Sikkimese gentility, who seemed relegated to the position of back stage observers. And the expense incurred on the festivities was out of all proportion to the country's resources.

The Prince had up to now been consistently stressing the necessity of adhering to customary usage for the survival of Sikkim's identity and had looked askance at marriages between Bhutia-Lepchas and Nepalese as likely to undermine the solidarity of the minorities. It was only by standing together as one in all matters, political as well as social, that he felt the minorities had a chance of survival. By marrying an American, he laid himself open to the charge of acting against his own widely proclaimed principles. Hope was aware of the Prince's predicament and no woman could have done more to try to spare him embarrassment. If she was not Sikkimese by blood, she was determined to prove herself Sikkimese by adoption, and took infinite pains to assimilate herself to the ways and habits of the traditional Bhutia and Lepcha communities. She wore Sikkimese dress, served Sikkimese beer¹ in rustic bamboo "pipes" at Palace functions, picked up a smattering of the Bhutia and Lepcha languages and conversed in scarcely audible whispers in the manner of high-ranking ladies of the Tibetan aristocracy. She gave a strong impetus to the development of traditional Sikkimese arts and crafts by paying frequent visits to the State's Institute for Cottage Industries, and took initiative in applying traditional Sikkimese textile designs to articles of day-to-day utility such as handbags, carpets and cushions. It was thanks largely to her close and keen supervision that the quality of Sikkimese handicrafts was improved and maintained at a high level.

Apart from her interest in revivifying the traditional arts,

¹The beer was a brew of millet, sucked up by a straw from a bamboo container resembling a pipe.

Hope was also instrumental in gaining wider publicity for Sikkim outside the Indian subcontinent. She travelled extensively with her husband, and, as a handsome pair from a strange and exotic land, they attracted attention wherever they moved. The interest aroused in Sikkim by these visits gave the Prince the opportunity he was seeking of clarifying his country's status as an independent entity having special treaty relations with India. He wished to dispel the notion that Sikkim stood on the same constitutional footing as the erstwhile Princely States of India and could as summarily be absorbed by India whenever she chose. He wished Sikkim to be regarded in the same light as her two Himalayan neighbours, Bhutan and Nepal. Bhutan, he knew, was stretching out feelers for admission to the United Nations. India's treaty with Sikkim was not, however, identical to her treaty with Bhutan. India was vested with specific responsibility for Sikkim's defence and foreign relations, whereas Bhutan was only to be "guided by the advice of the Government of India." In other respects too, such as in the sphere of communications, the control of India over Sikkim was tighter than in the case of Bhutan. The Prince had never been able to reconcile himself to what he considered a discriminatory approach. Sikkim, in his view, was far more advanced than Bhutan. His country had been equipped with a network of basic road communications and had established a nucleus of schools and hospitals at least fifty years earlier than Bhutan. He could see no justification therefore in India's refusal to recognise Sikkim's status as being equal to that of Bhutan.

The Prince was, as a rule, discreet enough. But he was liable to let fall utterances in his cups which caused eyebrows to be raised in the staid and stern corridors of India's Foreign Ministry. He was not blind to the practical realities of his situation. He had seen for himself how British Political Officers had in the past functioned in their dealings with the Sikkim ruler and the over-riding authority they had exercised. Except therefore in his unguarded moments, he had the good sense to keep his peace, in the realisation that, if he stepped

beyond a point, the Government of India's patience would be exhausted to Sikkim's ultimate detriment. He could thus succeed in retaining to some extent the confidence and goodwill of the Indian Government. He was held in deep regard and affection by the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who respected his views and felt sympathy for him in his championing of his country's rights and interests.

His consort, however, lacked in her youth his maturity and experience. In her zeal to out-Sikkimese the Sikkimese, she committed indiscretions that served no purpose but to cause embarrassment to her husband and create a climate of hostility and suspicion as between himself and Indian officialdom. The Prince was provoked, under her influence, to make demands upon the Government of India to a degree he would not have ventured if left to his own better judgement. From the viewpoint of relations with the Indian Government, the Prince's foreign tours were of negative value and damaging to his image as a friend and ally upon whom India could rely and place trust.

Within Sikkim too, the marriage brought about a perceptible change in the Prince's style of functioning. For despite her efforts to assimilate with the Sikkimese, it was not humanly possible for Hope to shed her essential American core. Whereas, after his first marriage, the guests of the Prince were more often from Tibet and the life style of the Palace was to that extent Tibetan, the Prince was now seen to entertain many more guests from the homeland of his consort and her friends. Tibetan guests were left to make themselves at home in the town, where they had acquaintances and relations, and did not require so much cosseting. It was different with his American and European friends, who expected the Prince to personally show them round his country and its institutions. An increasing proportion of the Prince's time was taken up in entertaining foreign guests, and his officers were finding difficulty in obtaining access to him for discussing and obtaining orders on affairs of State.

In earlier days, the Prince spent much of his time moving

informally amongst his people and we often toured the country together during my tenure as Prime Minister. As we travelled during the day or relaxed in camp in the evenings, he would be freely approached by villagers coming to him with their troubles. The informality of his style of functioning enabled him to feel the pulse of his people and endeared him to the villagers. On my visits to Sikkim in later years, I missed the simple informality of old. Whether in the Palace or on tour, the Prince was so pre-occupied with his foreign guests that he had less time left for his own people. The publicity Sikkim had earned through the American marriage attracted a ceaseless stream of visitors and the Prince felt personally obliged to attend upon his guests to ensure that they should carry away with them the impression of his country that he was seeking to project. While therefore the marriage brought Sikkim for a time into the limelight, it had the grave and harmful effect of creating a distance between the Prince and his people. And for all the external trappings and trimmings of traditional Sikkimese culture that were so much in evidence in the Palace at the periphery, the pulse that beat deep within was of a Euro-American rhythm that was essentially alien to the spirit of the country.

Hope was, again, instrumental, albeit innocently, in drawing the Prince apart not only from his people and from his old and trusted advisers, but also from his own family members. Prior to his marriage, the Prince leant heavily for support on his very charming and brilliant sisters, Princess Kula and Princess Coocoola. Princess Coocoola combined in herself the glamour and exoticism of the orient with all the sophistication and culture of the west. She functioned as the Prince's roving ambassador, whether in the corridors of power in New Delhi or socialising with the American President's aides in Washington. She was the Prince's chief hostess at State functions, as well as the chatelaine of his Palace.

Princess Coocoola had always kept her ears very close to the ground as far as Sikkim's local politics were concerned and was even more forthright than Hope in speaking out her mind on

delicate issues affecting India's relationship with her Protectorate. Some five years previously, a proposal had been mooted that Indian residents of fixed habitat in Sikkim should be entitled to representation in the Sikkim Council. (Hitherto only the Bhutia-Lepcha and Nepalese communities had been eligible for such representation). I was Prime Minister of Sikkim at the time, and her reaction to the proposal may be judged by her letter of protest urging me to resist it.

Calcutta
26-11-58

Dearest Uncle,

Thank you so much for your most welcome note and the photograph. I've given Kula her copy and she is thrilled. Oh dear—good morning. It's the 27th today. Hectic time yesterday. Work as usual.

You know, I'm losing quite a lot of sleep these days, and again, it's the darn "general seat." You're not going to agree to the seat being available to "any resident of fixed habitat", are you? It's preposterous and is not only another move to undermine the individuality of Sikkim but I feel has been manoeuvred by our non-Sikkimese business friends. This is the third attempt, and, a little more cleverly than formerly, is being done through a second party. Correct? It's, it's *un-heard* of in other countries. It's absurd and, if it were not so serious, quite ridiculously funny.

We have no proper immigration check at the moment, do we? The immigrants want a lot of demands fulfilled and now this. Not a single other country would allow anything like this. Another infiltration by foreign elements and this time directly into the Council. There is a steady stream of small little such and similar matters, that, together, sap a formidable amount of the country's individuality. You agree? I'll bet you twenty to one if it is ruled that "any person of fixed habitat" is allowed—the *Marwaree* gentlemen will try to capture the seat. You've been a friend to Sikkim, uncle. Resolve yet one more of her problems, won't you? After all you look after the

administration, and don't compromise on a major issue like the present one. You know what will happen? Compromise will achieve a surface smooth running for your tenure of office – and naturally, not having been dealt with firmly, the matter will crop up again. I'm being very outspoken. But, it (no clear settlement) will be a liability to future administration. Also, will provide a wonderful handle for blackening the reputation of the one that follows as administrator. Eventually, the day will arrive when Chola¹ will be faced with the same old questions. You, of course, realize the handicap he would have to face? Partiality, non-cooperation and, *if* the G of I should feel like it, – why, the most useful, ready-made excuse to interfere in internal affairs. It's not *fair*, uncle. But if our Marwaree friends with the help of the Sikkim Congress *do* carry their point, – well, any policy issue will of course be carried through by them with the great financial resources at their command – they will do it in return for business facilities back in India. Believe me, these are no idle words. I've got to know some things through spending an occasional short spell in India. If you could see the corruption they spread! Why don't you make a confidential check on their reputations with the Income-tax, Sales Tax, Customs and Special Preventive and Enforcement Branch, Police? Yes, of the aspirants to the general seat. They're a canker that will rot the country through. All other countries have their problems and take measures. Look at Ceylon and Burma and now even U.K. The idea of any person of fixed habitat being given the seat is foreign to the interests of any country concerned and more so to Sikkim that is struggling to retain a little of her individuality. The Indian business community is interested. But the P.O. is there to look after their interests. Desperation can drive people, uncle, and the Marwarees being what they are, once they have the Sikkimese in economic bondage – what solution is there? What would you do as a Sikkimese? Would you try and combat one evil with yet another one? So many in

¹Sikkimese for "elder brother," i.e. the Prince.

An American Queen

the world today have been driven to it. Wouldn't you, with the interests of your country at heart, fight money with money? And no Sikkimese is wealthy, remember.

It's always been tough on Sikkim. Encroachment and infiltration make the whole show a farce and a sham and utterly humiliating. But you're there. On the spot. So much lies within your hands. Disorientate yourself from the past and former environment, trying to act as care-taker in a country where temporary surface placidity or lack of it did not, could not, affect the fundamental stature of individuality of the country. Think of yourself as a Sikkimese, a citizen of a very small country struggling – albeit against odds, such odds! but still struggling – to retain some measure of her intrinsic character. For a moment, drop your veneer of detachment and feel. For one day look about you with an eagerness to accept, to taste, to utilise your senses. Let the sensations pour in, be alive to them. Don't repress, evade or stultify. Just for twenty four hours, uncle, *live* and you'll understand. Be alive to life. Meet the breeze off the Nathu La, gaze your full on Kangchendzonga, scrunch across gravel and the grass, breathe in the life of the people, and, late in the evening, gaze into the flames, bright blue flames of the cherry logs and see visions, visions. Be at one with yourself.

Life can be wonderful. I sit here talking to you. I know you'll understand and not take offence. If you do – just tell me off. By return of post. Once more back to the grind.

Much love and bless you.

Coocoola

Princess Coocoola saw in Hope a rival to her hold over the Prince, and Hope, in her turn, as soon made it clear that it was she, as Queen, who was the First Lady. Hope's contacts with powerful American Senators were an incitement to Princess Coocoola to demonstrate to the Prince that she too was no less stalwart a champion of her country's cause. Her statements to the world press deprecating India's manhandling of her Protectorate served however only to worsen the Prince's

already sullied relations with the Indian authorities. The Government of India had, as a friendly gesture to the Prince on the occasion of his coronation, agreed to recognise his adoption of the Tibetan title, Chogyal, signifying "King who rules according to the Divine Law." As a title with religious connotations, it carried no implications touching Sikkim's international status as an independent entity. Princess Coocoola, however, interpreted the gesture otherwise, and, while sending out invitations some time later to the wedding of her daughter, assumed for herself the honorific "Her Royal Highness". This was disapproved by the Government of India and a circular was promptly issued by the Indian Foreign Ministry clarifying Government's stand.

If Hope had restricted the field of her activities to cottage industries and such like domestic concerns, there would not have been much problem. No one could expect a woman with her background, education and enterprise to sit idling away her days on the mountain tops. But it was soon becoming evident that her sights were set higher, and that her husband, perhaps even subconsciously, was being encouraged in the belief that, through her support and diplomatic lobbying, he could bring external pressures to bear on the Indian Government. If Hope had been as aware as her husband of the historical background of Sikkim's relationship with the British Indian Government, she would not have risked the sowing in his mind of high-falutin ambitions which would be more than likely to lead to his downfall. The marriage was thus, to some extent, the turning point of his and his kingdom's fortunes. For though Hope had started off with extravagant praises of India and her culture, the tune was changed when she was ultimately enthroned and pictured herself in mind's eye as Queen of a sovereign state. It was the pride and the perversity of the Government of India, as she saw it, that were standing in the way of this final consummation, and if only her husband would assert himself instead of listening to his Indian advisers, the path was clear.

Within two years of the marriage, Sir Tashi Namgyal passed

away, after a reign of nearly fifty years and beloved by all his people. Sir Tashi's illness came at a time when the Prince's stock with the Government of India was at a low ebb and the Government of India had evidently decided to dispense with kid gloves and talk tough. The Prince was a Founder Member of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute and took the opportunity, during one of its meetings at New Delhi, to call on the Foreign Secretary and explain his stand.

Ashok Hotel
New Delhi
8-11-63

My Dear Rusty,

.....
I am here for a meeting of the H.M.I. I shall be trying to see Foreign Secretary as well. The last time about 2 weeks ago he was MAD. The dear old chappies from Gangtok had been at it. I was surprised to see a sheaf of notes "Maharaj Kumar said so-and-so on-at lunch, so-and-so dt. M.K. said-on-at dinner" etc., all out of context and some allegations apparently to support some sort of a case.

The usual is the charge, anti-Indian talks conform to Chinese propoganda. Mulish, obstructive, anti-army. Another old one, wants his own army and then will ask Indian army to quit. It is sad people can be so gullible and such fools. Anyway it is not new. All in the days work now. The General¹ at home can at least say how good we have been and every complaint is genuine. Excuse the spelling again, you should by now be spelling like me.

Haldipur² is good. Thanks for naming him, but you must give him advice from time to time.

Things are not so bad on the home front but the P.O. and

¹The Indian Army dispositions in Sikkim were under the command of a Major-General headquartered at Gangtok.

²I had, on the Prince's request for suggesting a name recommended Mr. Haldipur for the post of Principal Administrative Officer, Sikkim. This post replaced the post of Dewan.

army wanting a lot of land is a problem. Father is returning this Tuesday to Calcutta and will fly home after 2 or 3 days rest in Calcutta. Things are not good with his health. He is a very ill man and there is not much that can be done.

Glad to hear you will come to see us in Gangtok soon. Do come, we will give you the low down.

Thondup

I was in Bhutan, where I had moved on from Shillong (in 1963) as Adviser to the King, when I received news of Sir Tashi's death. Although he had not played an active part in the administration of his country, Sir Tashi had been nevertheless a stabilising force and the Prince was deeply conscious of the heavier responsibility that now weighed upon him as King.

The Palace, Gangtok
22-12-63

My dear Rusty,

Thank you for your letter. The warm feelings and thoughts you have transmitted move us and encourage us. I hope you will come to Sikkim whenever convenient specially now.

Well we must all move on and sooner or later we must all depart. We are already more than half way and, in what life spans we have, we must do our duty to family and country. So many people have written and so many have come. I hope I shall be able to win even a little of the faith and goodwill late father was able to win. Not only for himself but for Sikkim.

Work here gets more complicated. The parties are not that important as they all depend on the support of the people and you cannot bluff people for ever, specially with education coming on. The population problem and integration is a great task.

There is the human problem with so many men, army and labourers. But there are other problems when people are forced out of their houses within 8 hours, their crops forbidden to be harvested. These pain both Sikkim and India, but we are small,

and funny pictures are drawn in Delhi. It is sad. More so because our people have had it so good for so long that decay sets in so easily. Something like the fall of the Roman Empire, no initiative, determination and sacrifice for country. Anyway life must go on and we are not too badly off. The Governmental machine is of course poor, gone from bad to worst.

The L.P.'s or most of them, have come. We are not playing any, so you need not worry. Why not try to come soon? Lots to talk.

Hope is O.K. She is doing the usual showing the house with an N.B.C. team. They are very nice people. She will go into confinement in Calcutta. I shall be taking her there end of January.

The kids are all here. Ours, Pheankhangs, Yuthoks etc. Those studying in Europe will return middle of January. I hope I shall be able to run there and back for just a week. Money problems.

Gangtok is lovely with sunshine, new mantle of snows for the mountains and chill in the air. The only thing is there are so many non-Sikkimese and the whole place resounds and vibrates to the blasting going on to widen the Tibet road.

Bye for now,

Love,
Thondup

The coronation in 1965 was conducted in even ampler style than the wedding, with Indira Gandhi¹ attending as a guest of the Palace. I was myself summoned from Bhutan to assist in the preparation of the Speech from the Throne. This might well be regarded as the Prince's finest hour. Foreign dignitaries of the highest diplomatic level were in attendance, and there was no question that, as against the days of the British raj, it was the Prince, and not the Indian Political Officer, who was the centre of attention and attraction. Personally, I felt a sense of unease

¹Indira Gandhi was at that time Minister for Information and Broadcasting in the cabinet of Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succeeded Nehru as Prime Minister.

that rather more importance was attached to attending to the requirements and seating of guests from abroad than to high ranking dignitaries of Sikkim itself. This was perhaps inevitable, as many of them had come at considerable expense from distant lands as Palace invitees and the aim was to win friends for Sikkim from the international community. The elaborate ritual of the coronation, as handed down from the time of the first Chogyal consecrated in 1641, was discharged by the Lamas with deep solemnity and the most exacting precision, after which the Prince delivered the Speech from the Throne.¹ He spoke with dignity and assurance, and there was emotion in his voice as it rose to a crescendo with the concluding pledge: "Together, by the Grace of the Tri Ratna, may we make of Sikkim a paradise on earth. Let this be our pledge today, and let us pray that we are given strength so that we fail not in its fulfilment."

The Prince was now, *de jure* as well as *de facto*, Chogyal or King and it soon became evident that Hope relished playing Queen. She was gifted with a sense of the theatrical and the part offered infinite possibilities. She had, for backdrop, the snow-capped peaks of Sikkim's guardian mountain deity, Kanchenjunga, for plot the political and diplomatic manoeuvrings over Sikkim's identity and the Prince's role in a democratic set-up, and for audience the world itself. For there was a magic that attracted attention from far and wide in the name of this seeming Shangrila, with its Prince Charming and his highly talented American consort presiding royally and graciously over their loyal, silken-robed subjects. Hope realised, however, that unless public opinion within Sikkim itself could be effectively mobilised, there was little prospect of the raising of Sikkim's status under the Treaty being seriously taken note of. It was in this view that she gave encouragement to the activities of the Youth Study Forum, an organisation established with the objective of highlighting the need for safe-guarding Sikkim's identity and countering any

¹See Appendix 1.

move to bring the country under tighter control of the Protecting Power. Members of the Youth Study Forum enjoyed the patronage of the Palace and were also assisted in obtaining scholarships for study in various disciplines abroad.

It was during the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965 that I heard on the radio early one morning of the Chinese demand for withdrawal of Indian fortifications and military personnel alleged to be situated on the Chinese side of the international frontier near the Nathu La Pass in Sikkim. The demand for withdrawal was coupled with an ultimatum that, failing such withdrawal, the Chinese would themselves take action to vindicate the frontier.

I happened to be in Calcutta at the time, as was also the Prince, and telephoned him at once to ascertain whether he had any information of the Chinese threat. He was asleep when the telephone rang in his flat, but I had him woken up and informed him of the radio report. He had received no news whatsoever from any source, either from Sikkim, the Government of India or the Army. As Adviser to the King of Bhutan, I had of course no *locus standi* as far as Sikkim was concerned. I prepared for him nevertheless a statement for the Press, denying the Chinese allegations and affirming that the people of Sikkim "would resist to the last man" any aggression into their country. While confirming India's responsibility for the protection of his country, the statement gave expression to the Prince's confidence that, should the need arise, his people "would be proud and happy to lay down their lives in Sikkim's defence". I also considered this to be an opportune time to broadcast a talk¹ on the radio on the implications of the Chinese ultimatum. The object of all this exercise was to underline the Prince's stand that, whereas under the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950, India assumed responsibilities for Sikkim's defence, external affairs and communications, such responsibilities were expected by the Prince to be exercised in consultation with the Sikkim Durbar and with the respect due to Sikkim's status as a Protectorate.

¹ See Appendix 2.

