Chapter Six

POLITICAL PARTIES: ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT AND COMPOSITION
Among the numerous parties and political factions which grew up in Nepal during 1951-60, those which played a somewhat prominent role in politics were the Nepali Congress, the Gurkha Parishad, the Samyukta Prajatantra Party and the Nepal Communist Party. Each of these parties polled more than a lakh of votes in the general election and claimed a sizable following in the country. Thus, the General Secretaries of the Nepali Congress reported in 1960 that their Party had an estimated membership of about two lakhs. (1) The Gurkha Parishad and the Prajatantra Party did not provide any definite information regarding the strength of their membership, but their hold in certain parts of Nepal was said to have been as strong as that of the Nepali Congress, if not greater. The Communist Party claimed that its active members totalled about 5,000, though it could count upon a larger number as potential supporters and sympathisers. (2)

Ideologically and in their compositions these parties differed from each other. The Nepali Congress was a large and loosely-knit

(1) Central Office, Nepali Congress, Kathmandu. Sri Bhadra Sharma, one of the general secretaries, reported to this writer that in 1956 the Party's total strength was more than 5 lakhs.

(2) Puspalal, a Politburo member of the Nepal Communist Party, gave this writer the following figures about the membership of the Party's front organizations - 1) the All Nepal Kisan Sangha, 3 lakhs; 2) Nepal Trade Union Congress, 5 to 6 thousands; 3) students and other associations about 20,000.
organization in which various sectors and classes of the Nepalese society, ranging from the rich Ranas and landowners to poor peasants, found a place. Ideologically, the Congress claimed to be a socialist party which sought to establish a socialist society through peaceful and parliamentary means. The Gurkha Parishad, on the other hand, represented the conservative elements among the Ranas and stood for defending the traditional values in the name of nationalism.

K. I. Singh's Samyukta Prajatantra Party was composed of a hybrid group of dissatisfied political workers, and some Ranas and agricultural labourers of Western Terai. It did not follow any particular ideology or programme and remained, in the main, dominated by the personality of a single man. The Nepal Communist Party recruited most of its members from among the lower-middle class salaried and business groups in the cities and poor peasants. It practised totalitarian methods in organization and tended towards political extremism in its policies. Thus, it could be said that among the four major parties of Nepal, the first was a moderate socialist party, the second was conservative and nationalist, the third was a personality party and the last was totalitarian and extremist. As these four parties represented four different trends and types of party-formations in Nepal, their origin, development and composition form the main subject matter of this Chapter. However, to make the discussion more complete, a brief reference to the other smaller parties which also received recognition at the time of the general election has been made at the end of the Chapter.
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Nepali Congress - Party of Moderate Socialism

As a party with a long history and comparatively larger following, the Nepali Congress definitely headed the list of the four major parties of Nepal. Though originally born in foreign soil, it accomplished the biggest revolution in Nepalese history by overthrowing the family rule of the Ranas. Its overwhelming majority in the election in 1959 also showed that inspite of initial setbacks and organizational weaknesses, the Congress enjoyed the confidence of a large section of the people. Finally, it should be noted that among all the political parties, the Nepali Congress played the most important role in influencing the developments of Nepal during the post-Rana period.

Origin and Political Background

Although the Nepali Congress was formally founded in Calcutta on 9 April 1950, its origin goes back to the eventful years preceding the attainment of Indian independence. It has been noted, in Chapter Two, how each passing phase of the Indian national movement influenced the minds of those Nepalese who had settled in India or on the Indo-Nepalese border. The "Quit India" movement of 1942 inspired many Nepalese youth to plunge into the thick of the Indian national struggle and court imprisonment. After the end of the Second World War, these men came to the realization that unless they organized an independent party working from India, no political movement, open or secret, could be built up inside Nepal. Some of them also felt that their stage of political apprenticeship in India
had been completed and, therefore, they should do something to end the oppressive Rana rule. (3) They watched with impatience the sweeping political changes that were taking place all over Asia as a result of the movements for national independence. In a sense, this feeling gave rise, for the first time, to Nepalese nationalism. On the other hand, the impact of world-wide movement for freedom and democracy and the clash of various modern ideologies made a profound impression on the minds of these men. Thus, by the end of the World War, a new generation of Nepalese grew up in India who sought to modernize Nepal along the path of nationalism and democracy.

**Birth of the Nepali Rashtriya Congress.** In October 1946, B. P. Koirala, then a very young member of the Indian Congress Socialist Group, issued a press statement from Patna urging the Nepalese residing in India to organize a movement against the autocratic regime of the Ranas. At the same time, a few young men formed the Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Rashtriya Congress at Banaras and elected an ad-hoc committee. (4) This organization held its

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(3) B. P. Koirala described the then-prevailing sentiment of the Nepalese in India to the present writer as follows - "After participating in the Indian movement we came to realize that something should be done for our own country."

(4) It consisted of Devi Prasad Sapkota as President; Bal Chandra Sharma as Vice-President, K. P. Upadhyay and G. P. Upadhyay as General Secretary and Publicity Secretary, respectively. This Association, as Bishwa Bandhu Thapa, then an active member of the Rashtriya Congress, informed the writer, was largely composed of students. But even among the students there were two groups - 1) those students who maintained regular connections with Nepal and used to go home during the holidays, and 2) the elderly ex-students who had already settled in India.
Inaugural Conference at Calcutta on 25 and 26 January 1947, where two other organizations joined it to form the Nepali Rashtriya Congress. (5)

This Conference passed four resolutions, the first of which stated that no popular government could be established in Nepal unless the British colonial rule in India had come to an end. Accordingly, the resolution declared that the problems of India and Nepal were "identical and one." (6) Among the remaining resolutions, one supported the cause of the Viet-Namese people in their struggle against the French; another demanded the release of the Praja Parishad leaders who were then in prison, and the last resolution proposed to launch a non-violent movement in Nepal. (7)

How far the Rashtriya Congress believed in the non-violent policy, it cannot be ascertained; presumably, it laid stress on peaceful methods in order to enlist the support of the Indian people and their leaders in its struggle against the Ranas. (8)

This objective was soon fulfilled when, in March 1947, the Rashtriya Congress started a Satyagraha in support of the striking

(5) The organizations were the Nepali Sangh of Banaras and the Gurkha Congress of Calcutta. See Nepali Rashtriya Congress Ko Utghatan Samaroha (Rashtriya Congress, Calcutta, 1947).

(6) Ibid., 6.

(7) Ibid., 6-7.

(8) It also appears that certain Indian socialist leaders advised the Rashtriya Congress to strictly adhere to the policy of non-violence.

When this writer discussed the subject of non-violence with B. P. Koirala, he stated that his own "non-violence" was more a matter of tactics than an article of faith.
mill-workers of Biratnagar. (9) Though this movement was easily suppressed, it succeeded in arousing considerable public sympathy for the anti-Rana struggle and brought both popularity and new recruits to the Rashtriya Congress. Apart from these, the Satyagraha forced the Rana Government to announce a limited measure of reforms as discussed in Chapter Two.

**Split in the Rashtriya Congress.** This newly gained achievement of the Rashtriya Congress, however, soon suffered a set-back. The Party was not as yet strong enough to start a large scale political movement inside Nepal. Moreover, with the admission of new elements in the ranks of the Rashtriya Congress, new factions grew up to contest for its leadership. A section of the ranks also grew critical, at this time, of the intimate relations which existed between some party leaders and the Indian Socialist Party. (10) Finally, owing to the personal rivalry between the two top-ranking leaders of the Party, B. P. Koirala and D. R. Regmi, two factions emerged from the Rashtriya Congress. The events leading to the split between these two rival factions seem to have occurred as follows - at the Inaugural Conference of the Rashtriya Congress

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(9) The strike has already been discussed in Chapter Two.

(10) It appears that some Indian socialist leaders also attended the Inaugural Conference at Calcutta. Some members of the Party even at that time feared that their organization would become an appendage of the Indian Socialist Party. See Dharma Ratna Yami, *Nepal Ko Kura* (Kathmandu, 1957) 236. D. R. Regmi also wrote in 1952 "The worst was done by the intervention of certain political parties of India, whose leaders acted purely from narrow party interests ..." etc. D. R. Regmi, *Whither Nepal* (Kathmandu, 1952) 46.
(January 1947), Tanka Prasad Acharya of the old Praja Parishad was elected its first President. But, as Tanka Prasad was then in jail, B. P. Koirala was made the Acting President in his place. (11) In March 1947, B. P. Koirala was arrested at Biratnagar and, in his absence, his elder brother, M. P. Koirala, agreed to fill the post for a temporary period. After the Satyagraha was suspended, a delegates conference was held at Banaras, in July 1947, where D. R. Regmi was elected the new Acting President. (12) In September 1947, when B. P. Koirala was released from jail, he challenged the validity of this election and demanded that Regmi should step aside from the post in his favour. Regmi refused to do so and, at the end, he decided to quit the Party along with his followers. Thus, by the end of 1947, two Nepalese parties with the identical name of the Rashtriya Congress began to function in India. (13)

Nepal Prajatantrik Congress. In August 1948, yet another party was formed at Calcutta under the name of the Nepal Prajatantrik Congress. The chief architects of the new Party were two 'C' class

(11) See Nepali Rashtriya Congress Ko Utgahan Samarcha, n. 5.

(12) Based on the writer's personal interview with M. P. Koirala. K. P. Upadhayay, who was at that time working as the General Secretary of the Rashtriya Congress, told the writer that M. P. Koirala actually wanted to be re-elected at Banaras. But, as the ranks had become very critical of him, D. R. Regmi was chosen as the Acting President. He, however, asserted that there was no question of Regmi's continuing in office after B. P. Koirala's release. See also Grisma Bahadur Devkota, Nepal Ko Rajnitik Darpan (Banaras, 1960) 17-8.

(13) For a different view on the subject see Regmi, n.10, 52-3.
Ranas, Subarna Shamsher and Mahavir Shamsher, who had considerable financial investments in India. In a long manifesto the new Party declared that its immediate aims were to put an end to the autocratic regime of the Ranas and to replace it by a constituent assembly to be elected on the basis of universal and adult franchise. (14) Unlike the Rashtriya Congress, the new Party did not lay stress on non-violent methods. On the contrary, it freely advocated the use of force to realize its aims.