The Indian Take-over

I reverted, in 1966, from Bhutan to my old pastures in Assam, but the Prince continued to call upon me for assistance whenever he was in doubt or difficulties. I was beginning to find, however, that, although he approached me for advice on the slightest provocation, he was falling more and more under the influence of his wife and other nearer contacts. I used to visit Sikkim with my family every October for my annual holiday and could notice also a distinct change from year to year in the style of life in the Palace.

The major concentration of activity henceforward seemed to be on building up an international image for Sikkim and Hope set herself up as the Prince's Chief of Public Relations. She was tireless in her efforts to keep the Prince, Sikkim and herself in the public eye and to present Sikkim to the world as a country whose wings were being systematically clipped by an aggressive Protector. Wherever opportunity offered, whether in or outside Sikkim, the Press were in constant attendance, with interviews on television which more than hinted that India was not treating her Protectorate justly. An article of hers in a bulletin of Sikkim's Institute of Tibetology¹ raised a minor storm in India, on the ground that it offended against the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950. Hope had claimed in the article that the transfer of Darjeeling to the British in 1835² had been illegal, and that, in this view, Sikkim theoretically still retained her sovereignty over the territory. The Indian public was enraged at

¹See p. 43.

²See p. 9.

the suggestion and indignant questions were asked in Parliament. It was pleaded on her behalf that the bulletin was an academic journal of which she was only one of the several editors and that she had raised the question purely as a theoretical issue and not with any political motive. But the damage was already done and the Prince forfeited much goodwill as a result of his wife's ill-advised initiative.

But apart from her public stance, Hope was also sowing seeds of discontent in the Prince's mind as regards his treatment at the hands of the Government of India. There were insinuations of affront when none such was intended and there was nothing that the Government of India or its officers could do right. Further, she was possessive of the Prince to such a degree that she resented his leaning on the advice of even his oldest and most trusted friends and advisers.

The Prince and his wife were both highly strung by temperament and tensions started mounting after the first rapturous years of marriage. It was at such times that the one or other of them would come to my home in Shillong to allow passions to cool. Hope spent a happy fortnight in my home in 1967 and it was a relief for her to come picnicing with us in the hills and pine forests away from the politics and squabbles of Gangtok. She was a woman of many interests, and as we were both curious to know whether the Shillong pine and peach could be introduced to Sikkim, I arranged for stackloads of saplings of each variety to be despatched with her on her return journey for trial by the Sikkim Forest Department. Her account of her journey home gives a wonderfully vivid description of travel during the monsoon months in the flood-ravaged borderlands of Assam and Bhutan, apart from reflecting her abounding sense of fun.

The Palace
Gangtok

Dear Rusti & Avi,

Please forgive this delay in writing to you. Upon return home my usual torpor set in almost at once & I have been

good for little. It was so lovely to stay with you in Shillong. A really conscious & happy week. Please know how much I appreciate your letting me come and your many kindnesses. I'm afraid I really disrupted much of your schedule. My trip back was quite an Odyssey—was it the Gauhati D.C.¹ who pronounced your misadventure unusual? Well. At 7 the next morning we woke up at Fakiragram. After 4 hours they brought a pot of tea by Pedicab to the train. After another hour they announced that we must move to another train which proved to be about 1 mile up the track from Fakiragram. We moved up the platform looking very like security officers under our burdens of peach saplings and young pines. We were shown into a compartment with a jolly Burmese family numbering five & a young Assamese mother with a petulant child. It was not too bad though, because one window we could pry up so about 3 inches of air could come in. And the Burmese women were gregarious and chatted entertainingly to us as we were reading. Every section of the track seemed to be flooded however. We would go one hour, and stop one, or two or three. At Koch Bihar we stopped a long time and then just as we pulled out of the station a young village boy had laid down on the track and was shattered. It happened right under our window and for an hour we had to stay there as the train officials tried to get the local people to claim the boy. That really destroyed what was left of my morale. About now the Burmese and Assamese people changed compartments and a young Brigadier's daughter came in. She was kind of overpowering and impeccable and beautiful to boot. We had got no food in the train and had shared your very kind packed picnic with the previous incumbents of the compartment. It was now 5 and we were pretty hungry and fortunately had half the cake left but no knife. Every time the young lady would remove herself to the aisle or

¹The nearest rail head for Shillong is at Gauhati (now Capital of Assam) 60 miles north of Shillong and in the plains. I had instructed the Deputy Commissioner, Gauhati, to superintend the arrangements for Hope's return to Gangtok.

The black blazer has
just arrived. Thank you
so much for sending it
on.



THE PALACE,
GANGTOK,
SIKKIM.



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return ~~my~~ home my usual torpor set in almost
at once + I have been good for little. It was so
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track from Fakiragram. We moved up the platform
looking very like security officers under our banners
of peach saplings + young pines. We were shown into
a compartment with a
jolly Bhamose family
numbering 5 + a young
Assamese mother with a



the bathroom or someplace, Yabla¹ would seize the cake from the basket and chop it up Karate style and we all would gobble as much as we could before she came back in. And then sit looking guilty with cake crumbs all over our faces. It was not very nice of us, but there was not very much and she was not at all the kind of person that you could offer a slice of cake that had been bashed off with your hand. After 6 the light faded rapidly. Two hours of real hysteria as the babies and children grew increasingly afraid of the pitch black claustrophobia of the compartments. At about half past eight, myself also very jittery from the darkness I resolved to get off and take a taxi to Jalpaiguri, 4 hours away by road. Yabla was nervous at this idea, it wasn't really a very sound one. The road was very broken and the taxi drivers are occasionally Dacoits. Fortunately just then like a Deus Ex Machina a loud voice and a lantern and an enormous flask of Tea materialised in the doorway. The army. We were saved. We drove an hour to Hashimara, had an exhausted dinner with these really dear officers. Saw a Rogue elephant in the garden. Memeh² who was by now prepared for anything expected momentarily that the elephant was going to rush into the house and trample us. Slept at midnight. The next morning we played scrabble until lunch time and at 2 took the helicopter to Bagdogra.³

The road was terrible and it took us from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. to get home. The only thing that had kept up my spirits during this journey was the visions that kept coming to me of Claude Marie sitting in total darkness, only the gleam of her gold bangles lightening the gloom, Claude Marie⁴ crushed between a basket of plums and an ample Burmese etc. It would have been such fun.

Thank you so much for your letter Avi, which I got yesterday. I am so glad about Bhopal's⁵ flower arrangement

¹Her A.D.C.

²Her personal maid.

³The air-terminal for Gangtok, 60 miles further north.

⁴Wife of the A.O.C., Eastern Command, stationed in Shillong who had originally planned to accompany Hope to Gangtok.

⁵My personal attendant, who had recently been awarded the first prize for flower-arrangements at Shillong's annual flower show.

prize—he must be delighted and really confident now. I hope that you took pictures of it so he can recreate it. I am glad that Mummy¹ is safely in England, having gotten safely through the wilder shores of Europe. I hope that she has a really good time and is not upset by the radical changes she will find. It was really lovely this time with you getting to know her.

I have met the P.O. once since my return. He is silvery, extremely outgoing and ingratiating. Somehow he reminds me of Nixon. His wife seems older, plumpy pretty, domestic, rather stately. I am so happy about our new baby—I think it will serve my intention to withdraw somewhat from Gangtok society. Also in a larger sense (sic) am really happy and feel very ready for another child.

The children are here now and it is really lovely. Everything is relaxed and I feel they are having a good time even though we don't do much. At night we play Monopoly or a Wonderful game "Diplomacy". We have never yet finished "Diplomacy" although sometimes the game has gone on until 2 in the morning. It is a lovely game, although we fight a lot over the rules.

Ashey Kesang² is coming here tomorrow with her 2 daughters. I'm busily doing last minute painting in the guest rooms. We are so happy. It will be the first visit for a long while. My husband is toying with the idea of having the peasantry shout Sikkim-Bhutan Bhai-Bhai as the Royal Party approaches. . . I do hope Ashey has a good time. I wish that Rani Dorji³ would come but she is implacable.

This summer is going to be a madhouse. Clover is due to arrive momentarily from Paris and another friend of mine from Thailand and Alice from Morocco. None of them have given us addresses of where to reach them. In the end of August we are going to Delhi (the 27th) and after to Wellington. I really wanted to go in November but we are being forced literally into the Sept. trip by certain parties. In Mid September

¹i.e. My mother.

²The Queen of Bhutan.

³The Bhutan Queen's mother, who rarely stirred away from her home in Kalimpong, save to visit Bhutan—see p. 13.

we will take the children back to England and, I hope, a junket in Europe. I am really glad my husband has agreed, as I think a junket is very much in order. Up with travelling, down with the Ahom ruins,¹ That's what I say!

I hope that things are going well there for you and that your school Avi engages you so that you are not lonely. Please give my regards to all there and my love to Rashne and Shanaaz.²

Please know again how much I loved my visit, how happy and sort of awakened I was, and thank you truly for everything.

Love from us all here
Hope

No mention has as yet been made of Kazi Lhendup Dorji,³ who later played such a focal role in the deposing of the Prince and Sikkim's ultimate merger with India. Lhendup Dorji came of an old and highly respected Lepcha family of the landowning class, known as Kazis. He had, however, harboured a deep grudge against the Palace ever since he had been removed, as a young man, from the headship of the monastery of Rumtek, one of the most prestigious of the whole country. There had been allegations against him of corruption and defalcation of funds, allegations which he claimed were concocted and entirely without basis, and he was determined to retrieve his reputation. He was a man of quiet and shy disposition, who, left to himself, would not have made much headway in achieving his purposes. During one of his visits to Delhi, however, he was introduced to the woman who was to change his destiny, Elisa Maria, an adventuress of soaring ambition, Belgium by origin and endowed with a striking and overpowering personality, Elisa Maria saw in the Kazi the

¹Apropos my suggestion, in jest, that she might more profitably—and economically!—visit the ruins of the old Ahom kingdom in Assam than go sight-seeing all the way to Europe.

²Our daughters.

³Also known as Khangsarpa of Chakung, i.e. Squire of Chakung, his estate in southwestern Sikkim.

opportunity she was seeking of securing for herself a position of power and eminence and quickly set about winning his heart. It was not long before they were married and joined together to overthrow the Prince and set up a democratic regime over which they planned to preside and rule in his stead.

Elisa Maria could look back on a full and colourful life, having counted Kamal Ata'ark and Chou En Lai amongst her many friends in high places. She had also lived for some time in Delhi, where she had cultivated people of influence, including some Members of Parliament. She was equipped with a vigorous mind and widely read in subjects ranging over an extensive field. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, there would come a clash between Elisa Maria and Hope, two women of such utterly contrasting personality. Hope, however, was no match for a woman of Elisa Maria's experience, intellect and maturity – it was an unequal contest from the very start. Elisa Maria had indeed delivered her *first* salvo against Hope as early as in 1963 during the royal nuptials, for it is difficult to think of any other person in the vicinity who could have penned the “Ballade upon a Wedding” in which the following lyrics appeared, amongst others in no less doubtful taste:

“I am Hope, the New York Lepcha,
Oh, yes I really am
Though I'm marrying a Shamgyal¹
Don't think I'm just a sham.

Chorus of Lepchas (after partaking of marriage chang²)

She's Hope the Yankee Lepcha,
Oh, Yes She really is
Despite her Bowery accent
And her pure Caucasian phiz.

¹A pun on Namgyal – the family name of the royal house.

²Local Sikkimese millet beer.

She's Hope, the Kumarani,
Our unfed children weep;
But ten lakhs for a wedding
Is really very cheap.

Kazi Lhendup Dorji was prime mover of the Sikkim National Congress, a party formed in 1960 largely from amongst dissident groups of the old Sikkim State Congress and Sikkim National Party.¹ By adopting a young Nepalese as her son, the Kazini (as Elisa Maria came to be known after her marriage to the Kazi) endeared herself to the majority community as a person sympathetic to Nepalese interests. She was clearly out to exploit every possible device to discredit the Prince and elevate her husband to the seat of power.

The Prince, on his part, was pre-occupied in focusing attention upon the symbols of a sovereign state. The Sikkim flag, Sikkim's National Anthem, the Sikkim Guard, the Oath of Allegiance to King and Country - these were the areas to which, in his view, special importance must be paid if Sikkim's identity as an independent country was to be perpetuated. He could not reconcile himself to accept that these were not the issues that would bring in votes in an election. And herein perhaps lies the clue as to why, if the Kazi, as a member of the minority (Bhutia-Lepcha) communities, could make a bid for and win Nepalese support, the Prince was not prepared to proceed likewise. It might be argued that if the Prince could have found a Nepalese bride for Tenzing, his son and heir, and urged the majority and minority communities to stand side by side to resist absorption by her overwhelming neighbours to the north and south, Sikkim's survival might yet have been ensured.

It was not that the Prince was lacking in such elementary statecraft. As he saw it, Sikkim's physical survival might, through some such stratagem, have been prolonged by a few years. But the cultural and political identity of the minority communities would for certain have been eroded away, and it

was precisely the safeguarding of such identity that he felt deeply in his heart to be the sacred trust that had been handed down to him by the founders of Sikkim's royal house. His inflexibility on the Nepali and Bhutia-Lepcha issue was not thus the outcome of racial prejudice or communal narrow-mindedness. India was able to continue as a secular democracy and avoid degenerating to a Hindu theocracy, as the minority communities, such as the Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, were no less politically conscious than the majority community and could therefore put up a strong front against any threat of Hindu domination. The Bhutia-Lepcha communities, on the other hand, who were by and large lagging in western-style education and politically dormant, would quickly and inevitably be overwhelmed and submerged without the protection of heavy safeguards.

The Prince realised that, if Sikkim was to survive as an independent political identity, it was essential to nurture in its youth a feeling for country, and it was with this in view that he sought my assistance in drafting a pledge of loyalty to be taken by students in all educational institutions:

The Palace, Gangtok
12th July, 1966

My dear Rusty,

How is Assam? How are the Mizos? How are the Nagas? How is everybody? I trust things go well with you.

I am in one hell of a big mess. We have a P.O., who is far worse than me and every damn thing is playing up again. Haldipur¹ is wanting to revert after his three years in September. Lal² is wanting to revert under pressure etc. etc. The rains have washed out eastern Sikkim and the drought has dried up southern Sikkim. So much for the dark side. On the bright side there is real unity and loyalty to country starting to develop. We have many graduates now also for whom we can

¹Principal Administrative Officer see p. 73.

²Police Commissioner.

find no work. How about you paying us a visit? Right at the end of this month or early next month. The children will have returned.

Can you do me a favour which you forgot when you were here last? In India, all school children take a pledge from time to time. We have drafted a pledge for Sikkim which is absolutely awful. Be an angel and draft us something eloquent with the deepest meanings.

My love to all the girls in Shillong, remember me to your Joti¹ etc.

Love
Thondup

It was not long before rumours were going the rounds that the Prince would shortly be asking for revision of the Indo-Sikkim Treaty and was trying to bring pressure to bear on the Government of India to this end. The Press was not sympathetic to the move and he was coming under heavy fire from all directions. It was an issue over which the Government of India felt particularly sensitive, aware as they were of the Prince's antipathy to the clauses of the subsisting Treaty placing restrictions on Sikkim in the field of foreign affairs and other vital subjects.

The Palace, Gangtok
29th May, 1967

My dear Rusty,

I must thank you for the draft address you sent for the Council.² With a little adjustment it went off very well. Copy enclosed. Very few people know that I had asked your assistance, which I think includes Haldi.

¹My cook, who had been with me for over twenty years, including my tenure in Sikkim and Bhutan.

²The Prince, as Head of State, addressed the Council at the commencement of every session.

We have had a hell of a time about forming the Executive Council. The National Congress led by Sonam Tsering are adamant that they should not join unless the transferred subjects are made fully independent, that is they will submit no papers to any higher authority and will in no way be under the Principal Administrative Officer.¹ They want the Planning and Development Department and the Establishment Department should be handed over as transferred subjects. The impasse, however, now seems resolved. Four Nepali members of the eight Councillors belonging to the National Congress have agreed to join the National Party and the State Congress in forming a coalition. If this goes through, some more powers will have to be given, but things should run fairly smoothly until the next election. Sonam Tsering and the Kazini no doubt will stir up a storm in the newspapers.

Talking about newspapers, in spite of my explanations, I am sorry that Press Trust of India has taken it into its head to try and run me down. Treaty revision as you know is not a secret and even the P.O. etc. had spoken to the Press about it. There was talk about a "Happy document" and the "Treaty does not hamper Sikkim's development" and "trying to wrest power from the Government of India". A question was asked, a reply had to be given and it was given, I think, most diplomatically and sympathetically for India. If these papers thought a little more carefully and looked a little more closely, they could have seen other things like a gradual change in the social structure, specially with the Nepalese languages becoming practically the lingua franca. As the political parties mature a little and more power comes in the hands of the party leaders, their demands for the review of the Treaty will be much more radical and sharp.

Love to the whole family
Thondup

¹i.e. successor to the Dewan and appointee of the Chogyal. See in this connection pp. 45-46.

It gave me something of a jolt to see one day in the newspapers a photograph of the Prince sporting a wispy beard, rather in the style of Ho Chi Minh. For although thirty years had passed since our first meeting as young men in the Administrative Camp at Dehra Dun, I pictured him still in my mind's eye as the youthful Adonis of our spring-time days. The beard was a reminder, and not a very pretty reminder, that we were getting on in years, and, as I still nurtured a sentimental nostalgia touching the joyful abandon of our rapturous carefree past, I appealed to him to efface this latest evidence of the inexorable march of time. I was amused to receive his light-hearted rejoinder.

The Palace, Gangtok
16th March, 1971

My dear Rusty,

I have indeed grown a beard. The young girls think that I look old and should shave it off, but the old girls think it is intriguing. My wife says it tickles. The whole thing proves to you that Mongolians are not hairless like you pretend they are, as opposed to your being hairy which is in the lower scale of evolution. I really look like a wild Mongolian in my regalia and will send you a photograph one of these days.

Tenzing¹ has just left for the Indian Administrative Service training school in Mussoorie for two months. It will be the fag end of the course but at least he will meet people who will be your future bureaucratic rulers. By that time you will have retired and they will lord it over you. We hope that after his attachment there, before he joins Trinity in Cambridge, he can be attached for a month or so to the Prime Minister's Secretariat so that he can learn a few tricks of the trade.

¹The Prince's eldest son, recently returned from Harrow.

All my love to the family and all the girls in Bombay.

Love
Thondup

The year 1973 was a turning point in Sikkim's history and in the fortunes of the Prince. I visited him with my family in late 1972 for our annual holiday and found him and Hope busily absorbed in preparations for the Prince's 50th Birthday Jubilee celebrations to be held in the following April. One of the Prince's concerns at the time was the setting to music of Sikkim's National Anthem and he wanted me to undertake the task. I informed him that, although I was a moderately competent musician, I had no experience of orchestration, which required considerable technical know-how. He nevertheless insisted that, forgetting about orchestration, I should at least make an attempt at translating the tune to musical notation so that the band of the Royal Guard, designated as the Sikkim Guard,¹ could perform it at the ensuing Birthday celebrations. His feeling was that my technical inexpertise would be more than compounded by the consideration that I would have a surer instinct in interpreting the spirit of a Sikkimese tune than any other outsider and that, in any case, he would, for reasons of sentiment, wish me, his closest friend, to be thus associated with his country's national anthem. It was not an easy task, as every person summoned to assist and sing the tune for me presented some slight variations and I was bewildered as to what I should finally settle upon as the authorised version. The Prince himself conducted the Guards band during our rehearsals to ensure the correctness of the tempo and other niceties and between the two of us, amateurs though we were, we did not do too badly, though Beethoven and Toscanini might not have entirely approved!

I returned to Shillong after my visit and in due course, on the morning of April 4th, sent him my customary telegram of birthday greetings:

¹See p. 58.

Many Happy Jubilee returns and please score a century at least for all our sakes. Love Rusti

I thought I would give him a ring on the telephone in the evening, as I imagined he would be preoccupied during the day with the various jubilee celebrations. It was not until nearly midnight that I eventually managed, with much difficulty, to get through to the Palace, only to be informed by his A.D.C., in hushed and worried tone, that there had been serious trouble and that the Prince was closetted in discussions with the Political Officer.

Only a few months previously, during my visit to Gangtok, the Prince seemed confident that all was well, and it seemed incredible to find a repetition so soon of the distressing events of 1949—anti-Chogyal demonstrations, a breakdown of the administration throughout the State and a request by the Prince to the Government of India to intervene and restore order. The crisis had evidently been precipitated by the general elections held earlier in the year. The Sikkim National Congress and Sikkim Janata Congress, the parties who were pressing for divesting the Chogyal of his powers, charged the Presiding Officer with aiding the Sikkim National Party (associated in people's minds as the King's party) by rigging the elections. The Sikkim National Party had secured the majority of the elective seats, and in the commotion and heart-burning over the declaration of the results and the violent accusations against the Government of corrupt practices, it was considered necessary to arrest the Janata Congress President on charges of sedition and breaking the peace. The Janata Congress and National Congress thereupon formed a Joint Action Council and submitted a memorandum to the Prince seeking, *inter alia*, changes in the electoral system. The agitation for electoral reforms and release of the Janata Congress President was also taken to the villages and a number of police posts in the interior were bodily taken over by the volunteers of the Joint Action Council.

It was unfortunate that the Prince's elder son, Tenzing, also

became personally involved in the riots. After moving some miles out from the outskirts of Gangtok to dissuade the demonstrators from surging into the capital, he was himself obstructed by the crowds on his return journey and, in an attempt by his escort to force its way back, two of the roadside demonstrators were wounded by a shot fired from his jeep. A rumour was circulated that the shot had been fired by Tenzing himself, which infuriated the agitated mob all the more against the Palace. Tenzing was a gentle but somewhat headstrong young man, who had returned from his studies in the U.K. so that he could give support to his father at this time of tension. But his zeal and filial concern in fact further exacerbated the already explosive situation.

On news of the disturbances reaching Delhi, the Indian Foreign Secretary paid a hurried visit to Gangtok and an agreement was eventually thrashed out between the Prince, the leaders of the political parties and the Government of India providing for fresh elections, the setting up of an Assembly on a "one man one vote" franchise and the deputation by the Government of India of a Chief Executive to bring about further democratisation and communal harmony. The Prince was thus back again at square one, if not worse. Worse, in that the Government of India had evidently come to the conclusion that he could no longer be unswervingly relied upon in the context of Sikkim's strategic location as a buffer between India and China. The feeling was growing in the highest echelons of the Government of India that they had been ill-advised in pampering the Palace and building up the ruler after the uprising in 1949. This feeling became exacerbated after the Prince's American marriage and grew to such an extent that there was determination in certain quarters that he must never again be given the opportunity of asserting himself in affairs of state. After twenty years of struggle to safeguard the identity of his country, he found himself outwitted and overwhelmed. I recalled, sadly, a letter he had written to me fifteen years earlier, when I was Sikkim's Dewan.

The Palace, Gangtok
6th December 1958

My dear Rusty,

Frustration on frustration due to all desired actions being bogged down; the strain is I think beginning to tell. I have lost the game you and others have won.

Yours,
Thondup Namgyal

I forgave him then bracketing me, in his utter frustration, with the opposition, as I knew full well that, deep in his heart, he was aware of my feelings for himself and his country. If he had felt frustration at a time when he was at the peak of his dignity and held in respect by persons of the eminence of India's Prime Minister and the Dalai Lama, his desolation can be imagined at the shattering of all his high hopes by this second virtual take-over of his kingdom.

I have mentioned that, since my leaving Sikkim in 1959 at the close of my tenure, the Prince had started drinking more heavily, partly out of frustration and partly from the thoughtless encouragement of some of his more sycophantic companions who did not care to realise the damage they were doing to him. I was appalled to find, during one of my later visits to Sikkim, that he was drinking even during the day time and counselled him, gently but firmly, that if he hoped to retain his kingdom, it was time he pulled himself together, and if he would co-operate, I was prepared to help him. To his credit, he agreed to my enlisting the aid of his doctors, but I had never realised what a responsibility I had undertaken. I was terrified to see him suffer the symptoms of withdrawal during the first few days that the treatment was started. Mercifully, he had a strong will and continued the treatment, despite the terrible strain. I was relieved beyond measure to hear from Hope on my return to Shillong that "although he is under quite a lot of pressure as there is so much work here, I think his self-imposed regime is good for him as he is getting a lot done, worries a lot less about abstract things, and seems physically fine. He has

lost about 15 pounds, still off drinks, and very up on problems confronting us. I think your visit here was the turning point and I am so grateful for all your kindness and real friendship to him. It was a difficult time and I really can't tell you how much your visit meant to us. Please do come again with the children whenever you can". She writes, in the same letter, of their unending flow of palace guests. "We look forward to the Nehrus'¹ visit here and also the other people from Assam that are expected. Recently we have had an odd assortment of guests including a Cardinal from the Vatican – the head of the propaganda fidei, Tom Abraham from Ministry of External Affairs, Jack Larsen, one of the best Textile designers in the world, and this fall another oddly assorted group are to come. The Nehrus' visit should coincide with the head of the Church of Scotland, Mr. Heinz, the pickle Magnate, and the head of I.T.V. in London. I do get confused with all these people, as somehow I seem to lose part of my central self in an effort to identify with each person. So far I haven't heard from Mr. Yusuf Ali² but please tell him that I still hope we can get some of the Kameng things for our house in Delhi.

With love from us all to your family
Hope

By August 1973, Hope had evidently made up her mind that the time had come for her to leave Sikkim. She at last realised that the foundations upon which her hopes had been laid were of straw. When the Palace was surrounded by mobs shouting anti-ruler slogans, her protégés, many of whom were members of the Youth Study Forum³ and had received Palace patronage and financial support through her good offices, chose to maintain a discreet silence. And the United Nations took as much notice of the Sikkim imbroglio as they would of a mild

¹i.e. B.K. Nehru, Governor of Assam.

²Chief Secretary of Arunachal Pradesh, a territory of the Indian Union bordering Tibet. Kameng, a district of this territory, is noteworthy for the beauty of its handicrafts.

³See p. 76.

thunderclap. Disillusion came to her, and she took the one decision remaining to her. She decided to leave Sikkim, where she had looked for security, position, as well as domestic happiness, to be rewarded by a collapse of all her aspirations and all that she had worked towards.

There have been many who have criticised Hope for deserting Sikkim, and, more especially, her husband, at a time of crisis when her place was at his side. Or, worse still, have branded her as an ambitious adventuress who abandoned her husband when she saw there was nothing more to be got out of him. I have known Hope long enough to be able to say with certainty that such criticism would be furthest from the truth. She was a woman of sensitivity, self-respect and honour. Foolish yes. But she was scarcely out of her teens when first she encountered Sikkim, and who is not foolish in the heady flush of youth? And her decision to leave Sikkim and her husband, however much pain and humiliation it might have caused him, was the right decision, perhaps the first really mature decision of her life. She had discovered that, despite all her strivings to strike roots in Sikkim, she was working in unfertile soil. For all her silken brocades and laboured lispings in Sikkimese, she would never be accepted as of the soil. Her marriage had already shown symptoms of breaking up under the strains and tensions of a way of life so divorced from her early upbringing, and she knew her husband well enough to be sure that, lose though he might his kingdom, his country was his heart and soul, his first and only true love. She was young enough to make a new beginning, he was old enough to have learnt the lesson of acceptance.

Hope's letter to my wife shortly before leaving Sikkim for the States is a touching reflection of her feelings at the time. I personally believe that she had already taken the decision never to return to Sikkim but considered the time not yet opportune to disclose her ultimate intentions.

August 5th, 1973

Dearest Avi,

Please forgive this paper¹ as, being Sunday, our fancier seems locked away. I write to thank you so much for your letter. I kept waiting for Sonam to return to Shillong, but he seems to show no signs of going. So am posting this. Oh, Avi, what to say. When one is a child you suffer sadnesses that seem like they will never end, then when you grow up you find out that all pain ends. We here seem to have reverted to a child's view of sadness, and perhaps its the true one. The only good thing is that perhaps since all our defences are down, we being stripped to the soul are more aware of relationships and in our own family have an almost painfully acute joy in each other. The children I have always been close to but now their beauty really fills me to overflowing. This same feeling extends to friends and I did want to write to say how much we love your family. I was looking at the pictures sent by Bengt of the violin evening. How beautiful that shared music was? Yangchen² has been accepted at Finch in N.Y.C. which has the best course on child development in the city. She is thrilled (doubly as she had not completed her 0 levels and was a bit anxious about admittance). The little ones have been accepted at a grandiose 'progressive' school with grandiose progressive fees and on the 15th P.M. I'm taking them to Zurich via Siliguri and Calcutta. We shall get an apt. (tiny) and Y + I shall keep house – neither of us can cook, so it should be quite comic. Thubden (Ugly³) is coming with us – he can't cook either but we all love him and he should provide at least the emotional security if not material that we will need. At Christmas we shall join Thondup in England for a vacation with the boys – hopefully in our flat if Marilyn can get it ready. Needless to say it is sad, but it will be good for the kids in many ways. Palden⁴ had little competition

¹The letter was written on ruled paper, as from a school exercise book.

²The Prince's daughter by his first wife.

³A young Sikkimese boy on the Palace household staff so nicknamed because he was gauche rather than because of his features.

⁴Her son.

at Tadanchen¹ Y and I have been teaching down there for the past 4 months and have gotten to know the children well and Yangchen is keen to resume studying of a meaningful kind (i.e., not school type). But, Avi, if it is hard for you all to get away here, please make Thondup visit you. He will balk but should. Life here is returning to normal – Yesterday a 3 hour performance at the Academy – we were all fainting. Also much more contact. Yesterday noon the district school (football) teams all came to tea before their tournament. There is so much love and connectedness here, I know it will be restored “I still believe that people are good at heart” (Anne Franks Diary).

We all here send much love.

Hope

Over ten years later, I informed Hope of my intention of writing a book about the events leading to Sikkim's dissolution. I felt that, in fairness to her, I should offer her an opportunity to rebut suggestions of her influence over her husband as expressed in my review of her autobiography, “Time Change”. She responded, in characteristic, light-hearted vein:

March 3rd, 1984

Dearest Nari,

Just back from seeing “Old Times,” a Pinter Play starring my college crony Jane Alexander and Anthony Hopkins (Wonderful!). Its a play about Memory and was a good prelude to finding your letter on my doorstep when I came home.

Mea Culpa! On reading it I ran to the basement to look up clippings and your review which I had not done the last time you wrote.

What I really wanted to rebut, if I still may, is the suggestion that I got Thondup over his head regarding Sovereignty. I had a big mouth, Nari, and was indiscreet (as indeed was all the

¹A primary school run by the Palace, partly for staff of the Palace establishment.

Palace I think), but I don't think I gave Thondup his ideas. They were an obsession with him both at a deep, substantial level and trivial. What I enjoyed doing was the fleshing out of the myth (cause I do think nationalism is somewhat a myth, more positive than negative). Everything from what food we served to handicrafts etc. seemed part of making this identity sharper – but it was Thondup and the handful of seeming “Young Turks” that offered the joy and obsession of a cause. Many of the changes in Sikkim coincided with my views, but were really Thondup's resolve and arising from his new assumption of office, not vice versa.

It was a very loving review and I am relieved to have re-read it and also to be in touch with you. If you would like in detail more examples of my being a follower not a leader in nationalist concepts, I'd be glad to correspond. The first example I can think of is that the wedding reception invitations I'd been asked to print in USA for the bride's party (rather expensively at Tiffany's) were burned and hastily replaced because they said “Maharajkumar and Maharajkumarani” instead of the requisite “Crown Prince and Princess”. I'm not being pious, for I readily admit I enthusiastically entered into it, – but it stings to be deemed the author of a policy that provoked so much violence and loss. (Well, maybe it would have happened anyway). I hope you might come here on a publishing tour, as this little writing does seem unsatisfying. There are so many nuances and whatever a non-nuance is called to sort out. I had several more things to tell you in my last letter which space and time did not permit. One was how often I think of the cherry-blossom planting occasion when you were forced to plant your tree in the shade and you said “Now now Thondup, I know you're the Chogyal and all that but I don't want my tree actually *stunted*”. Somehow the querulous spin you put on the word “stunted” and the look on your face really stuck in my mind and I think of it in the oddest places.

Anyway – I guess I write this last to tell you that even if I am out of memory and concert with you on the big issues, I do

remember you so much in an odd daily way!

With love to you and your family,

Hope

It is a tribute to her generosity of spirit that, despite all, she harboured no ill-will towards me.

The Wheel Full Circle

The agreement of May 1973¹ provided for the holding of fresh elections, but, once it became clear that the Prince could no longer lean on the Government of India for support, it was a foregone conclusion which party would emerge the victor. Kazi Lhendup's National Congress captured all but one seat in the Assembly and proceeded systematically to liquidate Sikkim and the Palace. The Prince's was a losing battle, but he was determined not to go down without a fight. On the Assembly passing a resolution assigning to the Chogyal the role of a purely constitutional head and requesting the Government of India to take steps for Sikkim's participation in the political and economic institutions of India, the Prince maintained that the resolution contravened both the spirit and the letter of the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 and that it was his duty therefore to discuss the wider implications with the Indian Prime Minister at Delhi before agreeing to its implementation.

I had just returned to Shillong from Bhutan after attending the young Bhutan King's coronation when I received a telegram from the Foreign Secretary of India requesting me to meet him as soon as possible in Delhi. I supposed that it must have been the Prince who had asked the Foreign Secretary to invite me to assist him with advice, but I was mistaken. It was the Government of India this time that wished to enlist my support to influence the Prince to agree to the draft of a bill prepared by their Constitutional Adviser to give legislative effect to the Assembly's resolution.

¹See p. 92.

It became clear from my discussions with the Foreign Secretary that the Government of India had already irrevocably made up its mind to implement the resolution and that if there were any changes to be sought by the Prince in the draft bill, the changes that the Government of India would agree to would be merely marginal and not affect the main substance. Participation in the political institutions of India meant participation in India's Parliament, and only a person representing Indian territory could participate in her Parliament. The resolution as much as sealed the fate of Sikkim as an entity separate from India.

The Prince had meanwhile engaged as his legal adviser Kumari Bhuvaneshwari Devi, a woman of formidable energy of the Princely house of Patiala. Bhuvaneshwari Devi, or Princess Leena as she was called, was able to convince the Prince that, being herself a member of an erstwhile ruling house, she could sympathise with him more keenly in the unequal treatment to which he was being subjected by the Indian Government and would ensure redress for him through her manifold contacts at the highest political levels. Princess Leena was doubtless well meaning in intention, but, like Hope, was out of touch with the realities of the situation. The Prince was ready at this juncture to catch at any straw to retrieve a rapidly deteriorating situation, and Princess Leena was the one person who offered him prospect that he could still reverse the irreversible. The Prince was, even in middle life, a considerable charmer, and Princess Leena perhaps saw herself go down in history in a blaze of glory as her Prince Charming's saviour from India's voracious clutches. She knew everything but the art of the possible and was, in the event, partly responsible for his ultimate downfall in encouraging him to stubbornness in a situation where a little yielding was his only hope of survival.

The Prince was staying in the Ashoka hotel in Delhi, where I held prolonged discussion with him and gave him my assessment of the Government of India's stance as conveyed to me by the Foreign Secretary. But he had by now committed himself almost unreservedly to the counsels of Princess Leena

and there was not much I could do to influence or assist him, beyond drafting letters that he wished to send to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of India drawing their attention to India's obligations under the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 and appealing for reconsideration of India's stand.

On his return to Gangtok from Delhi, the Prince represented that he be given an opportunity to place his views personally before the Assembly before it passed the crucial bill providing for the participation of the people of Sikkim in the political institutions of India. His request was refused by the Assembly, which after rejecting a detailed note prepared by him in consultation with Princess Leena, summarily passed the bill. The Prince now had no alternative under the constitution but to accord it his formal assent.

It might have been expected that, at this stage, the Prince would have reconciled himself at last to the situation and agreed to co-operate under the new constitutional arrangements. Although henceforward only a constitutional ruler, he would nevertheless continue under the Act "to take precedence over all other persons in Sikkim and to enjoy the honour, position and other personal privileges hitherto enjoyed by him". But it soon became evident that reservations were being expressed in some quarters regarding the summary manner in which the Act was passed and there were elements even in the Sikkim Congress that were calling to question the *bona fides* of Delhi. What disturbed Delhi more particularly, however, was the Prince's attendance on the invitation of the Nepal Government at the Coronation in February 1975 of the King of Nepal. This offered an opportunity for the Prince to meet with representatives of the world Press as well as with the delegates from China, and some of his utterances echoed his unhappiness over Sikkim's changed status.

Delhi wasted no time. Its spokesman, the Kazi, promptly launched a counter-attack on the Prince, declaring that, as he had obviously not reconciled himself to the democratic aspirations of his people, he must be forthwith removed. On April 10th (1975), the Sikkim Assembly passed a resolution

demanding the removal of the Chogyal and the merger of Sikkim with India. Within four days a referendum was organised to confirm the resolution and within another month Sikkim became, by an Act of the Indian Parliament, the 22nd State of the Indian Union. Rarely in its history since Independence had Delhi operated with such phenomenal despatch.

On April 5th, five days before the passing of the fateful resolution, the Prince telephoned to me to Shillong to say that, for reasons he had explained to the Indian Foreign Secretary personally, he had made a request to him that I should pay a brief visit to Gangtok and that the Foreign Secretary had agreed. Realising the Foreign Ministry's sensitivity in such matters, I sought telegraphic confirmation from the Foreign Secretary and received the reply rather expected that, although the request had been received, the visit would be "highly inadvisable" and that I might inform the Chogyal that my official preoccupations would not permit me leaving my station. The next message from the Prince was amongst the saddest I had ever received from him.

Apropos my telephonic talk presume you have contacted Foreign Secretary. Would appreciate your presence here in Gangtok in Sikkim's agony if allowed at earliest. Love to family. I am under house arrest. Thondup.

I received shortly afterwards (April 26th) a note from Princess Leena despatched somewhat deviously through an officer of the Civil Airlines.

My dear Mr. Rustomji,

How much our mutual friend wanted you there. He asked for you for 3 days and was told "Have him for seven days". So much could have been achieved with you there. However that's now a thing of the past. He did his damndest to make it up and set things right, but it was banging one's head against a wall as

far as Lal¹ was concerned. Saw him last night and he looked shattered after the happenings. Phone lines in Gangtok are cut. Central Reserve Police at the Palace Gate. I was searched for 45 minutes while leaving by the C.R.P. at the gate. It is expected they will do much the same inside. Foreign Secretary came and we tried to get a dialogue started etc. etc. People will blame our friend, but the humiliation etc. he was openly subjected to was just too much and the deceit was incredible. The Palace Guards were shot down and Army took over. After 6 days C.R.P. were posted and no contact with outside world was possible. He constantly asked for the dialogue but to no avail.

Yours,
Bhuvaneshwari Devi

Although I could appreciate the Government of India's predicament, it was for me a cruel blow that I should have been held back from my friend at the hour of his direst need. I saw later a letter in *The Times* (London)² from a radio amateur in Kent who, on April 11th (the day following the passing of the final resolution) happened, quite accidentally, to connect with an amateur, AC3PT, speaking in English to another station and making a request to inform the Human Rights Commission that all his communications had been cut. AC3PT was, of course, no other than the Prince, Palden Thondup Namgyal. Needless to say, his transmitting set was immediately seized – but it was ironical that his S.O.S. to me intimating that he was under house-arrest and passed through the public telegraph office in India itself could escape the watch of the censor!

If I as an officer in the service of the Protector Government could do little to offer him support at this time of crisis, it is to the credit of his younger son, Wangchuk Namgyal, then studying in London, that he was able at least to represent his

¹Special Adviser and later Governor of Sikkim.

²May 15th, 1975.

father's case through the columns of *The Times*. He had doubtless received messages from Sikkim through "radio amateur, AC3PT" on the basis of which the two following letters appeared in *The Times* of May 1st and May 12th, 1975.

(The Times)

Thursday, May 1, 1975

FATE OF CHOGYAL OF SIKKIM

From Prince Wangchuk Namgyal of Sikkim

Sir,

I have been very pleased to see letters in your columns saying what I cannot easily say without being accused of self-interest, namely, that my father, the Chogyal of Sikkim is the very opposite of a feudal and out-dated monarch ruthlessly oppressing the people of Sikkim. The ends of those who would like to annexe the Kingdom of Sikkim are best served by painting as black a picture as possible of the Chogyal, and it is they who have put it about that recent events in Sikkim have been the result of popular demands of the Sikkimese people for "democratic reforms".

It is a strange kind of "democratic reform" which results in the seizure of an independent country by its larger and more powerful neighbour! I suggest that this gross distortion of the truth has been made to give a superficial appearance of legality to a series of actions over the past year and a half by a country which in the past has been among the first to condemn imperial ambition in others.