Formation of the Nepali Congress

As these three parties pursued their separate goals, developments inside Nepal moved swiftly towards a political crisis of the first order. The repressive methods of Mohan Shamsher sowed the seeds of dissension even in the ruling family, while the surreptitious activities of the Praja Panchayat began to gain in volume at Kathmandu. (15) This changing shape of things inside the country induced the rival parties in India to reconsider their positions. While Regmi's group preferred to remain aloof, the Rashtriya Congress of B. P. Koirala and the Prajatantrik Congress started talks of merger. Two factors helped to bring these two parties closer. First, the leaders of the Prajatantrik Congress came to realize that their efforts to overthrow the Ranas could not succeed unless they received more substantial backing from the people. B. P. Koirala's group, on the other hand, felt that by joining hands with the rich 'C' class Ranas, it could solve its

(14) See *Nepal Prajatantrik Congress Ko Vivaran ra Uddeshya* (Calcutta, 1948).

(15) See Chapter Two.
problem of perpetual financial stringency. Secondly, by this time, the Rashtriya Congress also came to the conclusion that no political movement could be built up in Nepal merely through non-violent means. (16) These considerations persuaded the leaders of the two organizations to declare, in a joint statement, that they had decided to form a single party in order "to fight to the finish the autocracy that has no parallel anywhere in its ruthlessness." (17) On 9 April 1950, the merger took place at a conference held at Calcutta and the new organization was named the Nepali Congress. The aim of the new Party was laid down to be the substitution of the Rana regime by a popular and democratic rule under the aegis of constitutional monarchy. Later, in September of the same year, the Nepali Congress held its historic Conference at Bairgania where it decided to launch an armed revolt in Nepal. The revolt, as described in Chapter Two, culminated in the collapse of the Ranas and the beginning of democratic experiments in Nepal.

The development of the Nepali Congress after 1951 may be conveniently studied in three distinct stages. First, from 1951 to 1955 when the Party repeatedly suffered from factional quarrels and splits and lost its pre-eminent role in politics. Second, from 1956 to 1959, which may be described as the stage of recovery,

(16) B. P. Koirala communicated to this writer that while he was in jail he first realized that the non-violent peaceful movement in Nepal could never succeed. In a press statement issued in July 1949, he had stated that the Gandhian method was unsuitable to Nepalese conditions. See Nepal Today (Calcutta), 5th issue (July 1949) 7-8.

when the Congress re-activated itself through agitational and mass movements. The third stage began from May 1959 when the Party formed Nepal's first elected Government and made serious efforts to recast its organization and policies in line with the workings of a parliamentary system of government. It was during this stage that some important measures were undertaken by the Party which throw some light on its organizational method and composition.

First Stage 1951-55

Unlike the Indian National Congress which had led the national struggle and attained political power through slow process of evolution and years of struggle, the Nepali Congress suddenly found itself sharing power with the former Rana rulers after a brief period of sporadic armed revolt. At this time it had no convincing programme to make proper use of the political power which it had attained. Organizationally, too, it had no firm roots in the country. It functioned, more or less, like an "ad hoc organization." (18) Its personnel, which was largely composed of students, ex-soldiers and political careerists, broke into noisy factions as soon as victory was attained over the former Rana rulers.

Further, the Delhi settlement of February 1951 aroused the suspicion of foreign interference in Nepal's internal affairs. The Gorkha Dal and the leftist elements, led by the Communist Party, blamed the Nepali Congress for undermining Nepal's independent status.

A militant section of the Party led by Dr. K. I. Singh revolted when the Rana-Congress compromise was announced. When this forced the Congress leadership to put down the revolt, through India's help, almost the entire rank and file in Western Terai left the Party in protest. (19) The worst threat to the Party, however, came from among the divergent groups which composed its top leadership. In 1952, as many as 10 candidates pitted themselves against each other for winning the Presidentship of the Party. The total picture of the crises which the Nepali Congress faced at this time is described in its General Secretaries Report as follows:

At that time the Nepali Congress position was not satisfactory. The Party which had so long worked from outside could not be organized at many places. It had to fight elements which only wanted to get into the place vacated by the Ranas, forgetting the aims and ideals of the Party. These were those who had once blamed the revolution and the Party, but having entered the Government of the Nepali Congress after the revolution, they attempted even to capture the party organization. They openly asked for advisory or direct rule of the palace in place of the Nepali Congress Government and suggested this even in the Party's national conference. It was a difficult task to keep back party workers from this race for power following the revolution. (20)

Rift between the Koirala Brothers. The first serious rift in the Party occurred in 1952 when King Tribhuvan appointed the Nepali Congress's Ministry with M. P. Koirala as Premier. Since M. P. Koirala also held the post of the President, the non-ministerial wing in the Party viewed with concern the over-

(19) See Paschimi Nepal Rajnitik Sammelan (Kathmandu, 1953) 27.

concentration of power in the hands of a single person. The situation got worse when this group began to fear that M. P. Koirala was making use of his official position to strengthen his faction in the organization. It also alleged that the non-implementation of certain land reforms which the Party had declared earlier brought disrepute both to the Government and the Party. The question thus involved a clash of interests between the two rival factions and brought to the fore the difficult problems of adjustment between the ministerial and organizational wings of the Party.

To some extent, B. P. Koirala, leader of the non-ministerial wing, understood this problem and tried to solve it by propounding a thesis in which he made two important observations. First, he argued that since the Government was formed by the Nepali Congress, it could not wholly function as an opposition party as "we have to note that this Government is our Government. Its works and mistakes are partly ours too." (21) Secondly, he stated that, since a democratic government derived strength from popular support, it was also the duty of the Party to see that "our support to Government is based on popular opinion." (22) From these observations he enunciated two principles viz., while it was necessary for the Party to work in co-ordination with the Government, emphasis should be given to organizational activities, and, secondly, as there was no Parliament to keep an eye on the Government,

(21) B. P. Koirala, Nepali Congress ra Sarkar (Biratnagar, 1952) 1. See Appendix IV.

(22) Ibid., 2.
the Nepali Congress should render that duty during the interim period. (23) Thus, to fulfil this double-responsibility, B. P. Koirala suggested that the Party's President should remain outside the Government; that the majority of the Congress Working Committee should be composed from among the members of the non-ministerial group, and that the Working Committee should meet as frequently as possible "so that in present changing conditions it can declare its timely decisions." (24)

The arguments of B. P. Koirala were not accepted by M. P. Koirala. But an immediate show-down between the two brothers was averted by a settlement which was reached at Calcutta in April 1952 through the mediation of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Indian Socialist leader. (25) According to this settlement both the brothers agreed that 1) they would not incriminate each other; 2) that the office of the President should be separated from that of the Prime Minister; 3) that, excepting in matters of policy, the Party should not interfere with the day to day work of the Government, and 4) that members of the Working Committee should be selected by the joint consultation of the Premier and the President.

Janakpur Conference. Although this compromise formula secured B. P. Koirala's uncontested election to the Presidentship, it failed to remedy the roots of dissensions in the Party. At the

(25) *The Statesman*, 6 August 1952. For full text of the agreement see also Appendix III.
Janakpur Conference, held on 23-25 May 1952, two groups left the Nepali Congress. The first group was led by B. K. Misra, then a Cabinet Minister, who proposed that the Conference should be postponed for a period of six months and that a draft constitution as prepared by him should be accepted by the Party. (26) The Conference rejected these proposals and passed a resolution, with 400 out of 514 delegates, expelling B. K. Misra. (27) The second group, self-styled as the Congress-Socialist Group, produced a 'socialist' manifesto which claimed that the anti-Rana revolt of 1950-1 was mainly led by the rich and higher middle classes and, therefore, what the country needed was yet another revolution to be led by the lower middle classes and the poorer sections of the people. (28) It further proposed, in brief, a ceiling on land and its distribution to the tillers, drastic cut in military expenses, establishment of the Panchayat system, etc. This group too walked out of the Conference when its manifesto was rejected.

In July 1952 the compromise between the Koirala brothers also came to an end. The correspondence between the ministerial and non-ministerial wings which eventually led to the exit of M. P. Koirala from the Congress has already been discussed in Chapter Three. Here it is only necessary to know what factors

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(26) See Nepali Congress: Vidhan Ka Prarup, Janakpur Adhivesan (Patna, 1952). The draft laid down rules of party-membership, a four-tier organization starting from Primary to Central Committee, election of the President through ballot, etc.

(27) The Hindu (Madras), 2 June 1952.

were responsible for the split and how it affected the development of the Party. While B. P. Koirala's group at that time asserted that its differences with the Premier were ideological and fundamental in nature, the latter stated that they were merely personal. It is true that the Congress Working Committee used every kind of pressure tactics to overthrow the Prime Minister, but there is also some truth in the contention that the stand taken by M. P. Koirala was very divergent from the one which the Working Committee had wanted him to follow. The Party's differences with him, as the Nepali Congress Birganj Manifesto of 1956 suggests, involved four important issues viz., attitude in regard to the Crown, economic reforms, nationalism and relationship between the Party and the Government. (29) It stated

On the role of the King, his stand was that he was not only a reigning monarch, he was also a ruling one. ... The Party's line as opposed to his, was that democracy was a habit which even the King had to learn. ... On the question of reforms, he held, as against the Party ... that major reforms were the responsibility of the future. ... Similarly he held divergent views on the question of nationalism. ... The open rift, however, occurred on the question of relationship between the Party and the Government. (30)

The differences between the two factions, therefore, appear to have been both personal and ideological in character.

M. P. Koirala's exit, however, dealt a severe blow to the Nepali Congress as from then onwards, it lost its former position of influence in politics.

(29) Manifesto Adopted at the Sixth National Convention of the Nepali Congress (Birganj, 1956) 7.

(30) Ibid., 8.
Pressure Tactics. From 1952 to 1955, the Nepali Congress functioned on the basis of two simple principles - first, to use pressure tactics on the party in power and, secondly, to negotiate with the same party for a place in the Government. Thus, while at one time the Nepali Congress condemned the formation of M. P. Koirala's Praja Party Government as "conspiratorial and undemocratic," (31) at another time, it expressed every willingness to join the same Government. Similarly, though the Congress joined the League of Democrats in 1953 to oppose M. P. Koirala's premiership, in January 1954 it went all the length to pledge "unstinted and unconditional" support to him! (32)

The fact of the matter was that the Nepali Congress failed to formulate a clear-cut picture of its objectives at this time. Its numerical strength was also not sufficient to launch an open struggle on a large scale. For this reason the interim programme which it adopted, in November 1953, avoided to mention the Monarch's increasing role in politics or to demand even the formation of a constituent assembly. (33) Instead, it remained content by suggesting certain innocuous reforms such as reorganization of the administration, formation of an advisory

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(33) Ibid., 9.
assembly, economic relief to the peasants, etc. (34) It is also interesting to note that the Congress adopted a marked anti-India attitude at this time. It demanded the withdrawal of the Indian advisers and the Indian Military Mission as, according to it, "nobody in Nepal likes them." (35)

This kind of tactics, however, failed to pay any dividends and, at the end, the Congress was forced to adopt a more militant attitude in its policies. The Satyagraha which it waged in January 1955, not only secured significant concessions from the Council of State, (36) but boosted the morale of the rank and file. For the first time, the Congress leaders made serious efforts to build up the branches of the Party on a national scale and enlist new elements into the organization. A number of smaller organizations also joined the Nepali Congress at this time to swell up its ranks.