This is not only my view. In a statement made on April 25, Mr. Jeremy Thorpe said: "... speaking as one who has close and friendly links with India, I none the less believe that their *de facto* annexation of Sikkim has been quite outrageous". The International League for the Rights of Man has twice called for a United Nations investigation into Indian actions in Sikkim. In their first statement on January 13 this year, they urged immediate investigation into "this alleged act of aggression and violation of the principle of self-determination cloaked in legality". In a later statement on March 6 this year, the same

organization stated that "it was convinced by the abundance of first hand evidence, supported by secondary sources, that a situation existed warranting a United Nations inquiry".

It is not the wish of my father to preserve for himself a situation of personal privilege. His aim is to preserve the identity of the country of Sikkim; but above all it is his wish that whatever happens in Sikkim should happen in response to the genuine and freely expressed wishes of the Sikkimese people. The recent referendum in the country was in effect conducted by the Indian Government, and objective commentators have described it as a "farce." The Chogyal of Sikkim has repeatedly asked for the true wishes of the people to be determined by a referendum which is organized and supervised by a genuinely independent body such as the United Nations. On his behalf, I repeat this request.

I make a plea, too, for his safety. My father is presently kept under *de facto* house arrest by a detachment of the Indian Army, and it would be only too easy for those who see him as an awkward symbol of Sikkim's identity to contrive a situation in which he would come to harm.

The Chogyal has time and time again demonstrated his desire to have close and friendly links with India, but this stops short of jumping right into the tiger's mouth. It is surely in the interests of the international community that the resolution of the Sikkim crisis be in accordance with the genuine wishes of the people of Sikkim; for any solution imposed by an outside power without their full support can only lead to an unstable situation in a highly sensitive and strategically important part of the world.

Yours sincerely,

Wangchuk Namgyal,

1 Dunraven Street, WI

April 29, 1975

Amidst the spate of correspondence from India-watchers, there appeared a letter to *The Times*, that referred to the Prince's discussions in Kathmandu during his visit to attend the Coronation.

May 3rd, 1975 *The Times*

INDIA AND SIKKIM

From Mr. G.S. Bhargava.

Sir,

While sharing the concern voiced for the Chogyal of Sikkim by Mr. Brian Crozier and General Sir Alec Bishop in their letters of April 18 and April 29 respectively, may I submit that it is an oversimplification to assess the recent developments in the Himalayan State in terms of the qualities of head and heart of the Chogyal? When I first met the Chogyal in Gangtok in 1963 he impressed me by his awareness of the impact on Sikkim and India of Chinese policies in Tibet and Peking's hostility towards India. He also agreed that India was the only country in the region which could prevent the Chinese "five fingers exercise" of projecting its influence southwards with Tibet as the "palm".

Apparently he does not hold the same views now. During a visit to Kathmandu in February last he was reported to have talked of a Himalayan federation of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and presumably the north eastern parts of India as a neutral buffer between India and China. Naturally, India cannot be expected to countenance such a development because even if a Chinese military threat may have abated, the danger of subversion remains. Because of the diversity, ethnic, religious and other of its people India feels vulnerable on that scene.

India's position in Sikkim, based on the Treaty of 1950, is built on two pillars, close relations with both the Chogyal and the people of Sikkim. As such any estrangement between the people and the Chogyal will undermine that position. Faced with a choice in 1973 India plumped for the people which meant the majority of those of Nepalese origin. The Chogyal could have prevented the train of events by being a strictly constitutional ruler but he seemed to have opted for greater manoeuverability of position between India and China. The crudeness of the Indian reaction in organizing the so-called

referendum does not mitigate the magnitude of the Chogyal's folly.

Yours faithfully
 G.S. Bhargava,
 Research Associate,
 International Institute for Strategic Studies,
 18 Adam Street, WC2.

To this there was a prompt rejoinder from the Prince in his letter dated May 5th 1975.

Monday, May 12, 1975 *The Times*

INDIA AND SIKKIM

From Prince Wangchuk of Sikkim.

Sir,

Mr. Bhargava's letter (May 3) is well intentioned but inaccurate. My father's views on Sikkim's place in Himalayan politics have not changed since 1963. As a simple matter of fact, the Chogyal did not hold any "talks" about a Pan-Himalayan Federation whilst in Kathmandu. Mr. K.C. Pant and Mr. Raj Bahadur, Indian ministers present at the coronation, expressed their satisfaction that the Chogyal did not discuss external affairs at any time. I repeat; my father's wish has always been for close and friendly links with India. He has never sought to create real ties with other countries.

But let us follow Mr. Bhargava's lead and take the discussion beyond the "head and heart of the Chogyal". The dangers of and opportunities for "subversion" are increased rather than diminished by India's actions in Sikkim, which would appear to indicate the future trend of India's policy in the Himalayas. If false rumours of "talks" have precipitated the annexation of Sikkim, as Mr. Bhargava suggests, then Nepal and Bhutan have a precarious future indeed on the Himalayan knife-edge. China too cannot be expected to ignore the implications of developments in an area which is, after all, on her borders as

well as India's.

But no matter what the geo-political justification for Indian actions may be, the fact remains that the separate identity of Sikkim has been destroyed by a series of unconstitutional and illegal actions forced on the Sikkimese people by Indian army and police pressure. Hence, India's refusal to allow independent observers into Sikkim, and the rush in the Indian Parliament to incorporate Sikkim into the Union is significant.

Yours sincerely,

Wangchuk

May 5, 1975

1 Dunraven Street, WI

No less eminent a jurist than M. Hidayatullah, retired Chief Justice and, later, Vice-President of India, had opined, on his advice being sought by the Prince, on the legality of India's actions. He has held that enactments by the Indian Parliament could have no effect in altering Sikkim's status as an international personality. "In the opinion of counsel, the status of Sikkim in international law before and after the constitutional amendment in India remains exactly the same. Sikkim's international distinct personality is unaffected and it is a protectorate as before." Hidayatullah stresses that the relations between India and Sikkim had rested entirely on the Treaty of 1950. "A Treaty is a compact between nations or an agreement between high contracting parties. A Treaty cannot be contemplated unless each contracting party has a distinct sovereign international personality. The sovereignty may be full or only partial. The Treaty of 1950 discloses true indicia of a distinct international personality insofar as Sikkim is concerned." He concluded that "Sikkim enjoyed an international personality and still does so, although sovereignty is shared. This is as a result of historical association with India even prior to the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950. This still continues in spite of the events of 1974 and the amendment of the Indian Constitution."

It is pertinent to bear in mind, however, that ideals of legality and fair play do not have much validity or relevance where politics and national interests are involved. Once India had decided to cut Sikkim down to size, she chose her men with studied calculation. Shankar Bajpai, the Political Officer who master-minded the Sikkim operation, was cast in the mould of the illustrious Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, founder and architect of the country's Foreign Services on India's attainment of independence. He was no ascetic loin-clad Gandhian, but scion of the aesthete that was his father, a lover of the arts, a gourmet, and, what is more relevant to our purposes, a man of imperial ambitions. The Prince on the other hand was guided by the charming Princess Bhuvanesh Kumari of Patiala, who knew too much of law and too little of real politik, who, competent and conscientious lawyer that she was, saw it as her duty only to bring to the Prince's notice the illegalities of India's actions, as though India were in the slightest concerned at such a time about legal niceties.

It should be pointed out, in this context, that public opinion in India was not entirely unsympathetic to the Prince and Sikkim's plight. There were many who knew him personally and had admiration and affection for him. There were others who had visited Sikkim and had observed for themselves his deep concern for his people. They felt a sense of unease, even guilt, that the tactics of "toppling Governments" that had come to be accepted as standard practice in the Government of India's dealings with the States of the Indian Union were now being applied in the case of her Protectorate. But the media had been set to work with full force and not a day passed that the Prince's alleged undemocratic actions were not widely broadcast on the radio, television and the newspapers. The few lone voices in his defence were drowned in the strident clamour and the end was a foregone conclusion.

As for the international community, no country was likely to risk the sully of their relations with India over a moral issue concerning a country as small and, in the general view, as insignificant as Sikkim. There were loud demonstrations in

Nepal, but these were not because Nepal's ethical standards were set on a higher plane. Nepal saw herself as "next on the list" if the principle of might is right was allowed to be connived at without protest. Bhutan reacted with more discretion, and, having only recently consolidated her international identity by her admission as a member to the U.N.O., showed restraint in making no public demonstration of her apprehensions. India's other contiguous neighbours, Pakistan, Burma and Sri Lanka, were also drawing their own conclusions.

India has for some time been expressing deep and anxious concern over Pakistan's relentless pursuit of highly-sophisticated armaments and nuclear weapons capability with the assistance and connivance of foreign countries, more especially the U.S.A. Pakistan's strenuous endeavours in this direction become understandable, however, once India has indicated by her actions, as in the case of Sikkim, that moral considerations do not weigh with her in her dealings with smaller and weaker neighbours. Equally understandable is Sri Lanka's initiative in inviting foreign troops, be it from the U.K., Israel or any country other than India, for assistance in putting down internal disturbances. For there is grave distrust and apprehension that India would not hesitate to intervene in support of Tamil dissidents in Sri Lanka should it suit her purposes, political or otherwise. The involvement of the U.S.A. in Pakistan's defence arrangements or of the U.K. in restoring order in Sri Lanka would be a deterrent to India should she ever choose to take advantage of Pakistan's or Sri Lanka's weakness to interfere in their internal affairs.

With the passing by Parliament of the Constitution (Thirty Eighth Amendment) Act, 1975, there was nothing left for the Prince but to try to arrive at a financial settlement with the Government of India for the maintenance of his family members. To all outward appearances, he was showing extraordinary resilience and taking as keen an interest as before in the various developments, political and otherwise, since the taking over of his country. His main worry, however,

was to find the finances required to pay for the living expenses and education of his children in the U.S.A. and U.K.

The Palace, Gangtok
Sikkim
4th September 1976

My dear Rusty,

It was good to hear you on the telephone a couple of weeks ago, although the line was not too clear and I could not properly communicate due to my memory and weakness in connecting matters.¹

We hear that there are quite a few things happening there. From the newspapers we see that a lot of developmental activities are going on there. We here with the 20 Crores given last year are having a lot of things happening. I presume you get the *Sikkim Herald*² and are in touch. Electrification all over Sikkim, Pakyong, Chakung, etc., etc. There are many bodies coming up. Khadi,³ adult education, co-operatives of all kinds etc. At present they are busy training up Seva Dal youths for Gauhati⁴ at the TN Academy where they are housed in the hostel. Many Central Government agencies and departments are coming in and there is a good demand for housing. Rents have gone up more than twice, but alas the Private Estate has not been able to take advantage of the boom. Our accommodation is let to the Government or traders, who no longer cooperate but even refuse to pay the low rents, Motilal and company included.

¹ He was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, as became evident a month later when he took an over-dose of sleeping pills.

² The official organ of the Sikkim Government Publicity Department.

³ Spinning of cotton by hand, as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

⁴ Sikkimese students were being indoctrinated in the premises of the Academy (contrary to the rules barring utilisation of Government buildings for political purposes) prior to their deputation to the All-India Youth Congress Session to be held at Gauhati (in Assam) under the Chairmanship of Sanjay Gandhi, son of India's Prime Minister.

My settlement has not come through as yet and financially we are really broken. I had asked and written to Lal about the situation more than two months ago and was expecting something at the end of July but so far there is no outcome. I have had to remind Lal several times and telegram Delhi. The last I heard anything was a phone call from Lal that he has sent a telegraphic reminder. From this week we will have no money. The pending bills have exceeded one lakh.

It is demeaning having to beg for money but may be that is the way it is fixed. It is not shameful as they are 'on account' payments, whatever that means, pending our 'settlement'. But it does put us in one big fix. There is mental strain and worry. There is no reason why money cannot be released, as 5 lakhs has been budgeted in the Home Ministry, Delhi. There is a Katuk Lama (retired from service in Nefa) who is Private Estate Secretary going round to his staff waving papers, 'there is no money, who will pay you? Better look for jobs. P.E. is broken.' He has been told last week gently that, if the Government of India do not favour us, he will have to be dropped from next month. He and his son Tamdin are in with L. Dorji. He is supposed to speak on behalf of the Private Estate to the Chief Executive, but there is no goose brought home.

I am planning a business trip to Calcutta on the 19th Sunday of this month. Any chance of you being there? I could start from here even on Friday if you are going to be there for the week-end or something. There are things I would like to talk about if there is a convenient possibility.

Apart from finance things are generally the same. Tenzing has been allowed to see his cardamom field in a corner of south Sikkim Ralong way. He played football with the local teams at Rabangla. Friendly matches and they I am told play very well. He was very well received by all, specially the youth. He took the opportunity to visit Pemayangtse Monastery also. Of course, no officials are allowed to contact him.

Rabangla-Kewsing way they are locating a Tibetan Army battalion which is not proper nor are they well received by the

local population. I presume the Government of India have their own reasons. GOI was keen to remove Tibetans in the past.

We are having our annual Panglhapsol¹ on the 8th. The local government are allowing the dancers in service to participate but the orders were confidential and people were scared to come forward. However after explaining some of them have said they will dance. We have however trained some other dancers as well. Why they interfere in things religious is beyond me.

Yangchen must have joined Connecticut College by now in Ne London. Tenzing I am glad has made up his mind to return to Cambridge and finish his last year next year. He is doing an hour or twos home work these days.

Our love to the family and hope we will meet.

Love
Thondup

Despite the apparently detached tone of his letter, the traumatic events of the preceding years had obviously taken their toll and brought him to the verge of a nervous breakdown. It was a grievous shock to hear on the radio, just a month after receipt of the preceding letter, that the Prince had taken an overdose of sleeping pills, had fallen into a coma and had been removed by plane from Gangtok to Calcutta for hospitalisation. The loss of his kingdom, separation from his wife and crippling financial worries had combined to break him.

He had, moreover, never fully recovered from the shock of finding that the Protecting Power should have made common cause with his opponents, more particularly the Nepalese, to displace and supersede him. It was his misfortune that, despite his periodic disagreements with the Government of India and with their local representative in Gangtok in the person of the

¹Ceremonial dance celebrating the worship of the snow-ranges of Kanchenjunga.

Political Officer, he had always felt, deep within himself, an ineradicable dependence on the Protecting Power. The Nepalese influx was, in his view, a problem that the Protecting Power had saddled Sikkim with and they owed it to Sikkim as a matter of duty therefore to protect her from the consequences. While the Prince felt otherwise perfectly competent to manage his own affairs, he had regarded it as an inescapable moral obligation for the Indian Government to use its influence to protect the ruling house and the communities they represented from the Nepalese encroachment that was the outflow of their policies. The disillusion that came from what appeared to him as an act of treachery beyond his imagination might have corrected at last his perspective but such enlightenment came to him too late, when he was already an irrevocably crippled man.

Twenty years earlier, when I was serving in Sikkim, I was woken late one night by a telephone call from his wife, Sangediki. "Please come quickly, Uncle, I'm very frightened at the way Thondup is talking. He is very very upset and I don't know what to do". I rushed in my jeep to the Palace without even changing out of my pyjamas and found him completely broken down. There had apparently been a family party at his mother's Palace a few miles out of Gangtok, during the course of which the future of Sikkim was under discussion. "Why do you get so worked up about what's going to happen to Sikkim?" asked his younger brother, who had recently returned from his studies at Oxford. "I give Sikkim twenty years at a modest guess, after which God only knows what".

The Prince was aghast and infuriated at his brother's seeming apathy and lack of concern over Sikkim's destiny. "If even my own family feel so little about the country, how can I expect any more from my people? I might as well pack up and be done with it all". I tried to comfort him and, when he was a little calmer, took him up to his bedroom and waited until I thought he was asleep. I then returned home and retired to bed once more. After about half an hour, the telephone rang again,

“Uncle, Uncle, something *terrible* has happened—he has swallowed a lot of pills, I’ve shaken him hard but he won’t wake up. Please come at once, I’m all alone and very afraid what may happen”. I again hurried to the Palace, picking up our Chief Medical Officer armed with a stomach pump obtained from the hospital nearby. We found the Prince in a deep coma and proceeded to wash out his stomach. By next morning he showed signs of revival, though he remained mentally utterly depressed and in a blank daze for several days.

I had myself once gently warned him, about this same time, that, in the context of democratic upsurges all over the world, his hope for survival lay only as a constitutional head. It was night and we were talking at my garden gate while his brother, my mother and sister were playing a rubber of bridge indoors. He held my hand, and, after a pause and with almost a sob, responded, “If that ever happens, there will be no place for me in Sikkim. I shall have to leave. I have a duty to my people and it will be a betrayal of the trust handed down to me since my father’s fathers if I surrender my right to serve them.”

He made, despite his acute state of depression, a remarkable recovery from this second attempt to free himself from the wheel of life. But he remained plagued for the rest of his years by financial worries.

The Palace, Gangtok
29th November, 1976

My dear Rusty,

I am most touched by your affection and concern in my recent illness and specially you having spent so many days in Calcutta. Life is difficult but there is also a responsibility that goes with it. I realise this and promise to keep it in mind.

I may still take you up on your invitation to stay with you, as I have not as yet received any clearance to go abroad. Bipin Lal is definitely averse to the idea but I am keeping on pressing him. I have to press him about financial matters also which are now critical with literally no money in the kitty, foreign exchange for my children being released at only 25% of their actual needs.

Looking forward to meeting you soon,
Love to you, Avi, Shanaz and Rashne,

Yours
Thondup

As the Government of India did not look kindly upon his request to visit his family abroad, he spent a couple of weeks with us in our home in Shillong and also paid a visit to Bombay to attend the marriage of the daughter of his friends, the Karanjias.¹ The Shillong holiday had evidently revived his spirits. He brought up with him his eldest son, Tenzing, a keen sportsman, who lost no time gathering together the many Sikkimese students studying in colleges in Shillong and organising an exhibition football match. It seemed almost like old times all over again. Although the Prince realised that the chances of getting back his country were slender, the references to Morarji Desai and Jaiprakash Narain in his letter written after his return to Gangtok from Shillong hint that he still entertained hopes. He was also no doubt encouraged by Morarji Desai's statement (made soon after his Janata Party had defeated Indira Gandhi and her Congress Party at the elections and he had taken over as Prime Minister) denouncing the take-over of Sikkim by the predecessor Government.

The Palace, Gangtok
27th May, 1977

My dear Rusty and Avi,

Please accept my belated thanks for the wonderful holiday you gave us in Shillong. It was really great and I find I have put on at least 10 lbs. on return. The beautiful day at Cherrapunji where there was sunshine instead of rain, the Peak, the visits to your various projects and football will all be remembered. . .

The Karanjia wedding was beautifully held in the open at the Race Course in the evening. A dais lit up with lots of little white lights, the bride and groom in white, also the parents and

¹i.e., R.K. Karanjia, Editor of *Blitz*.

priests in white. Nice picture of me on the back page of *Blitz* with the wedding photo.

Met a few people and they all think that it will be a tough road to get back what we lost. Irani¹ has promised to sound out Desai's thoughts. Wangchuk² met J.P. in London and has had a good reaction out of him. Bright lad to have thought of the meeting. Enclosed a copy of press report that appeared in the *Indian Express*. Have had no reply to my letter as yet from Delhi, not that they are not very busy. I only hope it has been received – it must have been as it went by hand. Coocoola is returning from Delhi today, so I hope she will have some news.

We have a lot of games here with the Kazi trying to join the Janata Party³ and the two opposition parties objecting. His own Congress have suspended them for six years, so unless the Kazi gets into some party he will be running a partyless government? Nahar came here and was favouring the Kazi but the opposition got him to make a statement that the Centre had sent him to observe and not to grant any recognition and that he had not given or hoisted the Janata flag at Kazi's headquarters.

I may be going down to Calcutta in another three weeks time. I wish they would give me permission to go to see the Kids abroad. I do not think anything will happen regarding Sikkim or me in the next two months as they are busy in Delhi. How about your visiting us? You should be free to stay with us now that there has been some relaxation on me.

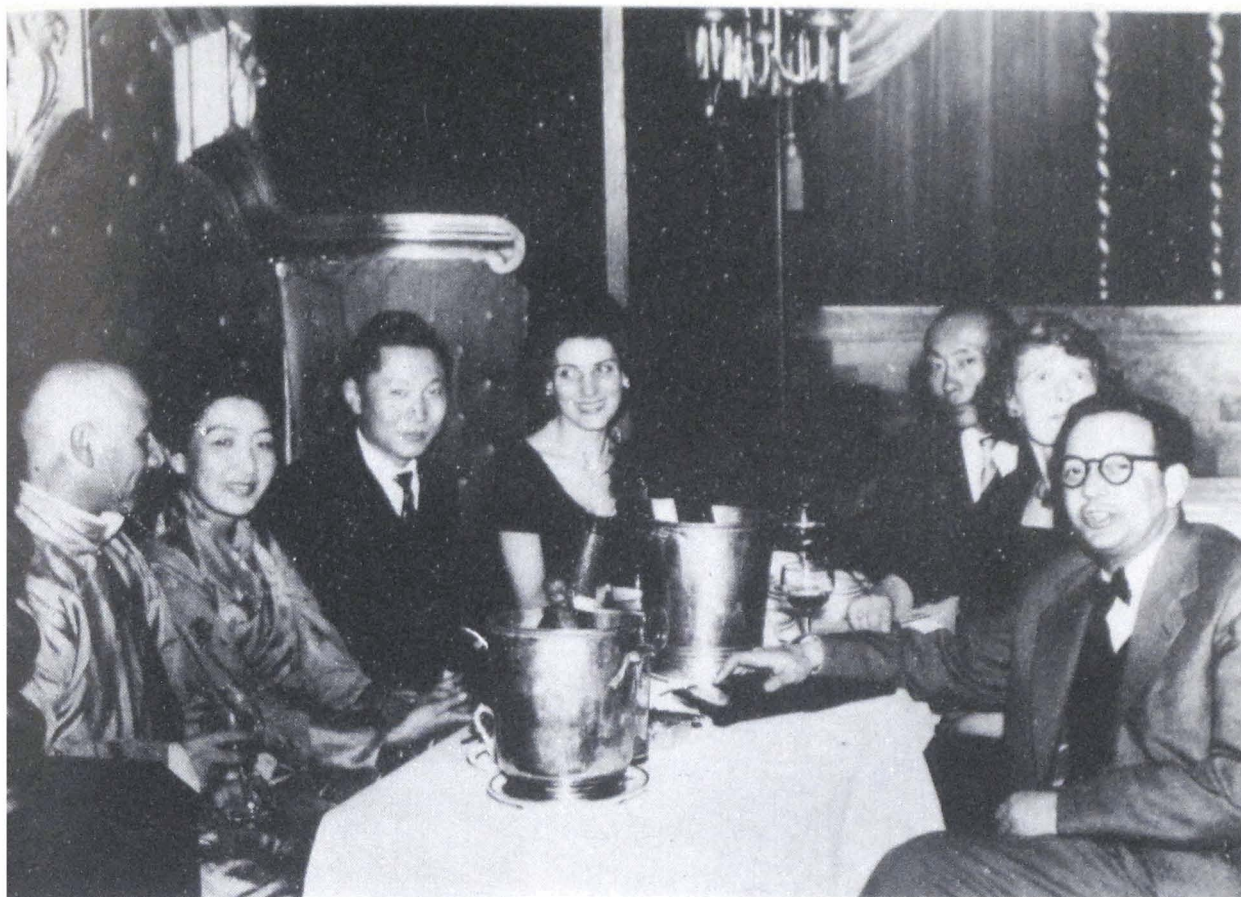
Remember me to Bhopal, Joti, Ahya, Sweeper and driver with thanks for looking after us so kindly. I close with Love to you and the children.

Thondup

¹C.R. Iranj, Managing Director of the *Statesman*, Calcutta.

²The Prince's younger son see pp. 104-109.

³With the defeat of Indira Gandhi at the polls held after the revocation of the Emergency, the Kazi made approaches to join hands with the new ruling party at the Centre, the Janata Party, headed by Morarji Desai. The Janata Party was no less interested in coaxing the Kazi and his party members of the Indira Gandhi's Congress to defect to its ranks and deputed the Party's General Secretary, Mr. Nahar, to negotiate the modalities.



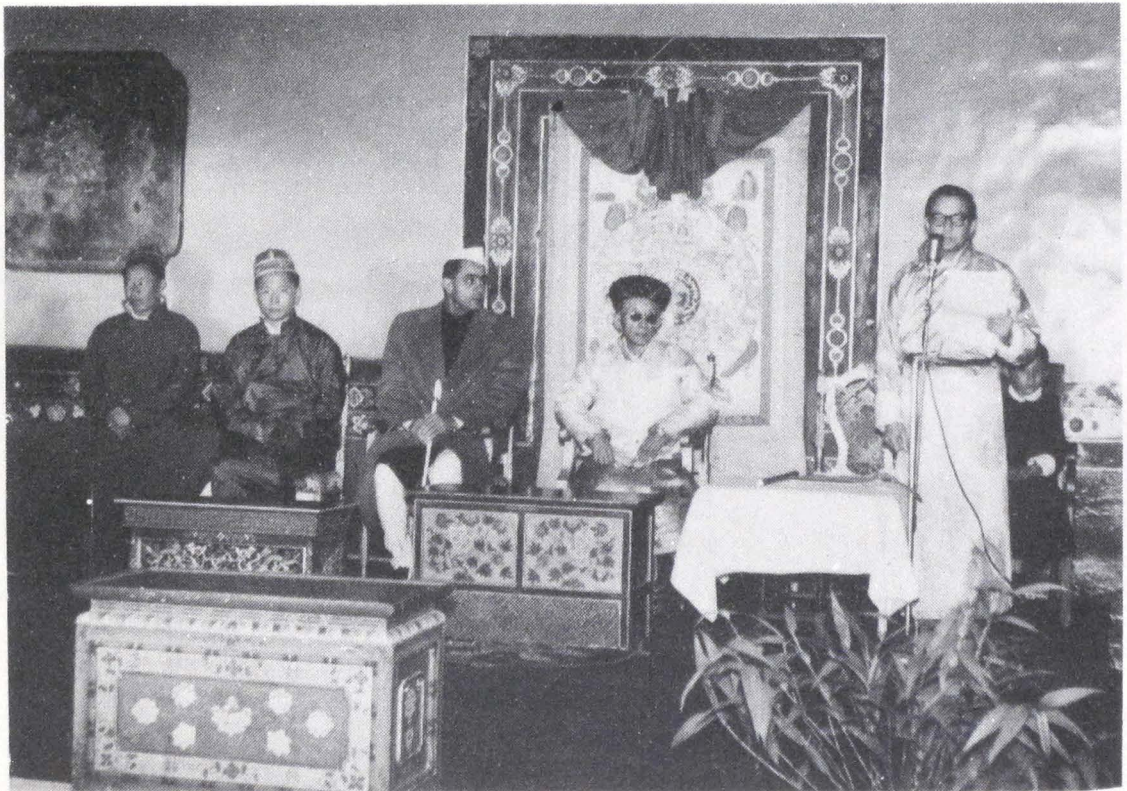
Paris: The Chogyal (third from left), -with Jigme Dorji, Prime Minister of Bhutan, second from his left, and Tessa Dorji to his right



Lamas at prayer at the Institute of Tibetology



Sir Tashi welcomes the Dalai Lama to Sikkim



Durbar Day Address. Sir Tashi (at centre), with Apa Saheb Pant, the Chogyal and the A.D.C. to Sir Tashi to his right



Princess Cocoola with Pandit Nehru at Palace Banquet





The coronation (1965)



Nepalese traders in Gangtok bazaar

Extract from the *The Indian Express*, Saturday May 21, 1977

PHIZO AND CHOGYAL'S SON MEET JP

Express Correspondent

LONDON, May 20:

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan had two important visitors last night. Prince Wangchuk, son of the Chogyal of Sikkim, and Mr. A.Z. Phizo.

While Wangchuk went to him for a courtesy call and to inquire about his health, Mr. Phizo called on him to discuss the Naga affair.

In his brief conversation with Wangchuk the Sarvodaya leader is reported to have told him that he had always felt that Sikkim should be treated differently from other Indian States. He told him that he was not in the Government but that he will try to prevail upon the present administration to that effect.

Mr. Narayan expressed these views when the second son of the Chogyal, who is studying business administration here, remarked during the talks that, while India had taken away the body of Sikkim, it had lost its heart. "Kindly release the body and you will find a warm and friendly heart".

The Sarvodaya leader laughed and then enquired about his father the Chogyal.

The Prince's eldest son, Tenzing, was more of an extrovert than his father. Harrow and Cambridge had fashioned him in the mould of a smart young man about town, but with his return to Sikkim and under his father's influence, he was soon involving himself in the politics of his country. The letter he wrote to us after his return home from Shillong was the last I ever received from him, for he was shortly afterwards killed in a car accident.

The Palace, Gangtok

9-5-77

Dear Avila and Uncle Rusty,

I do hope that you have by now both fully recovered from

having to look after us for two weeks.

Both father and I enjoyed ourselves tremendously. Especially being able to get out of the Gangtok atmosphere and do things which we have not been able to for a long time, like music, bridge, botany, etc. . . . For my father I know he had a real rest and enjoyed being with you both instead of the mundane officials here.

As for me the first thing I did on arrival was to look for the books on botany. I found the Book Trust series and others besides. But the head gardener seems to have disappeared to Darjeeling, so I await his return impatiently.

The political situation here is changing so fast between the various parties and the rumours each passes in town that I have decided to wait for news from Delhi. There are three parties here – CFD,¹ Janata and Congress. All wanting to merge within the Janata. So quite a pretty merry-go-round of rumours, scandals and speeches are going on.

We have planted your gift at the end of the lawn below the glass house. It is a lovely spot which the first morning sunshine bathes till the late afternoon. The top of the plant still looks travel worn but the smaller shoots and the lower leaves have taken on a healthy green tinge. I think that it should do well considering the amount of manure, coal dust, back soil, rotten leaves and branches that were put. Well. . . . I begin to sound like Maude.²

Any way, I hope this letter finds you all in the best of health and that Shanaz³ is “a little better”. I thank you once again for a lovely holiday and hope you will forgive me for any problem I may have caused.

I drunk to your health in my Pewter of hot water . . . let me

¹i.e. Congress For Democracy, a breakaway party from the Congress of Indira Gandhi.

²Mrs. Maude Boltomley, a very keen gardener and amongst the oldest residents of Shillong. Her father Col. Roe accompanied the Younghusband expedition to Lhasa in 1904.

³Our youngest daughter, who was unwell during the visit, but consistently replied, when asked about her health, that she was “a little better”

CHECK . . . double CHECK . . . and CHECK again¹. Yes, it is hot water. Cheers. Love,

Tenzing

I retired from the I.C.S. in August, 1977, and proceeded with my family to Bombay. My wife felt, very understandably, that schooling of our children in Bombay would afford them an opportunity to come closer to their roots, from which they had hitherto been almost completely divorced save for our annual visits on leave to their grandparents. My mother had also suffered a very severe stroke and I wished to be near her for some time before taking up a Fellowship I had been offered at Cambridge. It was while I was marking time in Bombay that I received the shattering news of Tenzing's death in a motor accident in Gangtok. Despite all that had happened in Sikkim, the Prince still entertained hopes that one day Tenzing would succeed him and lead his people. Tenzing and his younger brother, Wangchuk, had both been schooled in Harrow, where they had shaped well. Tenzing was later admitted to Trinity, and, although his academic results were just average, he was well liked and took a creditable part in College activities. His father was determined that his sons should be afforded the opportunities that he himself had been denied, and had taken special pains to groom Tenzing as his successor. It was the grimmest of ironies that, within three years of losing his country, the Prince also lost the one person upon whom he had pinned his hopes for the future.

Much as I should have wished to be present at Tenzing's funeral, I decided to postpone my visit of condolence until after the ceremonies had been completed and the crowds had departed, when the Prince, in his isolation, would be more in need of me for solace and counsel. Although I had known Tenzing since he was a child – on his mother's death, Tenzing and Wangchuk removed to my home to be away for a while from the strain and tensions of preparations for the funeral in

¹A dig at my insistence on always double-checking on facts before acceptance.

the Palace—I saw less of the brothers after they departed for schooling in the U.K. They wrote to me occasionally from Harrow, and we met from time to time during my visits abroad and their vacations in Sikkim. But I had already left Sikkim in my official capacity as Prime Minister when they returned home on completion of their studies and did not therefore have much opportunity to assess how they were shaping in their own country after their long absence abroad. It was with proud gratification therefore that I read of the vast fund of affection that Tenzing had evoked amongst his people during the brief period since his return from Cambridge, and this was evidenced also by the unprecedented crowds that poured into Gangtok from the remotest villages to pay him their last respects. Sunanda Datta-Ray, Deputy Editor of the *Statesman*, who had carried out a close study of developments in Sikkim, personally attended the funeral and I cannot do better than reproduce his appraisal:

“I am returning to the plight of Sikkim not only because of the controversy provoked by the Prime Minister’s courageous admission, but because recent events in Gangtok give clear notice to the world that, chafing under restraint, the Sikkimese are themselves demanding a review of the means whereby about 200,000 people and 2818 square miles of territory were absorbed in the Indian Union.

“Tragedy is often a catalyst in the lives of men as well as of nations. Crown Prince Tenzing Namgyal, the Chogyal of Sikkim’s 26-year old eldest son and heir, was active, vivacious and extremely popular. His unassuming modesty, natural charm, and the ease with which he made friends among people of all stations, Indian as well as Sikkimese, lent him the kind of aura that must have distinguished Scotland’s ill-fated Bonnie Prince Charlie.

“But the massive turnout for his funeral on March 19 cannot be explained away only in terms of the affection in which people held their young Prince. Tenzing was maturing into an experienced politician. He had already had several meetings with Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan and also discussed his

country's future with Mr. Morarji Desai. He was planning to set out for New Delhi for talks with Mr. Chandra Shekhar when he was so cruelly cut off in the prime of such a promising life.

“For the Sikkimese he represented the hope of the future. Many of them felt the 55-year-old Chogyal is too deeply rooted in the traditions to which he was born, and also too deeply wounded by his humiliating experience at Indian hands, to be able to achieve a compromise with new realities. But Tenzing's hold was as strong on the Nepalese as on the original Bhutia-Lepcha inhabitants. Indian politicians and officials invariably gave him a patient hearing; and even the nominal Chief Minister, Mr. Lhendhup Dorji Kazi, and his Cabinet colleagues were unable to deny him the respect which they had been ordered to withhold from his father and other members of the Namgyal dynasty.

“It was their firm conviction that Tenzing would one day weld together all the ethnic groups in Sikkim, win New Delhi's confidence and even evolve some kind of constitutional formula which would restore a measure of the kingdom's autonomy while fully protecting India's legitimate rights and interests.

“The Nepalese saw in him a bulwark against being swamped by more enterprising compatriots from northern West Bengal. For the hapless Bhutia-Lepchas, he was guardian of their threatened identity. Loyalists reposed faith in his potential as a liberal constitutional ruler. Politicians of all persuasions expected him to safeguard a democracy which is now only mocked by the extensive and arbitrary powers exercised by Sikkim's dictatorial ICS Governor, Mr. Bipin Behari Lal.

“Hence the crush of mourning visitors in Gangtok for Tenzing's cremation. The Chogyal's optimism provoked wistful sighs when he made arrangements to feed 10,000 mourners. But independent estimates place the crowd at nearer 20,000. It was by far the biggest concourse of people that the Himalayan town has ever experienced.

“Denied the right of protest – or, indeed, of any form of

political expression – the Sikkimese seized on this sad occasion mutely to share the Chogyal's grief and, by implication, to express solidarity with the cause to which he has so unflinchingly adhered. They were mourning their dead prince. They were also demonstrating their loyalty to Sikkim. Both acts were in the teeth of official Indian disapproval.

“It was probably the first time in the history of the Kingdom that Nepalese prostrated themselves before the Chogyal in the obeisance that was once part of Durbar etiquette, but was resented by the majority community. Many of them had trekked for days across the hills, avoiding roads where Central Reserve Police (CRP) personnel were posted with orders to send them back. All shops and offices voluntarily remained closed, again ignoring the CRP who swarmed all over Gangtok. School children disobeyed orders to stand sentinel along the route of the cortege.

“The most explicit demonstration of all was staged with quiet dignity by Sikkim's 4000 civil servants. They are under express orders from the Cabinet (which really means the Governor since he alone calls the tune) to have no truck with the Palace. But they defied the injunction to visit the Palace chapel and lay upon the gilded and tesselled bier those streaming white scarves that signify respect in the Himalayas.

“It has been our practice in the past always to attribute all such displays to Palace bribery. But with the Janata regime having stopped even the ad hoc allowance sanctioned by Mrs. Gandhi, and forcibly deprived of his private personal estates, the Chogyal has no money any longer. Indeed Tenzing was killed when driving down to the petrol pump which he ran to bring in a modest income. Little wonder that the traditional council of village elders – the Sikkim Lhadi Medi – as well as several politicians are demanding that the Government should bear the funeral expenses.

“The political coefficient of this upsurge of sympathy and loyalty exploded in the Sikkim Assembly after the funeral when a former minister, now a Janata MLA, Mr. Krishna Chandra Pradhan, tried to move a resolution of condolence

and to observe two minutes silence to mourn for Tenzing. He was ruled out of order by the Speaker—totally impervious to any calls of grace, courtesy or public sentiments, Mr. Lal continued to read his inaugural address. Following an altercation, there was a walk-out.

“A similar scene was re-enacted about a week later when the Opposition leader, Mr. Nar Bahadur Khatiwada, of the Prajatantra Congress, demanded a debate on Mr. Pradhan’s notice drawing the attention of the House to Mr. Desai’s statement. It was again disallowed; again, seven or eight M.L.A.s stormed out, protesting against churlishness.

“We must be fearful indeed with much to hide if we feel that expressing sorrow at the Crown Prince’s death will somehow encourage sedition and secession and endanger India’s security. India must treat the Sikkim Assembly as a subservient puppet institution if it cannot be allowed to discuss the Prime Minister’s remarks which have already been debated in the Lok Sabha.

“There can be no truer indication of the lack of justice in the Indian case for retaining the spoils of aggression, or of New Delhi’s misgivings about the sentiments of even those politicians who helped the merger (annexation is the more appropriate description) and are richly rewarded for having lent respectability to the extension of our frontiers. We dare not permit the Sikkimese that democratic expression for which we claim to have absorbed them.

“Meanwhile, Mr. Pradhan has joined Mr. Khatiwada in exposing the fondly-held fallacy that the Sikkimese ever demanded merger. Dismissing Mr. Desai’s pleas as a “blatant lie”, Mr. Pradhan says that the 1975 special poll in favour of abolition of Sikkim’s protectorate status was “pure farce enacted by the then Government as much to deceive the people of India as the world at large”. He adds that “the merger was a clear instance of annexation” and that the poll majority was a “spurious figure concocted by the authorities”.

“The vacillating Mr. Kazi, driven only by relentless ambition and his British wife’s goading, is understandably in a dither.

His popular base has all but disappeared, and a political career cannot forever be sustained by preaching hostility against the empty symbol of dispossessed monarchy. The groundswell of grief at Prince Tenzing's funeral dramatically reveals that it can no longer pay to hurl accusations at the royal family.

"The Chief Minister has nothing else to fall back upon except the CRP and the Governor's overriding powers. Mr. Lal was Chief Executive in 1975 and the special poll was held under his supervision. An indication of his style of ruling is available from Mr. Pradhan's stricture: "The majority of the M.L.A.s of Sikkim, as also the greatest majority of the people of Sikkim, had been reduced into abject submission by the naked use of force and political chicanery. Their voice of protest was gagged and scotched".

"Mr. Khatiwada says that the only good to flow from the annexation is a stronger sense of national identity and a determination to fight for Sikkim's rights.

"Mr. Desai's comments do not suggest insensitivity or territorial acquisitiveness at the expense of moral and legal principles. He may be right in claiming that the Chogyal was unpopular. But recent developments reveal that it is not the Chogyal's cause, nor even only Sikkim's. The cause is Indian, for India's dignity and self-respect are affronted by a situation in which an alien people not only have Indian citizenship thrust upon them but have to be retained as prisoners of this great country.

"Crown Prince Tenzing would probably have put it more diplomatically. He had the gift. But his death has enabled Sikkim's leaders—all of them articulate and intelligent Nepalese politicians who once looked to New Delhi for assistance against the Durbar—to protest against India's betrayal and give voice to the demand for self-determination."

To add to the Prince's distress at the loss of his son, his daughter, Yangchen, had fallen seriously ill in the States and had been prescribed a kidney transplant. Her brother, Wangchuk, had originally offered to be a donor, but, on the

death of Tenzing, her cousin Sonam Yuthok¹ volunteered, in the interests of the succession, to take his place.