Second Stage 1956-59

Birganj Conference. It was thus a new spirit of self-confidence and optimism which characterized the Sixth National Conference of the Nepali Congress which met at Birganj in January 1956. Unlike the Janakpur Conference, no noisy scene or walk-out marred its proceedings. The general secretaries reported with satisfaction that the total membership of the Congress had

(34) Ibid., 8-11.
(36) See Chapter Three, 112.
reached nearly six lakhs and that 56 new local branches had been established in different parts of the country. (37) These newly gained achievements also made the Conference declare, in a self-critical manner, that during the past the Nepali Congress had made serious mistakes in not using to the full "the revolutionary possibilities," and admit that "the ideological obsfucation and lack of clarity regarding social objectives on the part of the Congress, ... were mainly responsible for the dimming of the revolutionary spirit." (38)

The Birganj Conference elected Subarna Shamsher as the new President (39) and adopted a new manifesto which laid down that the Congress goal was to achieve "Socialism by peaceful and democratic methods." (40) A new constitution which was adopted by the Conference also declared, in the Preamble, that the Congress stood for the establishment of a socialist society and a representative form of government with an elected constituent assembly and a constitutional monarchy. (41) On the role of the King in politics, this time the Congress took a more definite stand. It declared:


(38) Manifesto, n. 29, 9.

(39) There were, at this time, two strong groups in the Party. One group advocated a policy of compromise with the King and entry into the Government during the interim period. This group considered that Subarna Shamsher, who was known for his liberal views, should be elected as the new leader. The other group, under Ganeshman Singh, wanted to continue the policy of struggle until the election was held. Subarna Shamsher's election, therefore, showed that the compromising trend in the Party was stronger. See also Nepal Pukar, 7 (18 December 1955) 2.

(40) Manifesto, n. 29, 11.

(41) See Nepali Congress Ko Vidhan (Kathmandu, 1956) 1.
We believe that the constitutional monarchy is a compromise arrangement between the King and the people on the terms of the latter and, in this sense, constitutional monarchy is a democratic concept, ... We should be remiss in our duty and be doing disservice to the cause of democracy and the ideals of constitutional monarchy if we did not courageously expose some extremely unhealthy tendencies associated with the actions of the King subsequent to the removal of the Ranas from the political scene. It therefore becomes necessary to submit events and actions of the King to a critical analysis and evaluation. (42)

Congress and the General Election. The Party initially welcomed Tanka Prasad Acharya's Ministry as progressive, but this stand was soon reversed when the Prime Minister made a remark to the effect that his Government was not as yet certain about the objectives of the election. This provoked B. P. Koirala to file a suit at the Supreme Court praying that the Prime Minister should be prohibited from making such irresponsible statements in view of the fact that the Interim Constitution of 1951 had already guaranteed the formation of an elected constituent assembly. (43)

(42) Manifesto, n. 29, 6-7.

(43) This case had a direct bearing on Nepal's constitutional developments. In presenting his case, B. P. Koirala contended that the holding of general election for a constituent assembly was a decided fact. Since

1) The royal proclamation of December 1953, as published in the Nepal Gazette 4 (Magh 2011) stated so;

2) By the same proclamation all royal statements were given recognition as the law, both by the Government and the people;

3) King Tribhuvan's proclamation of 18 February 1951 also pledged to the country that a constituent assembly was to be duly elected to frame the nation's constitution;

4) The Interim Constitution of 1951 also stated the same thing.

...(contd. on next page)
At its Taulihawa session, held in May 1956, the Nepali Congress Working Committee reiterated its demand for an elected constituent assembly. In June 1956, B. P. Koirala also wrote in an article in the party organ, the Nepal Pukar, stating that the right to make the Constitution belonged to the people. (44) He countered baseless doubts that in such a constitution kingship would find no place. But he wrote, "If the people are not really willing to accept a monarch, then to force a place for him in the Constitution is not only anti-democratic but foolish." (45)

Thus, by the middle of 1956, the Nepali Congress adopted an anti-monarch attitude and the non-compromising faction inside the

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Hence, the Court was requested to issue a decree prohibiting members of the Government from making such statements as might create doubts regarding the above facts.

The Counsel of the Prime Minister contended, on the other hand, that

1) Royal proclamations could not be treated on par with such legislations duly passed as Acts;

2) The Peoples' Representation Act did not get the royal seal and as such it could not be considered an Act;

3) There was no law which definitely stated that the election should be held for a constituent assembly.

Hence, to give one's views on this matter should not be considered as illegal.

The Court dismissed the case by saying that under section 6 of the Civil Rights Act of 1955 citizens could hold independent political opinions. The Ministers of the Government could exercise that right as individuals. See Nepal Pukar, 9 (30 June 1956) 4-6. Also Devkota, n. 12, 407-9.


(45) Ibid., 5.
Party became more active. At this time, many splinter groups and individuals joined the Party. In September 1956, M. P. Koirala with his handful of followers also returned to the parent body without making conditions. (46)

The changed climate of politics also necessitated a change in the Nepali Congress leadership. At the Biratnagar Special Conference, in June 1957, B. P. Koirala was re-elected to the Presidency to provide dynamic leadership to the Party during another round of struggle against the "vested interest of the palace." (47) Under his guidance, the Congress formed the famous tripartite Democratic Front which waged the Satyagraha of December 1957.

The Satyagraha ended in a partial victory for the Nepali Congress in so far as it forced King Mahendra to fix a definite date for the general election. But, since the King declared that the election was to be held only for Parliament, the Congress was placed in an embarrassing situation. If it accepted the royal offer then it would surrender its earlier demand for a constituent assembly; on the other hand, if it rejected the offer then other parties would capitalize the situation by propagating that the Nepali Congress was unwilling to hold the election. These considerations weighed on the mind of the party workers who assembled at Birganj in the first week of February 1958. Finally, the Nepali Congress decided to give up its former stand and agreed to participate in the election. Explaining this decision, B. P. Koirala observed:

It is definite that we cannot call the royal proclamation democratic, and theoretically it can be criticized at length. But political conviction should not be converted into a doctrine, it must be practised too. Anything that helps to relieve the present intolerable situation is more acceptable. (48)

It may be contended that the Congress policy of compromise was dictated by the motive of pure opportunism. This may be partially true, but the victory of the Nepali Congress in the general election proved that the Congress leadership was not very unwise in surrendering principle for the sake of an immediate and substantial political advantage.

The Party's sincere efforts to hold the election impressed the politically conscious section of the Nepalese, while the presence of its nominees in the Council of Ministers (1958-59) definitely influenced the voters' mind in its favour. Besides, steps were taken to overhaul the party apparatus and to intensify the election campaign. In each constituency booth committees were set up, directives were sent from the Central Office to the party workers for conducting election propaganda in their areas, and a Central Parliamentary Board was formed to screen the party candidates. (49) The final list of candidates was accepted by the All Nepal Congress Committee (ANCC) which met at Kathmandu in November 1958. (50) The meeting also adopted an election manifesto, and accepted some amendments in the party constitution. (51)

(48) B. P. Koirala, "Unnis Gate Shahi Ghosana ra Birganj Mahasamiti," Kalpana (Kathmandu), 17 Fagun 2014 B.S.

(49) Ibid., 3 November 1958.

(50) Ibid., 1 November 1958.

(51) See Nepali Congress Ko Vidhan (Kathmandu, 1958).
As the Congress had accepted the idea of Parliament, it was now laid down that the aim of the Party was to achieve Socialism through parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. (52)

Reasons for Success. In the light of this brief history of the Nepali Congress it can be well understood why the Party succeeded in winning the general election. In the first place, among the nine parties recognized by the Election Commission, the Nepali Congress alone was able to organize demonstrations, public meetings and Satyagrahas on a large scale to make its presence felt among the people in all parts of the country. Secondly, superiority in financial and organizational strength helped it to make a better impression on the minds of the voters. Thirdly, notwithstanding splits and dissensions, the Nepali Congress still managed to remain the largest political organization on the eve of the election. Fourthly, the Party's role of an effective Opposition to the King helped it to maintain links with the people at a time when other parties faced extinction. The United Front and the Satyagraha of 1957 provided an effective forum to the Party to ventilate its grievances and to win popular support for its cause. Finally, the role of the Nepali Congress in the armed struggle against the Ranas, which it never forgot to propagate, held an undeniable sentimental appeal to the majority of the electorate.

Third Stage 1959-60

Thus, after seven years of hard time and comparative political oblivion the Nepali Congress returned to power with a

(52) Article 1, ibid.
mandate from the electorate. It was obvious that the Government which it formed differed from all previous governments in as much as its success depended not so much on the King's wish as on the support of the people. There were, of course, too many limitations imposed on the elected representatives by the new Constitution of 1959, and the King was not very willing to part with those prerogatives which came unwittingly to him during the uncertain years. But the Congress leadership believed that it had no choice but to successfully work out the Constitution and lead the nation towards political and economic reforms.

New Tasks and Problems. But the enormity of the new tasks facing the elected Government sobered the high spirit of the Congress leadership. It realized that the old practice of merely denouncing others could neither help the Government to carry out constructive works nor make the Party popular with the people. The entire policy, organizational method and even the habit of opposition so long encouraged in the party rank and file had to be completely altered before the Party could readjust itself to the new situation. The leadership also felt that the Congress objective of building Socialism had to be shelved for a while so as to give more attention to immediate land reform and to the country's capacity of capital formation. (53) At the same time it became necessary to strike a balance between progressive reform and cautious conservatism to satisfy both the right and the left oppositions.

(53) B. P. Koirala informed this writer that for the next 10 years he had given up the idea of Socialism in Nepal.
The Party faced greater difficulty in attempting to reconcile the militant and conservative sections among the ranks. Thus, while some impatient party workers kept on pressing for immediate land reforms, others representing landed interests in the Party warned against the consequences of such a policy.

Along with these problems of organization and reform, came the task of formulating a foreign policy which could take note of Chinese expansionist tendency in the northern border and, at the same time, maintain friendly relations with India.