Despite his heavy family burdens, however, the Prince's will was not broken. The Government of India were reluctant to agree to a financial settlement until they had a written assurance from him that he had finally accepted Sikkim's new constitutional position, and he once again sought my help as intermediary:

The Palace, Gangtok
22nd April, 1978

My dear Rusty,

Thank you for your kind message of condolences on the tragic loss of Tenzing and your visiting us earlier this month. Death must follow birth but it was so cruel a fate to lose Tenzing who was in the prime of life shouldering his responsibilities so successfully and was a source of strength and our hope for the future. Your kind thoughts and your presence have helped me in my grief. I am ever indebted to you for the interest you have taken in our family and the help you have given me in my present problems.

As for the draft you gave me for Morarji, there are two things I would like to be clear on. One is that, although I recognize the existing constitutional position, I am not in agreement with it. Secondly, I should not be debarred from getting the true facts known and appealing for truth and justice, i.e., from trying to bring about a change constitutionally. I do not think I am asking too much in not being in agreement with an injustice and wrong that has been admitted by the P.M. himself.

I hope you will bear with me and give your valuable assistance and guidance at least once more and come to Delhi if necessary next month. I will bear all expenses, *even if I have to pawn the shirt off my back*. Please give favourable consideration to this request.

Sonam Yuthok has left for the States as a possible donor of a

¹Daughter of Princess Kula, younger sister of the Prince.

kidney for Yangchen. The operation, I gather, would be done within the next few weeks if the doctors find everything in order. So Wangchuk returns tomorrow from Calcutta where he was seeing to Sonam's journey.

We are preparing for the forty-ninth Day Ceremony for late Tenzing, which falls due on the 29th April Saturday. They are expecting a lot of people again although I would have thought that many who came for the cremation would not come just for a meal and see the end of prayers.

Yours
Thondup

The Delhi visit taxed my nerves to the utmost and it was only after a demonstration of temper that I could prevail upon, or rather bully the Prince into giving an assurance on the strength of which the Government of India would release funds and foreign exchange for his children's medical and educational expenses. As for the expenses he offered to pay for my visit, I put up with an old friend and colleague, Justice D.M. Sen, and so was no burden on his purse.

The draft that eventually emerged after my commuting backwards and forwards times without number between the Prince, the Home Ministry and V. Shankar, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, was finally, after acute heart-searching by the Prince, despatched to the Prime Minister.

Camp: New Delhi
7th July, 1978

Your Excellency Morarjibhai,

From your letter No. 1232 PMO/78 dated 29th June, 1978 and during discussions with you, I gained the impression that certain doubts and misgivings still persist regarding my views on the present status of Sikkim. I would like, through this letter, to clarify my position.

I assure you that, in the changed circumstances of the day, I would not act in any way contrary to the existing constitutional position, but would give my co-operation to the Government

of India in the interests of promoting the welfare of the people of Sikkim.

With highest considerations and warmest regards,

Yours sincerely
P.T. Namgyal

His Excellency Shri Morarji Desai
Prime Minister of India
New Delhi, India

The Government of India's *quid pro quo* for the above assurance was the sanction of finances specified in my letter of the same date to the Home Secretary.

C/0 1, Maulana Azad Road
New Delhi
7th July, 1978

My dear Kampani,

In confirmation of our discussions this morning, I am noting below the essential financial requirements which you kindly agreed to settle within the next week:

- (1) Rs.3,00,000 for Yanchen's operation (with foreign exchange)
- (2) Rs.2,70,000 for the children's educational expenses (with foreign exchange)
- (3) Rs.40,000 for travelling abroad (with foreign exchange)
- (4) Rs.10,000 (return air-fare to USA)
- (5) Rs.90,000 for expenditure in Sikkim for June, July and August at Rs.30,000 per month.

Total: Rs.7,10,000

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,
N.K. Rustomji

Shri M.L. Kampani
Additional Secretary to the Govt. of India
Ministry of Home Affairs
New Delhi

I have not upto now included any of my own letters to the Prince, as they were mostly written by hand and I kept no copies. On my retirement, however, I bought myself a typewriter and was able to keep copies of my laborious efforts, some of which are, in retrospect, not without interest. Soon after the Delhi discussions, the Prince left for the U.S.A. to be with his daughter during the kidney transplant and I wanted him to remain assured that, even though I planned to leave shortly for Cambridge, he could count on me to make myself available in time of need.

Jony Castle
96 Wodehouse Road, Colaba
Bombay 5
August 3rd, 1978

My dear Thondup (alias S in the M)¹

I hope you had a pleasant journey and that all is well, particularly with Yanchen. Please tell her that our thoughts have been with her all through these difficult times and that, with God's blessings, we are sure she will soon be well again. This last year has been a trying year for both our families, but let's hope the worst is over and the sun will shine again. I feel happy that I could play a *wee* part in making your visit possible, though, at one stage, I confess I almost felt like giving up. And why must you always fix your meetings at Delhi at the most excruciating season of the year?

You will be interested to know that my Cambridge jaunt has been finalised and I should be leaving for "home" on or about September 28th. If there is anything I can do for you before then, let me know at once, or else come back a little earlier. I do hope there will be no further problems over your settlement. In case I have already left for Cambridge while you are still in the States, you must drop in on me in Cambridge on your return journey. You can contact me C/o B.H. Farmer, Director, Centre of South Asian Studies.

Keep well Thondup – and remember to count ten! I shall miss you no less than my own family when I leave, but I expect that once your settlement has been finalised, you will not

¹"Stick in the Mud", as I nicknamed him for his obstinacy.

hesitate to give me a ring from time to time to cheer my spirits – and don't ask to reverse the charges!

Would you believe it, I am typing this letter myself to save you the strain of decyphering my cryptic hand – there's true devotion for you. I just don't know why I do it.

Give Hope our love, and tell her we are very, very cross that she hasn't replied to any of our letters. But I can understand – and forgive.

With fondest love
Yours ever, Rusti

The extracts from the letters I wrote to him on his return from the U.S.A. are equally revealing of our relationship. His son, Wangchuk, who assisted his father in the Delhi discussions, had not been accustomed to seeing him being pulled up and I wanted him to understand the difference between sycophants and real well-wishers.

Bombay
November 9th 1978

My dear Thondup,

I have just now received your letter dated Oct. 30th, and hasten to type you a reply with my two little fingers – how are the mighty fallen! You at least have your Ongit¹ while we here slave and sweat. I am dropping a line to Kampani requesting him to ensure that what was promised will be duly fulfilled. As for my coming up “at the crucial moment”, please decide only if you feel it will be helpful. It is an expensive proposition coming up such a long way, and there is no point frittering away the shekals, whether yours or mine!

Bombay is at its very worst just now, and I sit all day next to the air-conditioner just to keep alive. We are tentatively thinking of going to Poona round or about the 20th for a few days reprieve. Why not come and join us? We have a very nice place to stay, almost as stately as the old Phodang², and it will be a change from the hustle of Delhi, Bombay and even Gangtok. I might even be prepared to bear *your* expenses, *one*

¹His Secretary.

²His Palace in Gangtok.

way only, of course! Think about it seriously. Surely its time you came to keep an eye on Mr. Gandhi¹ and your Pharmaceuticals? Any plans to visit Delhi? We must get together somewhere, somehow, soon. I'm desperately anxious to see you at least tolerably settled before leaving for Cambridge.

How is Wangchuk? I wonder whether he will ever understand the difference between a courtier and a friend? When he does, he will realise why I sometimes appear to be rough or brusque with you. You can't make omelettes without breaking eggs.

Please remember me to all my friends and dear ones – Amla, Lhanzi, Coooola, Athingla, Yap Sherab (but dont *write* to him!²), Tobgyay Am, Bipin Lal, all in strict order of precedence.

With fondest love, and leaving a little space for Avi to put in her spoke,

Yours ever and Ever
Rusti

P.S. Likee Typee?

My next letter to the Prince is illustrative of the confusion and muddle that persisted over Sikkim's status in Government of India departments even four years after the merger.

Bombay
December 16, 1978

My dear Thondup,

I succeeded, at long last, in contacting Gangtok by 'phone this morning after a four day struggle involving not inconsiderable expenditure of heat and tension. When I dial 180 and ask for Gangtok, I am instructed to dial for international calls. I tried to explain to the "monitor" yesterday that Sikkim was in India, but he stuck to his point and ended by advising that I better "study the English language" if I wished to continue the discussion. This rattled me, and I

¹His partner in a pharmaceutical concern in Bombay.

²Yap Sherab was Sikkim's Chief Secretary, and Sikkim's Governor, B.B. Lal, had taken serious exception to the Prince writing to him direct as an uncalled for interference in a democratic set-up.

retorted that I would report his impertinence to the Post Master General, but this was, of course, no good, as I am now no longer on the right side of the table. So I ate humble pie and dialled 186, to be informed that I should know that Sikkim is in India and not waste everybody's time by dialling 186 instead of 180. And so it goes on, round and round in circles. Anyway I expect Wangchuk has passed on my message to you that you will be given every opportunity to present your case before finalisation, so that should put your mind at rest somewhat. But don't hesitate to let me know if there is anything further you would like me to see to before I set off for "Phoren".

Bombay is now much cooler, even pleasant. Were it not for mummy's distressing condition, life would be almost tolerable, though the sea can be no substitute for the mountains. I am kept busy enough, as I am sent books to review, being recognised at last as the expert and last word on the Himalayas and what not! So put that in your pipe and smoke it. And you too better treat me with more respect in future.

Fondest love, yours ever,
Rusty

His main anxiety from now on was over obtaining a final settlement from the Government of India as compensation for Government's taking over of his private estates. He felt conscience-stricken that his family should have to suffer deprivation on account of his own obduracy. My advice to him was not to set his sights too high but to accept whatever was offered within reasonable limits. Left to himself, I think he would have agreed, but Princess Leena and others seemed to be encouraging in him hopes that were quite unwarranted and so coming in the way of any settlement being finalised.

The Palace, Gangtok
24th March 1979

My dear Rusty,

I am told from a source that my settlement may be fixed before Morarji Desai comes here on the 8th April. The source

also says that they are thinking on a very small sum like one and a half to two crores and suggest that I get an expert to make an evaluation of the Private Estates. I do not think there is anyone who can really do it expertly in Calcutta or elsewhere. I value the whole claim at more than fifty crores, what with the copper mines etc. etc. I expect at least ten crores. Anyway to get the figures known to Delhi at an early date would be useful to us here and I would be grateful if you could let them know.

You have not given me your address in England. Grateful for it. Hope all goes well with packing and things. Thank you again for all your help.

Love
Yours Thondup

Bombay
March 29th, 1979

My dear Thondup,

Thank you for your letter dated March 24th just received, as also for your previous letter and telegram. I deliberately did not contact Delhi until I had confirmation from you about receipt of the advance. I have this morning spoken to Kampani and thanked him for his co-operation. He tells me that the team for going into your settlement should already have set off for Gangtok, but has had to be delayed to help deal with "Budget Grants".¹ I passed on to Kampani your message regarding your "expectations", but that will doubtless be taken up on receipt of the team's recommendations. My own advice is that, if the amount offered is what you have had indicated through your sources, you should gracefully accept it and not demean yourself by haggling. I do not think that any expert's estimate of the value of the Private Estates, copper mines, etc. etc. will add any weight. These are largely political issues, and the decision will probably be more on the basis of the amount you will require to live decently and with self-respect. By pressing for more, you will merely give scope to people to damage your

¹i.e., in Parliament in New Delhi.

image and make out that your concern for Sikkim is only what you can get out of it. My advice, therefore, is that you should not play into the hands of mischief-mongers, who will seize upon the least opportunity to malign you.

I leave Bombay on April 15th, and until we settle in a flat, you can contact me c/o Mr. Farmer, M.A., Director, Centre of South Asian Studies, Laundress Lane, Cambridge. Don't hesitate to get into touch with me if I can help in any way. I am told that return fares from London to India are comparatively cheap, so I can even come back for you if you are in real need.

With lots of love,

Rusti

The Palace, Gangtok
8th April, 1979

My dear Rusty,

Thank you for your letters of 24th and 29th March. Both were received in Calcutta and Gangtok. I tried to telephone you from Calcutta but when I got through at last, you had gone off to Poona. Thank you for everything, for all your help and moral support.

My settlement has not made any headway as yet. I have been told that Delhi is afraid that I may spend the money on the elections and hence there will be no settlement till our elections are over. If they give me what I have indicated through you, of course, I will not haggle, as I would consider it a reasonable fraction of the real value of the Private Estates. But if they offer something much below, I will be forced to haggle. There are other things connected with the Settlement like compensation for lands, tax exemptions, arms taken away by the Army from the Palace grounds, Sikkim House in Delhi, right to maintain foreign account, the Palace compound, funds deposited in the bank for new Palace etc. etc., which I will have to take up and I hope will not be considered haggling.

Thank you for offering to come back from U.K. if I need you. It is very kind of you and I shall take you up seriously. I

may need you really, as I have few friends to turn to for advice. The Princess Leena takes rather a cynical view on most things, yet I cannot disassociate her.

Bon Voyage
Love
Thondup

If he was making little progress in getting the financial settlement with the Government of India finalised, his hopes for Sikkim's future revived with the political developments that were taking place internally within Sikkim itself. Lhendup Dorji, who had been the main architect of Sikkim's merger, soon found himself discredited and was on the way out. The Prince's next letter suggests that he seemed to have shed what had been suspected by some to be an anti-Nepali bias and had come now to see the problem only in terms of defending a Sikkimese identity in which Nepalese would play at least as significant a role as the Bhutia-Lepchas against suction into the teeming human whirlpool of India. His pride appeared to be more in the emergence of a strong Sikkimese, political identity, with no reflections on how many seats were won by Nepalese and how many by Bhutia-Lepcha candidates.

The Palace
Gangtok
24th August 1979

My dear Rusty,

I was in Bombay at the end of last month where I missed you and Avi. Your children were very responsible when we met and gave us tea and cakes.

Here the Assembly has been dissolved, as there was going to be a vote of no confidence brought against the Lhendup Dorji Government which would have been carried, followed possibly by a resolution against the merger of Sikkim with India. Now with President's rule the Kazi is also out and Lal is all in all. Lhendup Dorji is definitely not going to come back and we hope that the next election will be held soon. Whatever

Government comes in will be better than the one that sold away Sikkim.

Yours
Thondup

It was within two months of the receipt of this letter, while I was spending a brief vacation in Venice, that, quite by accident, I came upon a head-line in the London *Daily Telegraph* (dated October 15th 1979) about the Sikkim elections.

SIKKIMESE VOTE FOR AUTONOMY.

“A party inspired by the Chogyal (King) of Sikkim, whom Mrs. Gandhi deposed when India occupied the Himalayan Kingdom in 1974, yesterday swept to a clear victory in the current elections to the State Legislative Assembly.

“The Janata Parishad party, which made it plain in its election campaign that it stood opposed to the merger of Sikkim into the Indian Union won 17 seats in the 32 member Assembly and thus secured the right to form a government. It has no alliance with the National parties in India and is a purely local grouping.

“Apart from the Janata Parishad’s spectacular win, another indicator of the strong local Sikkimese sentiment was reflected in the fact that the only other party to do well was the newly formed local Revolutionary Congress Party.

Official Opposition

“The Revolutionary Congress is neither allied to Mrs. Gandhi’s Congress Convention party or to the Official Congress party. It won 11 seats and became the official opposition.

“The implications of the Janata Parishad’s victory on Sikkim’s relations with the New Delhi government are now the subject of considerable speculation. The Parishad has given some indications of its acceptance of the merger as a *fait accompli*, but it is almost certain it will press hard for greater autonomy for Sikkim rather than secession, which would rake up animosity with India.

“Among those trounced in the elections was Kazi Lhendup Dorji, who had acted as Chief Minister since Mrs. Gandhi’s take-over.

“The Chogyal is abroad at present.”

The wheel, it seemed, had turned full circle.

I had been visiting Sikkim practically every year since my retirement from Government service in 1977, and, though I had differences with Kazi Lhendup Dorji over political issues, our personal relations had always been on the friendliest terms. His wife, the Kazini, however, reacted sharply to my mentioning in a review of a book by Sunanda Datta-Ray, *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikkim*¹ that she had once referred to the developments culminating in Sikkim’s merger with India as “a terrible mistake”. As the Kazi had been the main instrument of the merger, she no doubt apprehended that the exposure might be detrimental to his future political ambitions and she ascribed my reference to it as motivated by my “chagrin and rage” at her husband’s opposition to my somewhat cautious approach in the expediting of democratic reforms in Sikkim. That my observations were not, however, the outcome of any feelings of strain or ill-will between myself and the Kazi is borne out by the Kazini’s several letters to me, including the following written after one of my visits to Gangtok.

Mintokgang, Gangtok
Sikkim
Tele: 394 & 304
30-1-79

Dear Shri Rustomji,

Kazi Saheb has asked me to write to you and to thank you for your very nice letter and your New Year greetings which we heartily reciprocate. It was a great pleasure to meet you and we enjoyed our talks with you, and I still cannot forget your

¹Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1984, See also p. 122.

expression when you told us how you had tried to entice the Alsatian on to your bed in the lonely Palace!

Now, about the Secretariat. It has not been "officially" opened, though it is actually functioning. The P.M. was coming sometime in late November but he did not have time, and so "officially" it has not yet been opened. When this happens we shall certainly let you know.

I think you will be very happy with the Deer Park which owes its existence to you; it has been very beautifully done, and the little shrine and garden, which face Kazi's room, are in a lovely condition and daily shine their blessings upon that dear soul, Kazi Saheb.

Yes, I think you would have every reason to feel that the new Secretariat is a thing of beauty, and all that you did to beautify it still remains, and will be preserved carefully.

Of course, it will be better when you come and see it all for yourself, and, so, let us see when that can be brought about before you leave for the U.K. in April.

Meantime Kazi Saheb joins me in sending you and your family our warm regards and all good wishes for this year. Do write to Kazi Saheb occasionally . . . he likes to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,
Kazini of Chakung

The Light Goes Out

Having lost in his struggle to safeguard his kingdom's independence, the Prince's final struggle was to maintain his links with his two children by Hope. Relations between the Prince and his wife had become so soured that they eventually resorted to divorce. The Prince, however, was essentially a family man and wished his children to remain close in spirit at least to Sikkim and himself. Although they were being brought up and educated in the States, he wanted them to feel that their roots were still in Sikkim. It was for this reason, apart from the natural affection of a father, that he wished that his children should spend their holidays with him in Sikkim whenever free to do so.

It was a shock for him to find that Hope objected to the children's visiting their father in Sikkim and had obtained a Court injunction against such a visit on grounds that their lives would be in danger on account of the agitations against the Palace. It was only after considerable expenditure of time, effort and money that the Prince eventually succeeded in having the injunction vacated and he was full of joyful expectation at the prospect of a holiday trek in the mountains with his children and their friends. He had not been keeping well, however, and had written to me that he had been suffering from a throat problem for about five or six months and that, in spite of medication, his throat was still giving trouble. He may well have had some premonition even then that the end was near and planned this reunion with all his children in Sikkim as a final farewell.

His keen expectations of a trek in the high mountains with

nis children and their friends could not, however, be fulfilled. As he wrote to me in the penultimate letter of his life,

The Palace
Gangtok
17th August 1981

My dear Rusty,

The children were very disappointed, as they could not go on the Dzungri-Goechakla trek. The Governor would not recommend the permits for their friends, even though the area is encouraged as a tourist trekking area and permits are normally freely given. I think it was to put pressure on me to show that Government can be uncooperative if they choose. Foolish, as don't I know it! So we went on a Bus tour of Rangpo, Rinchenpung, Pemayangtse, Tashideng and Phodang. Even for this the Governor was trying to object to the children's friends going. It was great to have all the kids and their friends. The house was full and with lots of life. Yangchen has since left and the two youngest are leaving in about two weeks time.

I may come to Bombay to see the kids off, in which case I look forward to seeing you. A lot depends on finances. I am in a bad hole as the Governor is not advancing any more money until I accept the settlement. The Governor is, I am sorry to say, a dead loss. I am now planning to see Rajiv Gandhi and the P.M. Hope things will work out there.

Yours ever,
Thondup

It was not long after writing the above letter that the Prince visited me in my home in Bombay with his son Wangchuk. He appeared tired and cheerless – the light had gone out of his life. After lunch, I suggested he should rest a little, while I showed his son the letters of his father that I had preserved during all the years of our friendship. Wangchuk confided in me that he had been pressing his father to write about Sikkim and her

trials, and suggested that I should add my weight to his pleadings. I informed him that his father had already apprised me, some months earlier, of his decision to write the story of Sikkim's closing years and sought my help. It was to be the Prince's last request to me of his life.