All these problems came for discussion at the Seventh National Conference of the Nepali Congress which was held at Kathmandu in May 1960. In reporting about the internal situation of the Party, the General Secretaries expressed their regret that, instead of growing, the organization was disintegrating. (54) They observed that complacency and inactivity had been growing among the party ranks; that while the Nepali Congress workers failed to realize their responsibilities, the opposition parties were making great efforts to reorganize themselves; that foreign powers were trying to drag Nepal into cold-war politics, and that reactionary elements were hatching new plots to undermine the Congress Government. (55)

Inspite of these gloomy warnings, the Conference was not free from "shouts and exchanges" (56) among the delegates. Charges were hurled on the leadership for encouraging regionalism, for

(55) Ibid., 13-4.
standing still or even for going too far. Tempers ran so high that the Conference had to be terminated even before it could pass any resolution or elect members of the new Working Committee. Like 1952, once again a section of the Congress began insisting that B. P. Koirala should step aside from the Presidentship which should be separated from the office of the Prime Minister. This group put up Bhudev Rai as a candidate for the Presidential post, but when, out of 6,838 active party-workers, 5,973 voted in favour of B. P. Koirala, the latter was accused of practising dictatorial methods in the organization. (57)

Judged from the exigency of the time, it appears that B. P. Koirala was only trying to build a more unified leadership for both the Government and the Party. This was necessary in order to meet the combined challenge of the palace and the feudal elements. At any rate there was no ground in the charge that Koirala was trying to become a dictator because the term "dictatorship" had no meaning at a time when there was an open and continuous tussle for power between the King, the Congress Ministry and the Opposition. The fact was that those who opposed B. P. Koirala's leadership of the Party and the Government had only group interests in their minds and cared little for either.

(57) Nepali Congress Central Office, Kathmandu. When this writer met M. P. Koirala he furiously denounced the ministerial wing for imposing a virtual dictatorship on the organization.
the organization or the country. (58)

**Organizational Changes.** The different problems which came up for discussion at the Seventh Conference made the Congress leadership well aware of the need to build a strongly organized party. Thus, for the first time, great stress was laid on the observance of discipline by the ranks and proposals were made to evolve a method of promoting or demoting party members according to the merits of their work. (59) A Disciplinary Committee was also set up "to vitalize the Party and compile a comprehensive code of conduct for party members." (60) Similarly, in order to co-ordinate the works of parliamentary and mass wings of the Party, a Parliamentary Committee was elected with the Prime Minister as Chairman. The Congress legislature wing was controlled by a Secretary and a Chief Whip.

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(58) See also *Madan dev Bhattarai bata Kendriya Sabhanatike Ummedevar Sri Bhudev Rai ko Patrako Jawaf* (Kathmandu, 1960) 10-2. The pamphlet gives the following reasons in support of B. P. Koirala:

In 1951-2 the Party leadership was vested in a person who neither commanded the respect nor the confidence of all sections of party workers. But today the situation is different. ... This Government is not formed on individual basis nor was the Cabinet formed at the instance of a single leader. The Nepali Congress has formed a Government today by winning an election which was forced on the ruler after a long struggle. ... Also, we have now a socialist program which we must work out with as much efficiency and cooperation as possible. For all this, it is necessary to have a strong and unified leadership.

(59) *Mahamantrihraru ko Riport*, n. 54, 15.

The primary units of the Party were also reshaped to meet the changes initiated by the introduction of parliamentary rule. Booth committees were set up in each constituency to elect first, the constituency and, next, the regional committees. (61) Several important decisions touching party organization and policies were taken when the Nepali Congress Central Committee held its Plenary Session in the last week of August 1960. In its deliberations the Committee observed that although Socialism was placed as the ultimate goal of the Party, "considering our strength, means and social condition," (62) it could only be reached through slow stages. After mentioning the various legislations passed by the Congress Government, the new programme added

But these reforms have not made much impact upon the people. The reasons are that 1) we have forgotten to build the base-camp before reaching the summit of socialist society; and 2) we have also forgotten that unless there was a clear theoretical understanding, forward march against adverse circumstances cannot be possible.

We must admit that we have been unable to explain the significance of the reforms to the people, and also that the people have not derived much benefits from these reforms. (63)

To meet the new challenge an elaborate programme was drafted to launch educational training camps for party workers;

(61) Nepali Congress Central Office.


(63) Ibid.
to make the governmental measures popular by intensive propaganda and constructive works such as obtaining legal rights for the peasant, opening rural voluntary and credit societies, etc.; to activize and expand the youth and peasant mass organizations under the guidance of the Congress, and to publish and propagate socialist literature. (64)

Though these projected aims could not materialize owing to the sudden decision of King Mahendra to cut short the parliamentary system, nonetheless they showed new trends in the Nepali Congress and the possibility of its becoming a well-organized parliamentary party.

Composition: Ranks and Leadership

The Nepali Congress was a pluralist party. Its ranks and leadership was composed of such diverse sectors and elements as wealthy Ranas, big and small landowners, poor peasants, intellectuals, students and small business-men in towns. To some extent this plurality of the Congress was caused by the fact that, during the pre-revolution period, its recruitment came from all sundry elements who wanted to end the Rana system. This mutual sharing of a common goal brought students, ex-soldiers and, later, an influential section of the exiled Ranas and their followers in the Party. After the revolution, for a long time the Nepali Congress depended on the peasantry of Eastern Terai, especially of Biratnagar, Saptari, Mahottari and Rautahat, for active support.

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(64) Ibid.
During this period, it worked more or less as a regional party. But, after 1956, it made resolute efforts to enlist new members from other groups and regions to become more national in composition. Caste-wise also, the Congress ranks came to represent a heterogeneous combination of different castes, communities and occupational groups like the Brahmans, the Newars, the Muslims, the Limbus, the Rais and so on.

Perhaps, this composite character of the ranks also influenced the composition of the Congress leadership. Unlike some smaller parties and factions, the Congress leadership did not appear to be dominated by a single person or group. Thus, while B. P. Koirala undoubtedly held an unchallengeable position in the Party, he owed much of that position to the support he received from men like Subarna Shamsher, Ganeshman Singh and S. P. Upadhyay. All these men represented powerful caste or sectional interests in the Party, but this did not prevent them from forming a strong and unified leadership at the top. (65)

(65) B. P. Koirala was by caste a Brahman, who received his educational and political training in India. His early association with the Indian socialist leaders shaped his later radical ideas about Socialism. Subarna Shamsher was a wealthy Rana whose liberal views wielded respect among the Congress ranks. He was also educated in India and was considered to be an expert on economic matters. Ganeshman Singh belonged to a respectable official family of the Newar community in Kathmandu. He had little school education and his connections with India were minimal. In early youth he had joined the Praja Parishad and probably, his unsophisticated views were responsible for his uncompromising attitudes and fiery temper. In the Party he was known to be the leader of the most radical wing. S. P. Upadhyay, was a well-educated Brahman of the priestly family attached to the family of Subarna Shamsher. In politics he was more conservative than liberal, but his organizing capacity gave him a unique position in the Party.

See also Table III in the next Chapter.
This solid association between B. P. Koirala and his associates, which came to be known as the 'Big Four' in Congress circles, was, to a large extent, responsible for the wide measure of support which the Congress received from different sections of the people.

Nevertheless, in a party such as the Nepali Congress, certain amount of tension and conflict was unavoidable at the levels of both the ranks and the leadership. Sometimes regional leaders groups or factions became too powerful for the Party to control. Thus, during 1951-2, many Congress workers in Western Terai supported Dr. K. I. Singh's revolt because they resented the control of the party organization by men who mostly belonged to Eastern Terai. (66) At other times, some factions or group leaders opposed the 'Big Four' leadership to cause splits in the Party. Among many such splits those led by D. R. Regmi and M. P. Koirala were outstanding.

Again, this kind of factional rivalries and threats to party-unity often forced the Congress leaders to make compromises with principles and, to the extent they did so, the Nepali Congress failed to evolve ideological clarity in its programme. The same considerations forced the leadership to take every care to have all castes, classes and geographic areas represented

at the time of screening candidates for the election. (67) It is also true that after the election the tendency towards caste and regional affiliations grew stronger in the Party. This was made evident at the Seventh Conference where members from the hill areas charged the leadership for showing favouritism towards the Terai people. (68) In his Presidential address to the Conference, B. P. Koirala himself admitted that "parochialism" had gained "added vitality" in the Party which had been responsible for impeding the constructive programmes undertaken by the Government. (69) It cannot be said how far B. P. Koirala and his colleagues succeeded in checking this process of disintegration, but they were definitely becoming aware of the fact that the task of organizing the Party in line with parliamentary system was an arduous and up-hill task.


(69) Presidential Address by B. P. Koirala at the Seventh Annual Session of the Nepali Congress (Nepali Congress, Kathmandu, 7 May 1960) 3-4.
II

Gurkha Parishad - Party of Aggressive Nationalism

Origin: Growth of Nationalist Sentiment

The Nepal Rashtravadi Gurkha Parishad owed its origin to the outbreak of widespread violence and political disorder which followed immediately after the armed revolt of 1950-1. As the revolt was mainly organized by the Nepali Congress from India, a powerful section of the Ranas tried to mislead the popular mind by saying that Nepal's independence was in danger. This group took advantage of the resentment which prevailed in Nepal after the announcement of the 'Delhi Compromise' to mount up the anti-India campaign and to oppose any change in the old political order. Under the cover of nationalist slogans, this extremist faction of the Ranas organized the Gurkha Dal (70) with a view to overthrow the Rana-Congress Coalition Government.

The failure of the Gurkha Dal coup of 11 April 1951, (71) however, showed that neither the Army nor the people of Nepal were willing to accept a reimposition of the Rana rule. On the contrary, adventurist tactics of the Dal brought discredit to the Rana wing in the Coalition Cabinet and alienated the sympathy of a good section of the liberal Ranas.

For sometime though, even after the Gurkha Dal was declared illegal, its supporters remained active in certain parts of the

(70) Also known as the Kukri Dal.
(71) See Chapter Three, 72-3.
country. In June 1951, they were reported to have made an attempt to capture Piuthan, a district town mainly known as the headquarters of retired army soldiers. (72) Though this attempt failed, the incident provided evidence to the fact that a section of the martial community and their dependants still continued to give support to the Gurkha Dal. Its appeal to patriotic sentiment, moreover, aroused the fear in a section of the society that with every change in the political order, foreign interference would grow in the country.

**Formation of the Parishad**

In the early parts of 1952, the leaders of the Dal held a conference at Kathmandu and decided to form a new party under the name of the Gurkha Parishad. They adopted a manifesto which stated that the Parishad was formed in order "to save the country from armed upheavals on one hand and near-dictatorship of the party in power, on the other." (73) It claimed that nationalism was an inborn quality of the Nepalese and as such the Gurkha Parishad was a "party of nationalists." (74) The Conference elected Randhir Subba and Bharat Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana as the President and the General Secretary of the Party, respectively.

During the following years the Parishad gained enough strength to become a formidable rival of the Nepali Congress.

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(72) The Hindu (Madras), 25 June 1951.


(74) Ibid., 8.
In 1953, it claimed that its total membership had reached about 8 lakhs. (75) Though this claim seems to have been an exaggeration, there is no doubt that both in Kathmandu and in the adjoining districts of Gorkha, Dhading and Nuwakot the Parishad became a strong political force. The dominance of feudal influence among the people in these areas, the perpetual governmental instability and the split in the Nepali Congress were the three main factors which contributed to the growth of the Gurkha Parishad as the second largest party of Nepal. Further, its leaders took care not to repeat their past mistake of openly aligning themselves with any particular section of the old ruling family. They refuted the charge that their Party represented any particular class or group and claimed that its doors were open to all classes, groups and communities. (76) Finally, the prevalence of anti-Indian feeling in Nepal, during this period, provided an excellent opportunity to the Parishad to repeat time and again its charge that India was trying to subvert Nepal's independence for security reasons. In a leading article its official organ, the Rashtravani, observed

Indian advisers came to Nepal - they not only took active part in the administration but even began the practice of regularly attending meetings of the Cabinet. The Military Mission which came to reorganize the Nepali Army, established a full-time headquarter with a Major-General. The Indian Ambassador actively participated in the Conference

(75) Rashtravani (Kathmandu), 17 May 1953.

(76) See Rashtravani Ka Kehi Lekh Samagraha (Publicity Department, NRGF, Kathmandu, 1956) 239.
of Bara Hakims held at Raxaul. ... The Indian press published mendacious reports about Nepal without caring much for her independent status. ... Pandit Nehru declared the Himalayas to be the natural frontier of India and Indian check-posts were erected on our northern border. The continuous pilgrimage of our ministers to New Delhi became an essential ritual etc. (77)

Aims and Objectives

In February 1956, the Gurkha Parishad held its Third Conference at Rautahat where it adopted a new manifesto and a new constitution. The constitution stated that the Party followed four objectives viz., 1) to guard Nepal's independent sovereign status; 2) to establish a democratic system of government under the aegis of constitutional monarchy; 3) to achieve economic independence of the people through better means of production and just distribution of the national wealth, and 4) to educate the people in the exercise of their democratic rights and duties through all possible means of constitutional agitation. (78)

The manifesto stated that it had full faith in the growth of an efficient monarchical system and envisaged the establishment of a

(77) "Bharat Ko Nepal Niti Kata?" Rashtravanı, 29 June 1954. In another article entitled "Nehru Vad Ki Samyavad," it stated:

We want neither China nor India to impose their systems or extend their influence upon us. We neither want to align ourselves with the Communist bloc nor the one led by Nehru's dynamic neutralism. ... We neither want Nehruism nor Communism.

Rashtravanı, 26 October 1953.

responsible government, an independent judiciary and a unified administrative system with provisions for local autonomy. (79)

Explaining the Parishad's attitude towards the Crown, Randhir Subba stated in his Presidential address to the Conference...

... composed as Nepalese are of different racial stock, with most of the people at a tribal stage of development and keeping in view the history of Nepal, Kingship is the one cementing factor that has helped and will help, in building the people together in a common bond of nationality. For this reason we stand for a Constitutional Monarchy. Without a King Nepal will disintegrate. (80)

It was at this time that the Parishad also took a more tolerant and realistic view of India. It did so because of two reasons. First, by 1956, the anti-India feeling in Nepal began to recede as most of the earlier suspicions about India's ulterior designs in Nepal proved to be baseless. Secondly, the pronounced pro-China policy of Tanka Prasad Acharya's Government (1956-7) made the Gurkha Parishad more anxious about China than about the supposed dangers of Indian interference. Reflecting this new trend, the Conference declared that the Indo-Nepalese relation, "though for a time clouded by feelings of suspicion created in the minds of the peoples of Nepal by thoughtless activities of some political leaders, is one of great cordiality, understanding and friendship." (81)

(79) Nepal Rastravadi Gurkha Parishad Ko Ghosanapatra (Kathmandu, 1956) 4-5.

(80) Presidential Address, Nepal Rashtravadi Gurkha Parishad, Third Annual Convention, Gaur, Hautahat (Kathmandu, 1956) 2.

(81) Resolution on Foreign Policy Passed by the Third Conference (Gurkha Parishad, Kathmandu, 1956) 2.
Regarding the objectives of the general election however, the Gurkha Parishad preferred to remain vague and non-committal. At one time, like the Nepali Congress, it had demanded the formation of a constituent assembly, (82) but later it shifted its position in favour of an elected unicameral Parliament. Finally, at the Political Conference of December 1957 its President, Randhir Subba, simply stated that his Party would abide by the decision of the King on the matter. (83) Perhaps the Parishad was forced to adopt this position in order to show its loyalty to the King and get a place in the Council of Ministers as formed in May 1958. (84)

Reasons for Failure

The results of the general election, however, heavily impaired the prestige of the Gurkha Parishad. Its failure to put up an equal fight to the Nepali Congress disheartened a large number of its workers. The stability which returned to politics, though temporarily, after the election also did not prove conducive to the interests of the Party which had long thrived on unsettled political conditions. The new situation deprived the Parishad of such conditions as could afford it opportunities to exploit the popular imagination. As a

(82) See *Kehi Lekh Samagraha*, n. 76, 243, 257.

(83) *Rajnaitik Sammelan* (Publicity Department, HM Government, Kathmandu, 1957) 66.

(84) The nominee of the Parishad was Randhir Subba. See Appendix I.
conservative party, it could not give approval to the steam-roller policies of the elected Congress Government, yet it avoided to criticize them openly for fear of losing popularity. Instead, it pretended to play the role of a radical party by opposing the Congress Government as not sufficiently "progressive" or "socialistic." (85)

While such aimlessness brought general confusion in the minds of the ranks, the expansionist tendency of Communist China towards Nepal's northern frontier gave rise to serious differences at the top levels of the Party. A section of the leadership wanted to launch a campaign to mobilize popular opinion against Chinese policy, while another insisted that the old policy of anti-India baiting should be revived to strengthen the Party. (86) Inside Parliament, Bharat Shamsher and his group criticized the Congress Government for its neutral attitude in the Sino-Indian border dispute. (87) Accusing China for committing unprovoked aggression on India, Bharat Shamsher enunciated a four-point programme. He declared 1) that the Government should reorganize its diplomatic services; 2) that

(85) K. P. Upadhyay, Speaker of the Pratinidhi Sabha, narrated to this writer that after the advent of parliamentary rule he found that the Gurkha Parishad followed a more leftist line than even the Communist Party.

(86) Beni Bahadur Karki, the Gurkha Parishad Member in the Pratinidhi Sabha, admitted that, due to policy differences, many active members became defunct or left the Party.

(87) See Rashtravani, 22 April 1960.
the Nepalese army should be sent to the northern border; 3) that public opinion should be mobilized to meet any emergency, and 4) that Nepal and India "should jointly prepare a move for defence talk between all South East Asian countries against Chinese aggression." (88)

This move reflected a realistic turn in the policies of the Gurkha Parishad. But it failed to make any impression owing to differences in the top leadership and decreasing prestige of the Party. At the end, the Gurkha Parishad too was reduced into a small pressure group with little influence in the country. (89)

Composition: Ranks and Leadership

Unlike the Nepali Congress, the Parishad could not grow up into a national party representing different regions and sectors of the people. On the whole, its influence remained confined to the Kathmandu Valley and to those hill districts where the feudalist traditions still remained very strong. This short-coming of the Parishad was probably due to the character of its leadership which was mainly composed of some influential Ranas and their friends. In the Party two 'A' class Ranas, Bharat Shamsher and his father Mrigendra Shamsher,

(89) Beni Bahadur Marmi.
held almost a vested interest. Moreover, Bharat Shamsher's active role in the notorious Gurkha Dal uprising had earned him a certain amount of opprobrium which he could not efface. As a result, intellectuals, students or more enlightened sections of the people did not like to join the Party. The main bulk of its workers came from those illiterate sections of the hill people who, by traditions of feudal loyalty, still remained faithful to the Ranas. The Gurkha Parishad, therefore, may be described as an organization in which the ranks and the leadership belonged to two distinct classes. In such a party, policies were made at the top which others obeyed in return for financial help or other forms of patronage. The survival of the Parishad, therefore, depended on the capacity of its leaders to support their political dependants and, to some extent, on such adventurist tactics and slogans as could easily arouse the illiterate peasant masses. This is one of the reasons why the Gurkha Parishad was more interested in instigating revolts in certain hill districts than in taking such steps as could strengthen the parliamentary system.

(90) Bharat Shamsher received his higher education in India. Two other important leaders of the Party were Randhir Subba and Beni Bahadur Karki. Randhir Subba was a Christian, who was formerly a teacher at Darjeeling; Beni Bahadur Karki belonged to a middle-class Khattri family. See Table III in the next Chapter.
III

Samyukta Prajatantra Party: Personality Party

The history of the Samyukta Prajatantra Party illustrates how factors like political adventurism and individual ambition played an increasingly important role in the unsettled conditions of Nepal during the period under study. It records, in a word, the dramatic and unpredictable career of a single man, Dr. K. I. Singh.

Career of K. I. Singh

From his profession of an obscure medical practitioner at Nautanwa, a small border-town in Western Terai, K. I. Singh suddenly shot into fame during the stormy days of 1950-1. His armed defiance of Central authority in 1951 made his name a household word among the peasant folks of Western Terai. During the unsuccessful coup attempt of January 1952, Singh received further support from a wing of the unofficial soldiery called the Raksha Dal. (91) Again, the reports about his dramatic escape into Tibet and then to China, interpolated by tales of heroism and courage, inflamed popular imagination to the point of idolatry. Thus, in September 1955, when K. I. Singh returned to Kathmandu with a royal pardon, it created a great sensation

(91) See Chapter Three.
in the country. (92) Many feared at that time that Singh's reappearance would create further disruption in politics, while some suspected that he had come as an agent of the Chinese Communists. (93)

Putting all these fears and apprehensions to nought, K. I. Singh followed a course which surprised both his friends and enemies. In his very first public utterance he launched a full-scale attack on the Nepali Congress leaders for what he described as their dishonourable role during the revolution. (94) At the same time, he went to the other extent of asserting that, in 1950, he had himself opposed the move for an armed revolt against the Ranas. (95) At another place, he declared that at no time in his life he had any connections with the Communists, either of the Nepalese or the Chinese brand. (96) On the other hand, he

(92) The Statesman wrote in a leading article on 14 September 1955:

The return of Dr. K. I. Singh assumes added significance, even though the former rebel is reported to have been granted a royal pardon. ... At least three political parties seem bent on exploiting his popularity. Some think that this may wane in the peculiar atmosphere of Nepal politics; others say that his presence in the country may serve as a focal point for widespread discontent.