The Palace
Gangtok
16th July, 1981

My dear Rusty,

Wangchuk is insisting that I write about the endeavours of the Sikkim Government during my time, as all and sundry are writing misleading books on this period. I have now decided to bestir myself to write. The sad thing is I had such a good memory in those days that I intentionally did not keep any notes. Hence with my memory short and with no longer any access to Government records, the task is going to be difficult. It is indeed going to be very sketchy. Your assistance and co-operation would be invaluable and I will call on you in due course from time to time.

With love to you, Avi and the kids,

Yours Thondup

On his return journey to Gangtok, the Prince had himself medically checked at Calcutta and was diagnosed as a case of throat cancer. He was at once flown over to New York, from where I received the last of the letters that have formed this story of his life.

New York
6th October 1981

My dear Rusti,

Thank you so much for your two very touching letters and the cable. I am sorry not to have replied earlier but feel so sluggish in hospital in spite of the loving care the family are spending on me.

It is now three and a half weeks since I've been in hospital. The doctors diagnosed my ailment as Epidermoid carcinoma of the esophagus. They could not pass the Endoscopy down my throat as it was blocked, and I could hardly swallow even liquids. They then started me on chemotherapy, cisplatin which is very toxic and unpleasant. Vindecine and Bhomycin. The tumor in the throat has shrunk since and I am beginning to eat a little. They have been taking blood for tests two to four times a day and I am now being fed through a tube to the stomach after they took off the feed through my veins in the neck. I start my second round of chemotherapy from this Tuesday but no sisplatin which affects my kidney and my hearing and lowers blood count very much. I hope it will be over and I get out for a while from hospital which is depressing and very expensive (about Rs.5,000 per day).

The doctors are still to decide if I am to go through with the operation, in which case I lose my voice box and will have to learn how to speak again electronically. It is something I am dreading. But for a cure it seems it will be necessary. My doctors are Dr. Beattie (who attended on President S. Reddy) and Dr. H. Farr. They are supposed to be the best in this place. So much for boring med. details.

Thank you and Avi for your very kind thoughts and wishes. I only hope our Governor is a little more co-operative with finance and foreign exchange. I am so happy Bhopal's Dolma¹ is getting on so well.

We think of you all, I must now close.

Yours Thondup

P.S. Am losing all my hair, becoming really bald.

On the morning of the 30th January 1982, at 8.00 a.m., he was released from the wheel of life to the accompaniment of prayers recited by his personal Lama, a high-re-incarnate who had been for some time in attendance at the great stupa in

¹ Wife of my personal attendant, who was also under treatment at the time for cancer at Bombay.

Gangtok erected for the well-being of Sikkim and the royal house, and had been flown out to New York as soon as the Prince's condition became critical. The Prince's body was brought back to his homeland and cremated with regal honours on February 19th, the date decided upon by the Lamas as being the most auspicious. Villagers from the remotest corners of the country came to the capital to bear proof that, though he had lost his kingdom, he had not lost the heart and love of his people. And the Sikkim Assembly, the same august body that had abolished the institution of monarchy and the kingdom of Sikkim, recalled, in its obituary reference to the Prince,

“During the hour of his trial, when his very throne was at stake, Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal stood like a rock and sacrificed petty considerations for the lofty ideals he had espoused. He lost, but in the very process of losing his throne and status, he rose to his full stature. For when ‘little men’ who rule the roost in Sikkim will have been consigned to dust, posterity will look back with awe and respect upon the last representative of the House of Namgyal on the throne of Sikkim and say that Palden Thondup Namgyal bowed out of the political stage of Sikkim with the grace of a ruler and with the courage of a real man. He lost his Kingdom, but gained a martyr's halo. And his descendents will be able to walk with their heads held high whatever their circumstances in life happen to be.”

Whilst the Prince was relieved at last of his wordly burden, his book remained unwritten. He had lamented to me that he had kept no notes, forgetting that I had preserved the notes of his heart, his letters written to me over a period of forty years. This book, as much his as mine, is a final tribute to his memory and it gave me happiness to know from his son how much he appreciated my thought in writing it.

The Palace
Gangtok
28th September, 1982

My dear Uncle Rusty,

Thank you for your letter of the 14th September. I am full of many emotions on knowing that you now intend to write a book on late father. It would certainly be a wonderful way of not only remembering him as we knew him, but I'm sure there are many others within and outside Sikkim who would treasure this opportunity to know late father. Perhaps you are now the only person who can do full justice to such a task, and I eagerly await the day your work is published.

... Grandmother is still very energetic and is looking through, editing and connecting some prayer books at my behest.

I remain alone but slowly gathering the threads of life.
With love to the family and of course yourself,

Wangchuk

Retrospect

Consequent upon the death of the Prince and the cooling of passions with the efflux of time, it is possible to appraise more objectively the inner motivations, both of the Government of India and of the Prince, that culminated in the extinction of his kingdom. The question that remains to be answered is whether the relationship between India and Sikkim as envisaged under the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 could in fact have been indefinitely continued, and the extent to which the responsibility for its disruption was to be placed upon the Prince or upon the Government of India.

India's main interest, as we have seen, was to ensure that Sikkim, crucially placed as she was between two giant neighbours, should remain within India's orbit of influence, if not control. It was equally in India's interest that there should be harmonious relations between the several communities of this strategically vital country. One of the main passes for entry into India from China lay along the Sikkim-Tibet border, and China's control of these border regions would place her in a position to isolate, if she were so minded, India's eastern States from the rest of the mainland. India could not therefore allow conditions of instability to fester in Sikkim which might offer the Chinese the opportunities for which they were looking. The Chinese invasion of India of 1962 had had a catastrophic impact, turning Sikkim from a comparatively sleepy back-water to a strategic salient. Had it not been for the invasion, India might well have been prepared to allow the Prince a greater measure of latitude and placed the

maintenance of the *status quo* as the first and foremost priority. In the context of armed confrontation with China, however, India was not prepared to see the Prince step out of line. The defence of India was paramount.

The Prince, on his part, was apprehensive of the ever increasing Indian presence, in which he saw a potential challenge and threat to the ruler's authority. He sensed a disturbing tendency, if ever there was trouble or friction in Sikkim, for the people, and in particular the Nepalese element, to look not to the ruler but to the Government of India's Political Officer to arbitrate and set matters right. It was a tendency that became increasingly in evidence after India attained independence and took upon herself the onus of financing Sikkim's plan for economic development. The numerous Indian Officers recruited for implementation of the plan, though nominally functioning under the Sikkim Government, felt an allegiance also to the Indian Political Officer through whom their services had been requisitioned. This dual allegiance gave rise to tensions and confusion and justifiably irked the Prince, who began to feel that the motivation for appointment of Indian officers was not so much to speed up development as to tighten India's stranglehold over his country.

India's treaty with Sikkim gave India control over the defence and foreign affairs of the country. Sikkim was a Protectorate and India was entitled to station her troops in whatever strength and positions she might consider necessary. For the foreseeable future, Sikkim's existing status posed no threat to India. The concept of Protectorates was, however, a colonial legacy and it was not at all certain, in the context of changing attitudes throughout the world *vis-à-vis* the institutions of empire, how long it was likely to endure. Bhutan had already succeeded in winning entry into the United Nations and it was no secret that the Sikkim Prince had similar aspirations.

In the realisation that the days of Protectorates were numbered and that Protectorates in ex-colonial territories

were progressively graduating to complete independence, India had at one stage contemplated a formula that provided for Sikkim's ranking as an "Associate State" of the Indian Union. The ruler would continue as Head of State but would be only a strictly constitutional figure-head. This was a compromise that the Prince was not prepared to accept. The ruler's abdication of effective powers was tantamount, in his view, to surrender of Sikkim to the Nepalese which would be a betrayal of what he regarded as a sacred trust. For it has to be remembered that, from his early upbringing as a high reincarnate Lama, he felt himself to be, at a very deep level of his consciousness, and indeed was regarded by the Bhutia-Lepcha communities in general as the embodiment of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition in his country. This would go some way towards explaining his inability to compromise with an alien tradition, as he was convinced that the preservation of the integrity of the tradition he himself embodied came before all else. It was a conviction that subsisted at a level of his personality into which his later western-oriented training and development could not penetrate, which would account for his rigidity and inability to modify his attitude in the light of practical experience.

It was of no avail to remind him that he was fighting a losing battle. The Nepalese were fully aware that Sikkim's merger with India would be the surest way for eliminating the ruler. India had amply demonstrated by her past policies that she had scant regard for Princes. Even privileges constitutionally guaranteed to the Indian Princes at the time of the merger of their States had been subsequently revoked. For the Nepalese, the perpetuation of the monarchy symbolised the thwarting of all their high aspirations. With the removal of the ruler, the way would be clear for them to reap their deserts in proportion to their rapidly increasing population.

It would be injudicious to assume, however, that the resolutions respecting Sikkim's merger with India passed in the Sikkim Assembly in 1973 and 1974 necessarily represented the wishes of the Sikkimese people. The most reliable authority on

this point would be B.S. Das, who was “India’s man” at the critical juncture when he was called upon, in 1973, to assume the post of Chief Executive of Sikkim. Das has written an informative account¹ of the take over of Sikkim in which he has made it clear that it was only because Delhi’s support had been assured in full measure that the Sikkimese flocked in their thousands towards the Capital and the agitation assumed dimensions beyond the Prince’s control. Das’s instructions were, as he states, “to highlight constantly the feudal character of the existing system and the people’s revolt against it.” He goes on to note that, after personal assessment of the situation in April 1973, a senior Secretary in the Foreign office came to the conclusion that the agitation could not be sustained unless Delhi increased its support. “Do not allow the Chogyal to get on top again”, he was told, “We will never get a second opportunity like this”. He was urged to stretch out the tempo of the anti-Chogyal agitation over as long a period as possible so as to justify India’s intervention and meet any international criticism of Sikkim’s take over.

Upon India’s decision to hold a referendum to confirm the resolutions passed by the Assembly, the Prince represented that, if any such referendum were to be held, it should be under a completely impartial authority, and, in view of the Government of India’s objection to my visiting him in Gangtok, requested me to meet him in Calcutta to assist him in petitioning the Government of India to accede to his representation.² The referendum was however conducted, despite the Prince’s reservations, under the supervision of India’s Election Commission.

While there is no reason to question the *bona fides* of the Indian Election Commission or the fairness of the referendum, there can be no doubt that the public was at the time in a greatly agitated state of mind and there were many who were in confusion as to what exactly were the issues involved. Even

¹ *The Sikkim Saga*, Vikas Publishing House, 1983.

² See also his son Wangchuk’s letter to *The Times* dated April 29, 1975 at pp. 105-106.

amongst the Nepalese, the desideratum was not, perhaps, merger so much as the clipping of the ruler's wings, and their vote was, in effect, a vote for a more democratic form of Government as against an absolute monarchy. The army and the heavy Indian presence in Sikkim were also factors that inevitably weighed in influencing the vote. An impression was being spread that, with merger, the flood-gates of unlimited aid would be thrown open. With India as shepherd, Sikkim would lack for nothing.

India was true to her promise. The merger of Sikkim was followed by an inflow of developmental aid that was out of all proportion to Sikkim's population, needs and absorptive capacity. The Prince had been charged with neglecting the economic development of his country and it was therefore politically expedient to highlight the difference under the new dispensation. Deliberate mis-statements were broadcast to create the impression that it was only after the merger that any interest started to be taken by the Sikkim Government in the development of the country. The first picture shown in an official publication¹ on India's newest State was captioned "Development Building recently constructed at Gangtok", although in fact it had been constructed as long ago as in 1956 during what the booklet described as "Sikkim's Feudal regime". The building in question is one of the most beautifully designed in the whole of Sikkim and was planned and constructed under the personal supervision of the Prince himself.

It has to be borne in mind, in this context, that since 1949, Sikkim's administration had been virtually the responsibility of the Dewan and other officers deputed by the Government of India for service in the country. The allotment of funds by India was on the basis of detailed discussions with the Minister for Planning of the Government of India and senior officials of India's Planning Commission, including the Planning Adviser, who personally visited Sikkim at periodic intervals to satisfy

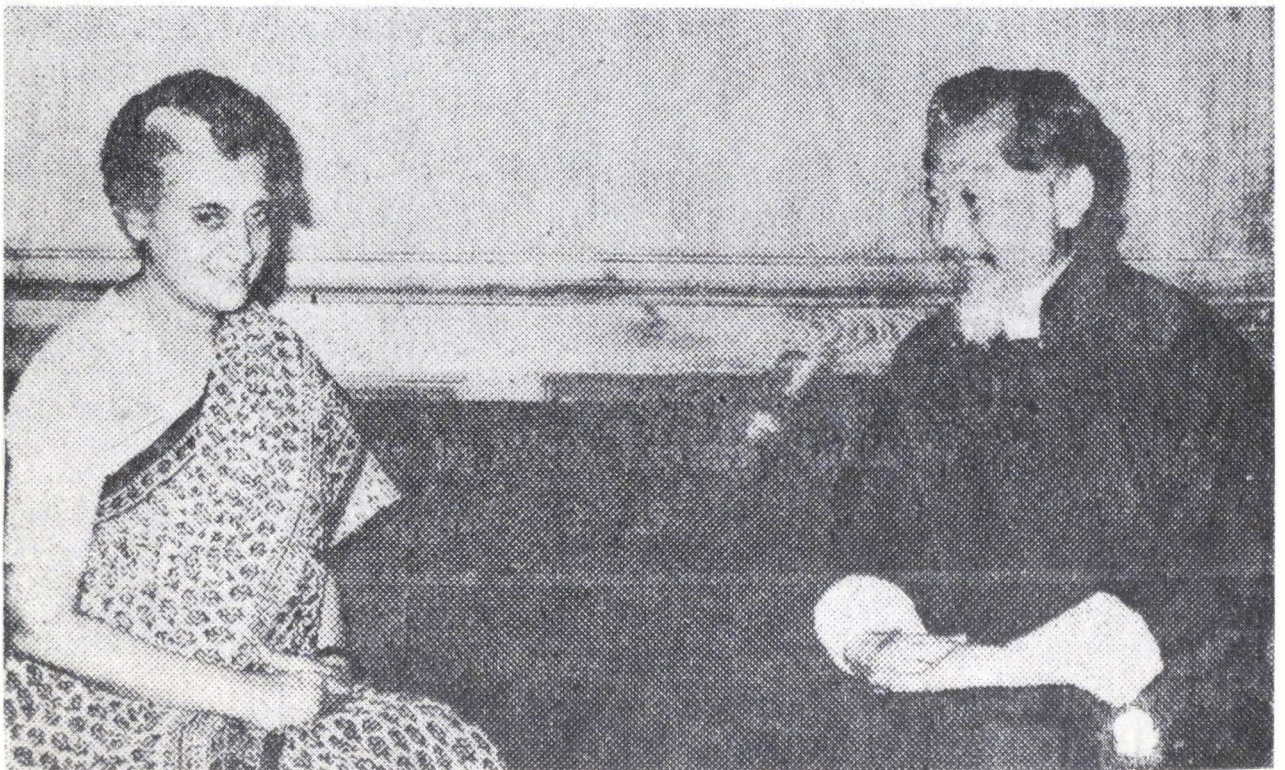
¹*States of Our Union: Sikkim*. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India (Publications Division).



The Chogyal and Gyalmo, escorted by the Governor of Tamil Nadu, during a State visit to Madras



Chakung Kazini leading a procession of the Sikkim Pradesh Congress (1976)



The Chogyal with Indira Gandhi (1971)



The Gyalmo escorting Indira Gandhi through rain in Gangtok (1967)



At the Kremlin, with the Gyalmo



The Chogyal with Prince Wangchuk



themselves that funds were provided to meet Sikkim's essential needs and to the extent of her capacity to utilise such funds to fruitful purpose. If, then, Sikkim's economic development had been previously neglected, blame has to be pinned upon the several agencies of the Government of India who had, more often than not, been responsible for pruning the financial demands for economic development pressed for by the Prince. After the merger, however, the provision of funds was multiplied many times over and salaries of Government staff correspondingly raised to sustain the impression sought to be created of the spectacular benefits accruing since the take over. But as Mr. Das has pertinently observed, "Sikkim's beauty and culture are being eroded with the implementation of the so-called development schemes and ideas applicable to the rest of India." His apprehensions as to the effects of the rapid process of Indianisation also proved correct when, as he observes, "large inputs of aid and implementation of new schemes within a short period created ethnic, political and economic problems which the new Government was incapable of facing."

I had been dissuaded from visiting the Prince in Gangtok during and after the merger and it was not until three years later, on my retirement from Government Service, that I could again do so. The effects of the vast increase in money-inflow were in evidence everywhere – unplanned construction of houses, ostentatious expenditure, both private and public, and worst of all, a complete lack of concern for any norm save the making of money as fast as possible, regardless of the means. Business interests in India soon became alive to the opportunities Sikkim offered as a tax haven and it was not long before Sikkim, pulled out of her "feudalism" by her erstwhile Protector, moved over to the opposite extreme of accelerating the setting up of assembly units for the mass-scale production of cigarettes, cosmetics and such-like articles totally unrelated to Sikkim's economy and culture for the enrichment of smart entrepreneurs, inside as well as outside Sikkim, at the cost of the public exchequer.

What was even more regrettable, the whole style of life had

become distorted. The modest residence of Sikkim's Prime Minister of pre-merger days was considered too humble for the Chief Minister of a people's raj and was therefore demolished to be replaced by a mansion more befitting his high office. The Prime Minister, during the years of "feudal" rule, had never felt the need for more than a single, unarmed constable and a common or garden jeep for his security and dignity, and I felt a sad nostalgia for times past to see, on subsequent visits, simple villagers brusquely brushed aside whenever the Governor or Chief Minister swept down the highway in their plush, imported limousines, with pilot, escort and sirens in full array. It was indeed no longer the "feudal" Sikkim of days gone by. Sikkim exuded in those distant days the feel and spirit of the Himalayas. Despite all the political friction and agitation, the dimensions of her problems were then on a homely and familiar scale. The army and police were negligible in number and rarely to be seen. A few policemen with lathis would normally suffice to deal with an emergent situation. With the merger, India set about consolidating her gains. Army and police encampments quickly multiplied. The picturesque little hill-roads were soon overwhelmed with trucks and jeeps carrying stores and supplies for the growing influx. The forested slopes were everywhere levelled down for the siting of barracks, and the calm of the mountains was desecrated by the perpetual din of bull-dozers and dynamite.

Apart from the noise and mechanisation that have come to be accepted throughout the world as the price of progress, there was also a perceptible change in the physiognomy of the population. While the Lepchas and Bhutias had resented the Nepalese influx, the Nepalese were at least somewhat like themselves in appearance – of fair complexion, Mongoloid in feature and comparatively small of stature. If there had been apprehension of the Nepalese outnumbering and lording it over the earlier inhabitants, the Nepalese did at least fit in and harmonise with the rural landscape. They were cheerful, carefree and simple folk, lovers of dance and song. After the merger, there was an increase in the Indian population,

including in particular military personnel. Although the increase was at first not so alarming in numbers, it became quickly noticeable, as this latest influx was more alien in appearance, dress and behaviour than were the former infiltrators, whether Tibetan or Nepalese. Besides being swarthier in complexion, these newest entrants were more sophisticated than the local inhabitants and tended to regard the latter as not quite measuring up to their own standards and level of culture. This tendency had been in evidence even earlier, during my tenure as Prime Minister. But as Sikkim was then nominally independent, it remained at a low key. While the Indian attitude to the Sikkimese was not "colonial" to the same degree that some of the British had looked down upon Indians prior to independence, a shade of superiority was, after the merger, distinctly discernible.

It is unfortunate that in endorsing Claude White's initiative the British gave no consideration to the *social* consequences of Nepalese settlement in Sikkim. For the British, it was only the *political* consideration that weighed, the expediency of populating Sikkim with a people whose racial and cultural affinities appeared closer to India than to Tibet. It should have been evident that the original and earlier settlers would not readily reconcile themselves to seeing their lands being over-run by a foreign people and their culture and language overwhelmed by an alien influx. What is surprising is that they remained passive for so long.