(93) See Girilal Jain, India Meets China in Nepal (Bombay, 1959) 56-7.

(94) Devkota, n. 12, 78-81.

(95) Ibid., 79.

(96) The Hindustan Times (Delhi), 18 September 1955.
emphasized the need for closer relations between India and Nepal, and opposed any move for opening diplomatic relation with China. (97)

Whatever might have been the real motives of K. I. Singh at this time, there is no doubt that he was trying to weave out a plan through which he could occupy the central place in political affairs. For this reason, Singh thought it necessary to placate the King and build a certain amount of goodwill for himself in India. He was shrewd enough to realize that King Mahendra, in his bid to continue the direct rule, needed the assistance of a popular leader who could form a bridge between him and the people. This was a part which suited Singh's plans very well. He made no delay in asserting that all along he had stood by the side of the Monarch as the supreme head of the State. (98) Later, when the aims of the general election became a subject of political controversy, he was the first to declare that he wanted the election to be held for Parliament and expressed the opinion that the Interim Constitution which envisaged the formation of a constituent assembly should be thrown into "the waste-paper basket." (99)

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(97) At a press interview in New Delhi, in October 1956 he, by implications, charged Tanka Prasad Acharya's Government with having sold out the country to China in return of Rs. 6 crores.

See Jain, n. 93, 56-7.

(98) Devkota, n. 12, 78-81.

(99) Ibid., 81.
On the other hand, Singh's exceptional pro-India attitude at this time seems to have been guided by two considerations. First, he was anxious to dispel any notion that he was either a Communist or a Chinese agent. Secondly, perhaps, he developed the belief that a definite pro-India stand at that moment would prove helpful to his political scheme. His own visits to India, both before and after the formation of Tanka Prasad Acharya's Ministry, might have also given him the impression that public opinion in India generally did not favour Acharya's pronounced pro-Chinese policies. (100)

Formation of the Party

With these aims and objects in view, K. I. Singh formed the Samyukta Prajatantra Party in October 1955. In a lengthy manifesto, the new Party described how the "selfish" and "opportunists" politicians had brought about an atmosphere of apathy and distrust among the people. (101) Asserting that in Nepal it was the only democratic party, the manifesto underlined the following programme:

1) to strive for all-round development of the country on the basis of a monarchical system of Government;
2) to abolish birta land and the Zamindari system; to provide land to the cultivators and to nationalize forest and excess lands;
3) to exploit national resources to the maximum for national good and service;

(100) See Chapter Four, 132-4.

4) to establish a new society based on equality and communal harmony, and

5) to keep Nepal away from the power blocs, and to build friendly relations with other countries on the basis of mutual benefit and equality. (102)

Obviously, in this programme there was nothing particular to distinguish the new Party from other groups or factions. The only thing in which the manifesto was more explicit was that it envisaged a system of government in which the King was to occupy the highest authority, with a cabinet to work under him and to remain responsible to an elected Parliament. (103)

These policy statements, however, mattered little so long as K. I. Singh used the Party to further his political scheme. His immediate object was realized when, in July 1957, he was called upon to form a ministry. But soon it became obvious to him that with a small party like his own and in isolation from other political groups, he could not occupy the central position in politics for a long time. His dictatorial manners dissatisfied King Mahendra who was very careful to put his ambitions under restraint. (104) Soon, K. I. Singh found out, to his dismay, that in his over-enthusiasm to discredit other political parties and groups, he had put himself into an isolated position from where he was helpless to meet the combined opposition of the

(102) Ibid., 5.
(103) Ibid., 5-6.
palace, the bureaucracy and the Army. When, therefore, in November 1957, Singh was eventually dismissed, he found himself a lonely figure in politics. Many of the devoted groups of his followers left him after his dismissal. Finally, in 1959, his personal defeat in the election took away most of the glamour which had once come to him unwittingly.

Composition: Ranks and Leadership

The meteoric rise and fall of K. I. Singh and his Party supply enough material to indicate certain features of Nepalese party politics. In the first place they show that almost anybody with a certain amount of popular backing could form a party and even rise to power against the general background of instability and political disorder which had set in Nepal after 1951. The over-all effect of such personalities on the development of politics proved unhealthy in as much as it brought about multiplication of parties and confusion in political goals. For persons like K. I. Singh there was nothing like an ideology or even a fixed policy. They changed their views according to the circumstances. Thus K. I. Singh, who was once so openly pro-India, did not hesitate to launch a full-scale anti-Indian campaign, in 1960, under the banner of the National Democratic Front which he formed with two other defeated leaders, Tanka Parsad Acharya and Ranganath Sharma. (105)

(105) See Chapter Five, 190.
The personal character of such adventurist leaders also, to a great extent, decided the composition of their followers. Thus, in 1955, when K. I. Singh returned to Nepal, a large number of political workers left other parties and joined him as their leader. This is the reason why the ranks of the Prajatantra Party were composed of such heterogeneous elements as some Ranas, poor peasants and students in the cities. This pluralist association proved successful so long as different groups and group-leaders within the Party held common allegiance to K. I. Singh; but once this loyalty got divided, it took no time for the Party to disintegrate and break into small pieces. This process started working by the middle of 1957 when a general meeting of Eastern-Western Terai and Valley workers of the Prajatantra Party accused K. I. Singh of imposing "undemocratic and fascist methods" (107) and formed a parallel organization to defy his leadership. (108)

(106) Kashi Prasad Srivastava, General Secretary, Samyukta Prajatantrik Party.
(107) Halkhabar (Kathmandu), 24 November 1957.
(108) Ibid.
Nepal Communist Party - Political Extremism

Origin: Inspiration from Abroad

Like most Communist parties of Asia, the birth of the Nepal Communist Party was foreign inspired. By 1947, when India became free, some India-trained Communists were reported to have become active in certain parts of Nepal in organizing revolts and strikes among peasants and workers. (109) Though these Communists were working on purely individual initiative, it seems that among a section of the Nepalese youth, then studying in India, a conviction was growing that only the communist methods were suitable in the Nepalese conditions to solve her outstanding political and economic problems. Inspired by the Indian Communists, these young intellectuals soon came to believe that a class struggle in Nepal was imminent and that some foreign 'imperialist' powers were conspiring with the Ranas to convert their country into a military base. (110) Following the tactical line of the Indian Communist

(109) Among the peasants of Eastern Terai, some Communists organized a no-tax campaign as early as 1947, while during the strike at Biratnagar, some others took an active part. See Jativa Andolanma Nepal Kamunist Party / Text of the Report of the General Secretary at the First Conference of the Nepal Communist Party, held in September 1951 /, (Nepal Communist Party, Kathmandu, November 1951) 3-4.

(110) In an article, written in March 1950, D. P. Adhikari, a top leader of the Nepal Communist Party, expressed the fear that if a war broke out, Nepal would turn into a battle-field. "When war comes," he wrote, "the Anglo-Americans intend to attack Russia, the home of peace and socialism, and Republican China from the air-base in Nepal." See Nepal Today, 12-13th issue (March-April 1950) 10, 5.
Party about the "collaborationist" character of India's national leadership, (111) they also feared that the free Government of India was harbouring expansionist schemes in Nepal.

With these convictions in mind, some Nepalese met at Calcutta on 15 September 1949 and founded the Nepal Communist Party. (112) The new Party set before itself the task of organizing Nepalese peasants and workers into militant bodies and starting a 'peace movement' in Nepal as part of the Communist directed world Peace movement. (113) Ignoring the concrete realities of Nepalese life, the Party dogmatically held the view that more than fighting the Ranas, its primary task was to fight for world peace. Thus in a resolution of the All Nepal Peace Council, an organization started by the Party, it stated

We, the democratic and peace-loving people of Nepal, shall have to do our great duty, that is, we must fight for peace. We appeal to all political, social, cultural organizations, neutral and democratic writers, singers and artists who are opposed to the preparation for war to come and join the Nepal Peace Committee...

War preparation is being made by Anglo-American imperialists in co-operation with the Ranasahi, but it can be foiled by intensifying the peace movement in Nepal and elsewhere. (114)


(112) Only five persons were present in this meeting - viz., Niranjan Govind Vaidya, Narayan Vilash, Nara Bahadur, Durga Devi and Puspalal. See Jatiya Andolanama Nepal Kommunist Party, n. 109, 16

(113) The Cominform Journal declared in November 1949 that peace "should now become the pivot of the entire activity of the Communist Parties and democratic organizations." See For a Lasting Peace, For a Peoples Democracy (Prague), 29 November 1949.

Communist Party and the Changes after 1951

This over-zealous adherence to a dogma naturally prevented the Communists from adopting a realistic attitude towards the anti-Rana movement. From the very outset the Communist Party considered that the Nepali Congress leadership represented a clique of the "national-capitalist bourgeoisie composed of Swarna Shamsher-B. P. Koirala group." (115) As such during the armed struggle of 1950-1, the Communists maintained a vacillating attitude and explained their stand by saying that the revolt had no political significance at all. Later, at its First Conference, held in September 1951, the Communist Party maintained that the revolt could not become a revolution because the "Anglo-American imperialists and the Nehru Government" intervened to press for a compromise between the "Tribhuvan-Subarna-Koirala group on the one side and the Mohan Shamsher-Rana group on the other." (116) The Delhi Agreement, according to it, was tantamount to a betrayal of the revolution by the leaders of the Nepali Congress. (117)

Tactics of United Front 1951-52. Owing to this understanding of the political situation, the Nepalese Communists failed to see any difference between the ousted Rana Government and the Rana-

(115) Jatiya Andolanma Nepal Kamjurnist Party, n. 109, 5.
(116) Ibid., 12-3.
(117) Ibid., 13.
Congress Coalition Government of 1951. It considered the latter as a "stooge" of the Indian Government and called upon all "progressive forces" to form a broad "Peoples Front" to fight it. (118)

In fact, this policy led the Communists to join reactionary elements like the Gurkha Parishad to start a bitter anti-India campaign in Nepal. For a time the Jatiya Janatantrik Samyukta Morcha (the National People's United Front) which they formed with Tanka Prasad Acharya's Praja Parishad (119) succeeded in becoming a strong rival of the Nepali Congress. The Morcha, in a manifesto adopted in November 1951, charged the Nepali Congress Government for working in the interests of the "Nehru Government." (120)

Pointing out that more than 75 per cent of Nepal's commercial and industrial enterprises were in the Indian hands, the manifesto declared that India was trying to prevent Nepal from becoming friendly towards China. (121) Stressing its admiration for the Soviet Union and China, the Morcha openly condemned the "expansionist war-mongering camp of America and Britain." (122)


(119) As the letters exchanged between Tanka Prasad Acharya and the Communist Party Secretary throw light on the growing pattern of Nepalese politics, they are translated and reproduced in Appendix II.