The answer perhaps is that, while the Lepchas and Bhutias were fully conscious of the threat to their community and culture, their Buddhist teaching of acceptance came in the way of their taking any active and positive steps to avert it. It was the Prince, with the dynamism of his western-orientated background, who at last provided the focus for which they were in search. He stood out for them as the symbol of the long awaited renaissance of the old Sikkim. His father had been respected and beloved by his people. But his interest had been primarily in the painting of the mighty snow-ranges and in the performance of religious ritual. He was not, by temperament,

attuned to politics, with the result that, for the fifty years of his reign, the traditional culture of Sikkim had been allowed to be eroded away under the sweep of the Nepalese flood. In the Prince, the Bhutia and Lepcha communities felt they had found the champion of their essential nationality. He became the mouthpiece for their long pent up feelings of apprehension and resentment, and through him they were determined to make an effort to reverse the Nepalese tide. But it was too late. It was unrealistic even to imagine that the tide could be reversed. The Nepalese had entered Sikkim in such numbers and had remained settled for so long a period that they had become part and parcel of the country, and their culture, however alien it might appear to the culture they had encountered on their original entry, had by now become the culture of their adopted country. Reversing the Nepalese tide was no longer a practical proposition, and the most that could be attempted was to hold it in abeyance for a while and allow a breathing time to the Bhutias and Lepchas so that the older culture of the land should not too suddenly be engulfed.

Sikkim had been subjected, as we have seen, to cultural assaults over the years from all directions, from Tibet, from Nepal and from India. But her fate as an independent entity of Lepcha-Bhutia culture was sealed from the moment the Nepalese influx was given full rein. The Prince has placed blame on the Indian authorities for stage-managing Sikkim's merger, and there can be no doubt, as is evident from Das's account, that manipulation took place. Nobody is so naive as to expect that India would stand idly by and let events take their course in a country of such strategic importance as Sikkim. But in the long-range historical perspective, nothing the Prince could do would have had much effect in perpetuating Sikkim's status as an independent entity. His was a hapless dilemma. He was well aware that, if he wanted the old Sikkim to survive, it could only be by ruling and not by reigning; for under a strictly constitutional ruler, the Nepalese majority would soon see Sikkim turned into a Nepalese State. The Nepalese, on the other hand, were not likely to accept *sine*

die a rule that did not give proportionate weightage to the majority population. A stage had been reached when it was only with the support and weight of an outside power, in this case India, that the Prince could maintain his position. But even India would have found it difficult to give unreserved support to a ruler who was not prepared to concede the democratic principle of "one man, one vote". There was growing political consciousness in Sikkim as well as in India, and popular aspirations could not be indefinitely flaunted. The most India could agree to was the continuance of the Prince as a constitutional ruler under the overall umbrella of the Government of India. The Prince was under no illusions that this could be only a temporary expedient and would, in effect, be a stepping-stone to ultimate merger.

The Prince was not prepared to enter into a short-lived compromise at the cost of his lifelong principles. It soon became clear that, if he did not yield, it would mean the end of his dynasty's role in Sikkim's history. Rightly or wrongly - and for him it was a matter of heart and conscience - , he considered it would be a betrayal of his trust as ruler to abdicate his powers and preside, as a constitutional head, over the liquidation of the minorities, who constituted in his view the essential and rightful core of Sikkim. It was open to him to step down gracefully as had the Indian Princes under Sardar Patel's dispensation in 1947, and there is no doubt that the Government of India would have offered him a liberal privy purse as well as an office of dignity and honour. But he felt, as the twelfth in the line of consecrated rulers of Sikkim, a tremendous sense of obligation to his people, and was not prepared to link questions respecting Sikkim's future destiny with considerations of personal advantage. And so, as in a Greek tragedy, by a kind of inescapable necessity, he annihilated himself insofar as his own future was concerned.

For India, the merger has been a double-edged gain. Friction between India and the Prince had arisen soon after India gained independence. But despite all, Nehru had affection for the Prince and treated the Palace with respect. As long as

Sikkim's troubles and problems were confined to the domestic field, the Government of India was prepared to be patient and even tolerant. But the Indo-Sikkim Treaty specifically vested India with responsibility for the conduct of Sikkim's foreign relations, and India's attitude noticeably hardened as reports were received of the Prince and more so, his American consort's parleyings with foreign diplomats. With Nehru's death again, there was a shift in the approach of the Indian Foreign Ministry. Nehru was an idealist, in whose view India was large enough to overlook a few pricks on her periphery. His aides however had inherited British attitudes and were more traditional in outlook. The Indian Princes were treated courteously enough. But when it came to protocol and the practical business of administration, the British representative or Resident let them clearly know their place. Nehru would think nothing of escorting the Prince and his family back to their car after a happy and informal lunch party at his home in New Delhi. His relations with the Prince were friendly and they spoke to each other as man to man. After Nehru's death, his aides came much more to the fore and asserted themselves more actively in the re-shaping of frontier policy. Indira Gandhi had initially been no less cordial to the Prince than her father. But she was, by temperament, more practically down to earth and would not allow any idealism to blind her to hard realities. She was also sensitive to slight and Hope's assertions of protocol, even where there might be some justification, were not calculated to improve relations.

But despite the Prince's rigid stances and Hope's high-falutin pretensions, a measure of patience might have served India's interests better. There was little likelihood of the Prince succeeding in manoeuvring Sikkim's admission to the U.N.O. over India's head or getting the treaty with India abrogated. And there was less for India to lose in putting up with a few pricks than to suffer the ignominy of appearing to have crushed her own Protectorate. For the fact of the merger having taken place under the shield of a heavy Indian presence gave an impression, within and outside Sikkim, that India's was the

hidden hand.

There was, again, no kudos to be gained by India through the accretion of a small corner of mountain territory to her already vast domains. There arose, on the contrary, a climate of insecurity throughout the frontier as a result of the haste and ineptness of the *modus operandi*. The contiguous Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan were not slow to voice their suspicions and distrust of their southern neighbour, who was branded as the spider that had lured fragile and innocent Sikkim into its web. Bhutan proceeded quickly to shuffle off the Indians she had appointed as consultants for the implementation of her Five Year Plan. The Nepalese took out processions at Kathmandu and staged demonstrations before the Indian Embassy as a protest against India's pushing around of a small and helpless neighbour. The labour of years of hard and sustained endeavour to build up a feeling of trust, confidence and goodwill amongst the hill-people on India's north-eastern borders was undone in an act of impatience that was subsequently denounced by no less than India's succeeding Prime Minister.¹

Das's account leaves no room for doubt that it was the assurance of Indian support that gave encouragement to and sustained the anti-ruler movement of 1973. The question arises as to what India gained by assuring such support. The Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 already offered India a blank cheque to station troops and military installations wheresoever and in whatever strength she deemed necessary in the interests of defence. Sikkim's external affairs, under the Treaty, were also the exclusive responsibility of the Government of India. If the Prince on occasion showed uneasiness and unhappiness over the provisions of the Treaty, it has, in all fairness, to be asked whether India's actions and policies did not give him reasonable grounds for apprehending² that the spirit of the

¹ Morarji Desai in a statement in March, 1977, denounced the take-over, but at the same time expressed his inability to undo it.

² See the Minute dated 30th November, 1954, at pages 37-41.

Treaty might not, in the ultimate event, be fully honoured. India's intervention in Sikkim will certainly have affected her credit in her dealings and relations with her larger and far more important neighbours, Bhutan and Nepal in particular. There is nobody so naive today as to be deceived for long by electoral manipulations, whether in Sikkim, India or anywhere else, but more so in Sikkim where the same leader and party that brought about the country's merger and the downfall of the ruler lost every seat in the next election to a ruling group "identifying and supporting" as Das puts it "the nationalistic sentiments towards Sikkim's separate personality distinct from India".

While highlighting the role played by the officials of the Government of India in manoeuvring the political parties of Sikkim and sustaining an anti-ruler movement, Das's final assessment is that "the merger of Sikkim was certainly an act of great courage in the face of the likely response of China and the reactions of the rest of the world". One has to ask oneself, however, whether there was much courage needed for a country of 700 million, with its vast paraphernalia of military armoury and diplomatic expertise, to extinguish a country of less than a quarter million of population. As for world wide reactions, if Tibet in all its vastness could be absorbed by China without as much as a murmur from the international community, India had no reason to fear that the take over of minute Sikkim would evoke a greater stir. And as for the danger from China, China would choose her own time and place when, and if, she felt herself sufficiently prepared to spoil for a fight with India.

It is difficult to predict the ultimate outcome of the Sikkim tangle. The old Sikkim and her culture will fall into oblivion as Nepalese pressures mount. With Sikkim as an integral part of India, the influx of Indians is bound to increase and may even be deliberately accelerated with a view to embedding into the state a solid core of Indians from the main heartland of the country to serve as a standing front-line of defence in a sensitive border region. If that should happen, it will be the

turn of the Nepalese to raise protest against the Indian entrance as a threat to the “sons of the soil”. The Nepalese, again, will have less compunction in calling upon Indian outsiders to quit Sikkim than had the Bhutias and Lepchas in resisting the Nepalese insurge. For in support of their posture of defiance will be the veiled threat to merge Sikkim with the flesh of their flesh in neighbouring Nepal rather than be overwhelmed by an unwanted Indian presence.

It had been the Prince’s contention from the outset that it was India’s interference in the politics of Sikkim that was undermining his authority and creating difficulties for him in administering his country. He was confident that, left to himself, without support being offered to the political parties by outside agencies, he could perfectly well have managed his country’s affairs. His ordering the arrest of even low level political leaders, however, used inevitably to result in protests to India as a country wedded to democratic ideals with an obligation to lend support to forces fighting against tyranny. And yet, within less than two years of taking over Sikkim, India herself declared an Emergency and entertained no conscientious scruples over detaining without trial leaders of the stature and eminence of Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji Desai.

If anybody had shown courage against all odds in the tragic and unequal contest that has been the subject of this story, it was the Prince. He was not wise, perhaps, in expecting that any efforts of his would enable Sikkim to achieve an international identity like Bhutan and Nepal. But he was not deterred by the prospect of failure, as it was a question of his faith in the rightness of the cause. His was a lone battle, for even in his direst hour of distress, he was denied access to friends who, if they could have done little to assist him materially, might have offered him comfort, consolation, perhaps even helpful counsel.

It was not under emotions recollected in tranquillity that I wrote of him on his death¹ – and I feel it is a fitting close to this

¹“The King must die.”, *Indian Express*, February 14, 1982.

story of a friendship as much as of his struggle for his country—

“It was his misfortune that, try as he might, he could not get people to understand that small can be beautiful. Nor could he allow himself to be convinced that others did not see Sikkim as he saw her, that Sikkim’s existence was, for the rest of the world, a non event. His principles might have been unrealistic and all wrong, but he was not prepared, to the very last, to compromise with them. He was intoxicated by his passion for his land and people.”

Appendix 1—Speech from the Throne
(See page 76)
(4th April, 1965)

It was over a year ago that we mourned the passing away of my dearly beloved father. His had been a long and historic reign, a life of selfless and unremitting dedication to his people, and it was, therefore, with a mind and heart full of the weight of the future that I assumed the heavy responsibility of the Chogyal of Sikkim. Today, our Venerable Lamas have, by the grace of the Tri Ratna, consecrated my accession and sanctified it by their holy blessings. From my people, I have received many and moving expressions of their devotion and loyalty. All this has touched me deeply, and I pray that I shall be granted strength and wisdom to fulfil your hopes and your confidence in me and that I shall not be found wanting in service to our country.

The example of my revered father will serve for me as an ever-living inspiration and it will be my constant endeavour to hold fast to the high ideals that were as a guiding star to him in the governance of the country. It was his purpose, as it shall be mine, to strive for peace and prosperity in Sikkim, to follow the lead of our forefathers through the centuries to bring happiness, beauty and contentment into the lives of the people. It shall be my great privilege to work together with you towards the improvement of our country's economy, to develop our agricultural and industrial resources so that the standard of living of our people may be further raised and welfare services made more readily available for them in the farthest and remotest corners of the land. And we have to ensure also that, with the material progress towards which we are striving, we do not lose sight of the spiritual values that are our precious heritage, that the rich legacy of our past and the lovely things of Sikkim are not engulfed in the ocean of change.

While the streams of many and diverse cultures have, for generations, flowed into and enriched Sikkim, her

geographical situation also raises problems that lay upon her people a special burden of responsibility. India is a great and peace loving country and we feel secure in her protection. But we are also conscious and alive to the need of preparing our own people for any eventuality, so that they may be ready to lay down their lives in the defence of their country, should the occasion arise. India has been a good friend to Sikkim, and we have received from our great neighbour generous assistance, for which I and my people shall always remain deeply grateful.

The bonds of friendship between our two countries are strong and indissoluble, and I take the opportunity to affirm, on this solemn day, that it will be our purpose and endeavour to yet further strengthen these bonds in fullest measure. We recall with profound affection the memory of Jawaharlal Nehru, a true and steadfast friend of Sikkim, and we have confidence that the Government of India will continue to hold out to us the hand of friendship. Our good neighbours, Bhutan and Nepal, are also much in our thoughts today and we shall continue to cherish their friendship.

Ours is a small country, but we have pride in our institutions, our way of life and cultural heritage. It is for this that we are resolved to maintain our national identity and so direct our affairs that our land may develop according to its own natural genius. Our system of law ensures prompt and impartial justice to rich and poor alike, and we regard it as our bounden duty to uphold the established faith and ensure the right of free worship for all people, whatever may be their beliefs or religion. For our conception of Government is that first place be given to the interests of the people whom the Government is to serve, and we consider our governance of the country to be effective in the measure that the aspirations of the people are fulfilled and they participate with willing and cheerful heart in bringing to fruition our hopes for the future.

I shall cherish in memory to the end of my life the sentiments expressed by you today, and know well that my father would have wished me to convey to you his gratitude for your loyalty and devotion to him throughout his long and happy reign. This

same loyalty and devotion you have offered to me also since my accession and it will serve as my greatest strength and inspiration in whatever crisis we may be called upon to face together. Our Gyalmo shares with me, I know, my joy and pride in serving Sikkim, and we both step out with you today with feelings of high adventure – for ours is a mighty challenge and we shall not remain content until we have banished from Sikkim whatever traces may remain of poverty, ignorance and disease; we shall not cease in the struggle until the light of knowledge, health and happiness shines bright in every home of our lovely land. Together, by the Grace of the Tri Ratna, may we make of Sikkim a paradise on earth. Let this be our pledge today, and let us pray that we are given strength so that we fail not in its fulfilment.

Appendix 2—Sikkim: the Chinese Ultimatum
(See page 77)

(Broadcast talk on All India Radio by
N.K. Rustomji, September 1965)

To those of us who have known and loved Sikkim over the years, the Chinese ultimatum was something more than just the next move on the shifting chess-board of international politics. We think back of the idyllic quiet of the Land of the Snowy Ranges – the shy Lepcha playing his rustic pipe as he tends his cattle, the lamas with their sacred books in devout procession during the feast-days of the Buddhist year, the gentle lilt of Nepalese folk-song – and it seems unnatural and unjust that war, or even its threats, should be permitted to intrude on such a land as this. My memories of the Nathu La are still of the endless caravans of gaily-decorated mules with their mountainous loads of wool. The bright tinkle of mule-bells and chanting by travellers of the universal mantra “Om Mani Padma Hum” could not break the stillness, rather by some strange mystical force the stillness was deepened further. Twenty years have brought many changes to Sikkim, many changes for the good, but there is something about a first-love that can never be effaced from memory. I suppose I am old fashioned, but when I think of Sikkim, it is still the Sikkim that first excited my interest and my love, the Sikkim that was for me an other-world, far removed from the tawdry round of everyday existence.

What really matters, however, is not how *I* should like to see Sikkim or what I or anybody else feel about the Chinese ultimatum, what matters is the feelings regarding these issues of the people of Sikkim themselves. Sikkim’s ruler did not waste time in announcing, in terms that were unmistakably clear, that his people would resist to the last man any aggression into their country, and while indicating his

satisfaction with the arrangements made for the protection of his country, expressed his confidence that, should the need arise, his people would be proud and happy to lay down their lives in Sikkim's defence. Self-respect is not the prerogative of only large countries, and Sikkim has sufficient pride in the legacy of her past and her institutions to make a determined stand for their preservation.

The Sikkimese consist of three main communities, the Lepchas, who are popularly held to be the original, indigenous inhabitants, the Bhutias and Nepalese. The Bhutias introduced Buddhism into Sikkim and, in course of time, virtually merged with the Lepchas in religion, language and social institutions. Whereas a fair number of Nepalis, such as the Tamangs and Limbus, are Buddhists, the majority are Hindus and speak only the Nepalese languages. They are good agriculturists and have been mainly responsible for clearing jungle and opening up extensive new areas for cultivation of maize and paddy. Millet is also widely grown in Sikkim and forms the base for the delightfully refreshing beer prepared in the rural areas, particularly during festive occasions. Cardamom and orange are among the more important cash crops of the country. The cultivation of cardamom is the main support of the Lepchas of North Sikkim. The orange-groves in the lower-lying regions of Central and Southern Sikkim have in the past found a ready and welcome market in West Bengal. In more recent years, Sikkim oranges have been fed into the Government's Fruit Preservation factory, from where they are sent out for export after tinning or bottling.

Sikkim will be embarking shortly on her Third Five Year Plan. Although Sikkim's Development Plans have been financed largely by the Government of India, what is significant is that Sikkim's own internal revenues have increased by over four-fold within the last ten years. This is an index of Sikkim's economic growth and the success of Government's efforts to step up the revenues of the country with a view to achieving ultimate self-sufficiency.

Of Sikkim's many and complex problems, not least has been

the integration of the various communities, with their differences in religion, language and social institutions. That such integration could be accomplished at all has been mainly through the genius of the ruler himself. If we are to understand Sikkim, it is necessary to know something of her ruler, for it is he who symbolises in his person Sikkim's cultural heritage as also her hopes for the future. An incarnate of the renowned Karmapa Lama of Palpung monastery in Kham, he spent his early years under strict monastic discipline. He later studied at St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling, and Bishop Cotton School, Simla, and, on the death of his elder brother, the Heir-apparent, attended, as grooming for future responsibility, a brief Administrative Training Course for I.C.S. Officers at Dehra Dun. On return to Sikkim, he devoted himself to studying the working of the various departments of the Durbar, and was recognised, within a few years, as his father's principal adviser. A bride was found for him, according to customary Palace tradition, from a leading family of Lhasa, the house of Samdu-Phodang, and three of his children are now studying in England, the Heir-apparent at Harrow. Six years after the death of his wife, the Chogyal found for himself a bride from a family distinguished in American political life.

The Chogyal has been President of the Mahabodhi Society of India since 1953, is a Founder Member of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute and Founder-President of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, which is gaining international recognition as a centre for Mahayana and Tibetan studies.

I have given this account of the Chogyal's background to illustrate how he has been able to hold together and integrate within himself the various, often seemingly conflicting influences and forces in his own life. A Buddhist by incarnation, his later schooling and wide travel have made him receptive and sympathetic to new ideas, so that we see in him a curious blend of old and new, of the mysteries of Mahayana and the no less abstruse mysteries of modern science. The secret of his leadership lies in his cosmopolitan outlook and his wide

humanism. His upbringing as an incarnate Lama has not come in the way of his acquiring fluent command of the Nepalese language as also a deep knowledge of and respect for their social and other institutions.

Whereas Chinese influence can be traced to many of the material things of western life, the people of the Himalayas have from earliest times turned for their teachers in spiritual and religious matters to India, the home of Buddhist beliefs. It was to India that, as long ago as in the seventh century, the King of Tibet sent his Chief Minister to learn the Indian written characters and evolve a script for the Tibetan language. And it was from India that the ancient rulers of Tibet invited the renowned saints and scholars of Buddhism, Santarakshita, Padma Sambhava, Atisha, to name but a few of a long and brilliant line, to expound the teachings of the Master and assist in translating into Tibetan the extensive Buddhist canon. It is by a strange irony and under tragic circumstances that, today, after a thousand years, Tibet repays her debt. For the refugees who have had to flee from Tibet to seek asylum in Sikkim and India, while leaving behind their personal possessions, have remembered, in the fulness of their faith, to bring with them the precious Tibetan translations of ancient Indian texts on early Buddhism that had long ago disappeared from their homeland when the monasteries of India were pillaged by invaders from the North. Until ten years ago, Sikkim provided, through the Nathu La, one of the important routes for the passage of trade between India and Tibet. She is now the repository of the great and continuous traffic of ideas between the two countries of a thousand years and more. For in the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology are being carefully collected and preserved the historical texts that will give back to India at long last something of her lost heritage.

Sikkim's ties with India, whether cultural, economic or political, are of long standing. But though, by the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950. India assumes responsibilities for Sikkim's defence, external affairs and communications, such responsibilities are exercised in consultation with the Sikkim

Durbar and with the respect due to Sikkim's status. The Chogyal's reaction to the Chinese ultimatum represented the heart-cry of a people deeply conscious of their identity and determined to fight to the last that it should be maintained; the heart-cry of a people not prepared to stand idly by to see the culture and the values that are Sikkim for ever effaced.

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