(120) Jatiya Janatantrik Samyukta Morcha ko Ghosanapatra (Kathmandu, November 1951) 3.

(121) Ibid., 5.

(122) Ibid., 13-4.
The success of the United Front policy made the Communist Party believe that it could establish, in place of a "bourgeois-cum-feudal Government," a "Peoples Democracy" on the model of the Chinese Peoples Democracy of Workers and Peasants. (123) But before this programme could take shape, the Party was banned on 25 January 1952 as a result of its complicity in the revolt of the Raksha Dal.

The New Tough-Line: 1952-56. The ban on the Communist Party naturally forced it to go underground. But it carried on its activities, first, by infiltrating into other bodies and organizations and, second, by intensifying its work among the agricultural labourers, especially in Jhapa, Bara and Rautahat districts of Eastern Terai. The ascending popularity of the Communists was demonstrated in the election to the Kathmandu Municipality held on 2 September 1953, when they captured 5 seats and polled nearly 50 per cent of the total votes. (124) They also organized a number of strikes and demonstrations in Kathmandu through a new organization called the Jana Adhikar Suraksha Samiti (Civil Liberties Defence Committee). Among the peasantry also the Communists made some headway and claimed that their peasant organizations, the Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh, had reached, by 1954, a record membership of 1,43,000 with 103 village committees. (125)

(123) See Jatiya Andolanma Nepal Kamvunist Party, n. 109, 10-1.
(124) See Chapter Three, 97.
In January 1954, the Nepal Communist Party also held its First Congress in secret. (126) The Congress adopted a new line which indicated a further shift towards 'Left-Sectarianism.' It stated that under the personal dictatorship of the Monarch as "helped by the Indian capitalists," all "progressive" sections of the people - peasants, workers, small businessmen, merchants and intellectuals "are being crushed," (127) and, therefore, it was the task of the Communist Party to fight the "feudalist regime" headed by the King and replace it by a republican constitution to be framed by an elected constituent assembly. (128)

Thus, the uncompromising stand against the Nepalese monarchy became the main platform of the underground Communist Party. In a resolution issued on 20 February 1954, its Politburo declared:

The King who represents the feudal land-lord interests no less than the former ruling Ranas, has been opposed to any furtherance of the cause of democracy in the country, or the possibilities of immediate political and economic relief to the people, let alone the talks of land reform, industrialization of the country and acts of administrative and judicial reforms. (129)

(126) The Party Congress seems to have been different in character from the Conference which was held earlier in as much as it was regarded to be the highest policy making body of the Communist Party.


(128) Ibid., 7.

(129) Resolution of the Politburo of the Nepal Communist Party Passed at its Meeting of 20 February 1954 (Kathmandu, 1954), (Typescript).
Period of Vacillation 1956-60

But the new tough-line failed to achieve any impressive results and, as time passed, a section of the rank and file grew restive with the Party's continued isolation from other political groups. This section contended that the call for ending the monarchy had not only proved unsuccessful but had antagonized popular opinion. On the insistence of this section, some top leaders also came out to declare categorically that they were in favour of a monarchial system and believed in the constitutional path. (103) Depending on these assurances, Tanka Prasad's Government lifted the four year old ban from the Nepal Communist Party on 16 April 1956.

Intra-Party Differences. But the return to political legality, could not resolve intra-party differences. Many factions demanded complete reshuffle of the structural and ideological lines hitherto pursued by the leaders, while the complexity of the political situation created further confusion at the top levels of the Party. At this time two strong factions grew up in the Communist Party. One advocated the policy of co-operating with other democratic forces; the other insisted on the need for an adventurist and fighting policy. As these two factions struggled to capture the leadership, the Communist Party moved to and fro between the extremes of 'sectarian' (ultra-Leftist) and moderate lines. For a while though, after 1956, it seems that

(130) Soon after the ban was lifted, M. M. Adhikari, then the General Secretary of the Party, told a Press Conference that his party supported the institution of constitutional monarchy. See Nepal Pukar, 8 (19 April 1956) 7.
the moderate line became stronger in the Party. This is evidenced from a directive of the Central Committee issued in August 1956 which asked the lower units of the Party to work in unity with the Nepali Congress. (131) As against the previous practice of outright condemnation of the Government, the Communist Party supported the "progressive" foreign policy of Tanka Prasad Acharya's Government. (132) It also came round to the belief that the principles of Pancha Shila alone could be the basis of Nepal's foreign policy. (133)

But this trend soon came to an end when the 'sectarian' group managed to gain the support of a majority of the ranks to oppose the moderate line. The Party's North-Gandak unit, which had been the most consistent in advocating the old tough line, flouted the directives of the Central Committee, while a section of the Politburo itself, under D. P. Adhikari, insisted that the Chinese example of agrarian revolution should be followed to establish a "People's Government." (134) In a thesis, propounded in 1957, D. P. Adhikari advocated the view that since the peasantry constituted an overwhelming majority of the Nepalese population, the peasants alone could become "the pioneer of a democratic revolution in Nepal." (135) From this time onward, it also appears

(131) Masal (Kathmandu), 29 August 1956.
(132) Ibid., 23 January 1957.
(133) Ibid., 8 August 1956.
(134) D. P. Adhikari, Nepal Ka Naya Sanajyadi Sangh (Masal Office, Kathmandu, 1957) 2.
(135) Ibid., 6.
that a faction began to work as a nucleus of the pro-Chinese elements in the Nepal Communist Party. It was owing to the instigation of this group that several agrarian riots took place in Eastern Terai during the summer of 1957. (136)

Second Congress, June 1957. The ideological differences grew so acute in the Nepal Communist Party, that, in an effort to solve them, a Second Congress was convened at Kathmandu in June 1957. But the Congress failed to take any major decisions. (137) The draft thesis of the Party's programme as prepared by its Politburo, however, showed that the compromising trend in the Party was not yet over. The thesis condemned the adventurist policy of "permanent revolution" as suicidal, described the demand for nationalizing land without taking due interest of the middle class peasants as a "left-wing mistake," and put forward a programme of forming a united front with the Nepali Congress. (138) But soon after K. I. Singh's Ministry was formed, which changed the course of Nepalese politics, the 'sectarian' group grew stronger in the Party.

(136) A scare was also raised that the Communists were trying to set up a 'parallel government' in that region. See Nikhil Chakravarty, "Nepal's Unfinished Revolution," New Age Monthly (Delhi), 10 (October 1957) 61.

(137) Tulsilal Amatya, a Politburo member, informed the writer that the Congress rejected even the Draft Programme.

(138) The original draft entitled Party Karyakram ma Pariyartan Kina was not available to this writer. As such he had to depend mainly on excerpts of the draft and its criticisms appearing in the Party's weekly organ, Masal. See Arvind Nath Rimal and P. N. Rana, "P. B. Dastavejma Hamro Motaved," Masal, 16 May 1957, and Puspalal, "Pratham Nahadhivesan Le pas Gariyeko Karyakram Prati Mero Vichar," Masal, 30 May 1957.
It contended that in view of the ascendancy of the reactionary elements in politics, the only course open to the Party was to wage a single-handed struggle to the finish. (139) For sometime the 'moderates' tried to counter this opposition by saying that since reaction was growing, it was all the more necessary for the Communists to form a united front on the basis of largest co-operation. (140)

**Party and the Election.** As the inner party struggle continued unabated, the date of the general election drew nearer. For sometime, it even appeared likely that the Communist Party would fail to make up its mind about participation in the election. However, in June 1958, the Central Committee Plenum met at Rautahat and announced that the Communist Party would participate in the election in order to strengthen the democratic forces. (141) It also gave an assurance to support the Council of Ministers (1958-9) in "all honest steps of the Government." (142)

But the actual performance of the Communist Party in the election showed that intra-party differences had gone deep enough to prevent it from becoming a strong political force. The failure of the Party in the election was mainly due to the lack of clarity.

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(140) Ibid., 15.

(141) Kalpana, 14 June 1958.

(142) Ibid.
in its programme and policies. Secondly, ideological differences among the leaders prevented the Party from organizing election campaign on a national scale. Finally, owing to financial stringency, the Communist Party could not conduct its campaign on the same level as that of the Nepali Congress or the Gurkha Parishad. (143)

**Return to 'Sectarianism'.** This failure in the election, however, brought back the 'sectarian' group in the leadership. This was evident from the tone of the resolutions which the Central Committee Plenum passed at its meeting at Janak pur in June 1959. Analysing the political situation following the election, the Plenum noted that political uncertainty in Nepal had increased and that the Nepali Congress Government was adopting an "anti-people's" path under the pressure of reactionary elements. (144) In another resolution, the Plenum criticized India's policy of interference in Tibet and called upon the elected Government to explain its stand in regard to India and China. (145)

Once more the Communist Party raised the cry that India was trying to subvert Nepal's independence and to drag her into the cold war diplomacy waging across the Himalayas. (146) In

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(143) Tulsilal Amatya.

(144) *Kalpana*, 6 July 1959.


internal policies also, 'sectarian' adventurism staged a come-back. Thus, in an article written in September 1959, Dr. Raimajhi, the General Secretary of the Party, observed that the people were becoming dissatisfied with the Congress Government while reactionary elements were trying to exploit the situation.

Hence, we have a double task before us. First, to convert the present popular discontent and frustration resulting from the Government's policy into a mass movement for the defence of the rights and interests of the people against dictatorial measures. Second, to win over the people from the influence of reactionary and revivalist elements. ...(147)

It is, however, not clear as to how the proximity of the Chinese military force on Nepal's northern border affected the minds of individual Communist workers. There were some indications though that a section of the ranks was becoming critical of the Chinese policy and opposed the pro-China faction in the leadership. (148) These differences of approach in regard to China seem to have come for discussion at another session of the Central Committee held in September 1960. Though nothing concrete came out of the meeting, there were indications that differences in the Communist Party ranks and leadership had assumed new proportions as a result of the border disputes between India and China.

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(148) In 1960, M. M. Adhikari issued a press statement in which he stated that in case China attacked Nepal, the Communists would be the first to fight them. See The Motherland, 27 July 1960.
The history of the Nepal Communist Party after 1956 is, therefore, the story of schism among various doctrinaire groups which ignored concrete realities in their zeal to follow the dictates of the World Communist Movement. The ideological background against which the Party was born remained, in the main, responsible for its stifled growth. The four year ban, during which the Party went underground, further prevented it from developing a nation-wide organization. The extremist course which the Party followed in regard to outstanding problems of Nepal, including the question of the fate of Nepalese monarchy, made it work in total isolation from other groups or larger sections of the people. Later, differences in regard to the Chinese objectives in Tibet and border disputes with India brought confusion in its ranks. Finally, the immaturity of its leaders and their conflicting ideological affiliations served as a stumbling block in the way of its becoming a strong political force.

Composition: Leadership and Ranks

Inspite of these weaknesses, the Communist Party was one of the best organized parties in Nepal. It was not a loosely knit body like the Nepali Congress. It recruited its members after careful screening and nearly 500 of its total 5,000 members were whole-time workers. (149) The primary members of the Party formed

themselves into small cells and fractions which constituted the lowest units of the Party. These cells and fractions elected district committees which maintained direct contacts with the Central Committee composed of 17 members. (150) The Central Committee, in turn, elected a 5-member Politburo which worked ordinarily as the highest executive body of the Party. (151) The two Congresses, which the Party held in 1954 and 1957 respectively, acted as general assemblies of the party workers where ideologies and policies of the Party were discussed and decided. Theoretically, the Congress remained the highest body which elected the Central Committee and its General Secretary. (152)

The bulk of the Communist Party's rank and file came from among the peasantry, especially from the landless and lower-middle class peasants. (153) The rest of the ranks was composed of students, lower middle-class intelligentsia and business community in the cities. Regionally, however, it appears that the Communist "cadres" came largely from places like Kathmandu, Patan, Palpa and Dharan. (154) Inside Kathmandu, the Communists

(150) Previously the Party organization was divided into three geographical divisions - Kosi, Gandak and Karnali, on the basis of which three regional committees were formed and under each of them, there were two provincial committees.

(151) The 5 members, in 1960, were - Dr. Raimajhi (General Secretary), Puspalal, Tulsilal Amatya, Kamar Sah and D. P. Adhikari. See also Appendix VI.

(152) See Nepal Kamyunist Party Ko Vidhan, n. 149, 9-10. In 1951, the Party was reported to have also elected an Honorary Presidium in which such important leaders like Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Maurice Thorez and Kim il Sen were elected. See "First Conference of Nepal Communist Party," India Today (Allahabad), 1 (December 1951) 12-4.

(153) Tulsilal Amatya.

(154) Puspalal. See also Chapter Seven for further discussion on the subject.
had a sizable following among the Newars who were mainly a business community.

The leadership of the Communist Party, however, came from among the educated middle-class intelligentsia and represented, like the Nepali Congress leadership, a wide association of men of varied political backgrounds and castes. Thus, among its top leaders there were well-educated India-trained Brahmans (M. M. Adhikari and D. P. Adhikari), two middle class Newars (Tulsilal Amatya and Puspalal), one landowning Khattri (Dr. Raimajhi) and a Muslim (Kamar Sah). The system by which these leaders of different classes and communities maintained their hold on the party organization could not be known, but there is no doubt that there was as much personal antipathy among them as they outwardly maintained the show of a unified leadership.

Apart from its own rank and file, the Nepal Communist Party also depended for support on a large number of people who joined its different front organizations. Among these organizations, the All Nepal Kisan Sabha and the Nepal Trade Union Congress were very powerful bodies with a total membership of over three lakhs. The Communists also organized numerous student and other social and cultural associations which served as recruiting grounds for new members to the Party.

(155) Puspalal.
Other Smaller Parties

Nepal Praja Parishad

Apart from the four major parties described above, other parties which contested the general election in 1959 represented small groups around certain individual leaders who played, at one time or another, some important role in politics. The old Nepal Praja Parishad of the forties was revived by Tanka Prasad Acharya in 1951. By disposition Tanka Prasad was more sympathetic towards the Communists than towards the socialist oriented Nepali Congress leaders. (156) As such he declared that the aim of his Party was to establish a "classless society" by ending all kinds of social and economic exploitation. (157) For sometime, during 1951-2, the Praja Parishad worked with the Nepal Communist Party in the so-called Peoples Democratic Front. But after the

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(156) In a letter which Tanka Prasad wrote in 1948 from jail to the Indian Socialist leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, he described at length his differences with the leaders of the Rashtriya Congress. He expressed the view that the Rashtriya Congress depended entirely on the Indian Socialist Party for guidance. He suggested that in a country like Nepal where there was no working class, the example of the Soviet Union and her Central Asian Republics should be followed to reach Socialism through a "short-cut." He deplored the continual anti-Communism of the Indian Socialist Party and maintained that Communism was not only a new political, economic and social philosophy but a new "religion" which could lead the poor masses towards economic equality.

For text of the letter see Kashi Prasad Srivastava, Nepal Ki Kahani (Delhi, 1955) 136-44. So far as this writer knows, the letter is genuine.

(157) See Nepal Praja Parishad Ko Ghosanapatra (Lucknow, 1951) 5.
Communist Party was banned, it functioned more or less as a pressure group aligning with one or the other faction until it found a place in M. P. Koirala's Cabinet, in February 1954. (158)

In 1955, Tanka Prasad's Praja Parishad, B. K. Misra's Jana Congress and Bal Chandra Sharma's faction in the Rashtriya Praja Party merged to form the new and larger Nepal Praja Parishad Party. The reasons for this merger seem to have been the common desire of these three leaders to pull their strength together with a view to replace M. P. Koirala's Government by an alternative one. This short-range objective was attained when King Mahendra called upon Tanka Prasad to form a ministry in early 1956. But as soon as the Party came into power, the constituent groups started their bickerings and factional struggle. By June 1957, when the Nepal Praja Parishad held its annual session at Kathmandu, the final disintegration of the Party became more than certain. (159)

The personal rivalries of the three leaders rent the organization, while a section led by B. K. Misra charged Tanka Prasad for being too friendly with the Chinese in his foreign policy. (160) As a result, in August 1958, the Praja Parishad was split into two rival groups, one headed by Tanka Prasad and the other by B. K. Misra. Both groups entered the election in the name of Nepal Praja Parishad but each fared as badly as the other. (161)

(158) Tanka Prasad functioned as the Home Minister in this Cabinet. See Appendix I.

(159) It was with great difficulty that the Conference could even pass a vote of confidence in the Government. See Gorkhanapatra, 57 (10 June 1957) 1.

(160) B. K. Misra.

(161) Only 2 candidates of Tanka Prasad's group were successful, while Misra's group had one solitary seat in the Pratinidhi Sabha. See Table I.
Thus the history of the Praja Parishad simply narrates how some group leaders attempted to exploit the country's unstable political conditions for their personal ends and made the confusion worse confounded.

Nepali Rashtriya Congress

D. R. Regmi's Nepali Rashtriya Congress originated out of a split in the Rashtriya Congress in 1947. As a group leader, Regmi had limited following in the country but he managed to get important places in the Government for a long time. In 1954 he became a Minister in M. P. Koirala's Cabinet and for sometime maintained the reputation of being one of the top leaders of Nepal. In 1957 he joined the Democratic Front, with the Nepali Congress and the Praja Parishad, to demand the formation of a constituent assembly. In 1958, again, Regmi became a Member of the Council of Ministers headed by Subarna Shamsher. His obscure political opinions, however, dissatisfied even those who had accepted him as their leader for a long time. As a result, the Rashtriya Congress could not even put up more than 20 candidates in the general election. Further, the lack of funds and the absence of a political programme resulted in the complete failure of the Party. Thus like K. I. Singh's

(162) Discussed in pages 206-7.
(163) Nepal Times (Kathmandu), 22 November 1956.
(164) Devkota, n. 12, 603.
Prajatantrik Party, the fortunes of the Rashtriya Congress reflected the rise and fall of an individual politician.

Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha

The Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha was started in 1957 by Ranganath Sharma, an old political worker of Nepal. Sharma held for sometime the post of a Minister in Tanka Prasad's expanded Cabinet. Later he was financed by some wealthy Ranas to start a party of his own. (165) But the failure of Sharma in the election proved that mere financial subsidies from the Ranas were not enough to make a party leader popular.

Nepal Terai Congress

The Nepal Terai Congress, unlike the personality parties as described above, wielded real influence in certain parts of the Terai. Organized in 1951, it soon grew up into a regional party to champion the cause of the oppressed people of the Terai against the unjust policies of the Central Government. The political problems of the Terai had been such as to give the new Party an immediate boost. Under the Rana regime, the Terai people had suffered great injustice. They were given no employment, either military or civil, by the Rana rulers who, generally, regarded the Terai people with contempt. The problem of the landless labourers in the Terai became one of the acutest after 1951 as 90 per cent of

(165) In his presidential address to the Annual Conference of his Party, Sharma admitted that without the help he received from Magh Raj Shamsher and Bhakti Shamsher, it would not have been possible for him to organize the Party. See Sabhapati Ko Bhasan, Nepal Prajatantrik Mahasabha Ko Jilla Pratinidhi Sammelan ma (Nepalganj, 1957) 16.
the land continued to remain in the hands of large land owners and birta holders who preferred to stay back at Kathmandu. The recurrence of famine and epidemic, the general level of poverty and the absence of developmental projects were responsible for the outbreak of serious unrest in the Terai region which assumed the shape of a peasant struggle against the absentee landlords. As the movement was local in character, it was easy for the Nepal Terai Congress to seize its leadership and demand for the establishment of an "autonomous Terai State," recognition of Hindi as a state language and adequate employment of the Terai people in government services. (166) These slogans increased the popularity of the Terai Congress and, by 1953, its membership reached well over 60,000. (167) While this constituted a source of strength of the Terai Congress, it also accounted for its narrow outlook and disruptive policies. (168)

The separatist nature of the Terai Congress prevented it from becoming a national organization. The absence of a strong leadership also limited its popular appeal which was one of the reasons for its failure in the general election. But the history of the Terai Congress proves that in a country where society was divided into numerous caste, tribal and regional groups, divisive and parochial tendencies in politics were apt to be more accentuated.

(166) The Statesman, 6 August 1953.
(167) The Hindustan Times, 2 May 1953.