Chapter Seven

PARTY POLITICS: POLITICAL GROUPS, TRENDS AND FACTORS
I

Nature of Politics

The emergence of a large number of political groups and parties with exclusive local, communal and personal ties and their continuous fragmentation and re-grouping had been the chief features of Nepalese party-politics since 1951. The collapse of the Rana administrative machinery under the impact of an armed upheaval and the failure to replace it by an alternative system which could prove both stable and conducive to the fulfilment of new aspirations brought extreme uncertainty in political life. The early splits in the anti-Rana movement as headed by the Nepali Congress set the stage for endless rivalry and scramble for power among leading political groups and politicians. As a result, the larger goals of taking the country on the path of democratic progress were lost. Politics, as in the Rana regime, came to be centred at Kathmandu. The rest of the country and the people in general remained unaffected by the processes of politics and formation and fall of the various ministries. But the failure of Nepal's new rulers to redress the economic sufferings of the people fostered among them an attitude of defiance to authority. Their feeling of helplessness
and dissatisfaction with the politicians found expression in committing such occasional acts of violence as became a part of Nepalese political behaviour.

Character and Behaviour of Parties

To a large extent, this aimlessness and confusion in politics was caused by the absence of a broadly based national political party. Such parties as described in the previous Chapter were neither strong nor sufficiently organized as to provide convincing leadership to the people. The Nepali Congress, which was the largest political body in the country, suffered too many splits and dissensions, during the period, to be able to make any lasting impression on the popular mind. The Gurkha Parishad and the Nepal Communist Party followed extremist policies which only helped in strengthening the forces of disruption. All other parties were either factions or composed of factions which sprang up round a particular leader or grievance and disappeared with one or the other "leaving behind only a disturbing influence upon the growth of democracy." (1)

Where politics thus came to be largely made up by a large number of leading persons who, with their political dependants, formed loose agreements and alliances to achieve power, any rigid adherence to policy or programme became impossible. In general all political parties, notwithstanding the actual measure of their popularity, gave slogans of building socialism or

(1) Werner Levy, "Fate of Democracy in South and South East Asia," Far Eastern Survey (New York), 28 (February 1959) 27.
democracy without understanding in the least the meaning of such terms. This led to a behavioral pattern in which parties and their leaders tried to outbid one another by making large promises to the people which they were unable to fulfil. While this made demagogy a part of party manifestos and programmes, it also gave rise to widespread popular frustration.

On the whole, the success or failure of a party or a political group came to be measured in terms of its ability or inability to form a ministry at a given time. Thus, with the exception of the Nepalese Communist Party which professed to cling to an internationalist dogma and the Nepali Congress which in its later stages made attempts to rectify past mistakes, the immediate objective of all political organizations was either formation of a ministry or fall of another in which they were not given place. The practice gave rise to another interesting pattern of behaviour in which parties tended to draw nearer to one another when they were out of power, but quarrelled invariably when their chances of entering the Government became brighter. This is proved from the formation of the so called 'united fronts' which the opposition parties formed from time to time. But the absence of common goals or objectives among them always led to the dissolution of such 'united fronts.' As a result, any definite polarization of the political forces along the lines of democracy or any conceivable political or economic goal could not take place. (2)

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(2) The only time when the parties made an attempt to resolve their differences to oppose the King's policies was in 1957 when they formed the Democratic Front.
Such behaviour of political parties as outlined above can be attributed to several factors. In the first place, owing to the limited measure of political awakening of the people, parties failed to secure their participation in wide political actions. Further, in view of the difficulties in transport and absence of regular inter-communication among the peoples of various regions in the country, the task of organizing broad-based political movements became extremely difficult. In such a situation, organized movements could take place only on the basis of tribal, communal or local demands. In this respect, though the Nepali Congress showed signs of outgrowing parochial limits, such factors as caste and regional affinities remained strong so far as its organizational structure was concerned. Moreover, the limited growth of organized economic groups such as industrial workers and entrepreneurs, and other liberal professions prevented the formation of parties on class basis. On the whole they represented ill-defined and heterogeneous groups of petty landlords, students, civil servants and illiterate sections of the peasant population who had no common ties to bind them together for a long time. Finally, in view of the constant instability in the Government, parties sought to reach through short-cuts and by any means. A party in power had certain obvious advantages over those in the opposition. In the first place, power gave it prestige and enabled it to gain numerical strength by attracting the political workers of other groups in its ranks. Secondly, it had the greater chance of distributing patronage among its ranks than others in the
Table III

Education, Caste, Age and Other Particulars of Nepalese Party Leaders

[Based on the writer's personal interview with them]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age &amp; Region from</th>
<th>Education and economic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>B.P. Koirala (N.C.) (1)</td>
<td>40 Eastern Terai</td>
<td>B.A., B.J. trained for lawyer's profession,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>M.P. Koirala (N.C.)</td>
<td>44/5 Brahman</td>
<td>B.A., ex-Subba under the Ranals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Subarna Shamsher (N.C.)</td>
<td>51/2 Rana Biratnagar</td>
<td>M.A., ex-Endahakim of Biratnagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Beni Bahadur Karki (G.P.)</td>
<td>35 Khattri Kathmandu</td>
<td>Undergraduate, poor middle-class family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>K.S. Raimajhi (N.C.P.) (3)</td>
<td>36/7 Khattri Eastern Terai</td>
<td>M.A.P., middle-class landowning family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>K.I. Singh (S.P.) (5)</td>
<td>55 Khattri Western Terai</td>
<td>non-graduate, ex-clerk in Indian Army.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>B.K. Malla (P.P.)</td>
<td>50 Brahman Eastern Terai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Ranga Nath Sharma</td>
<td>Brahman Kathmandu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Approximate and as in 1960.

(1) Nepali Congress 
(2) Gurkha Parishad 
(3) Nepal Communist Party 
(4) Praja Parishad 
(5) Samyukta Prajatantra Party 
(6) Nepali Rashtriya Congress.
opposition. Thus, by adopting such tactics, leaders of smaller parties, like D. R. Regmi, B. K. Misra and Balchandra Sharma continued to hold important places in various ministries and maintained their independent role as politicians.

II

Party Leadership and Personnel

In one way, however, the attainment of political freedom marked an advance upon the state of affairs which prevailed during the Rana period. This was the emergence of a new class of leaders who mostly belonged to the non-Rana families - a fact which signified a change in the social composition of the leadership. This also showed that the traditional criteria of birth and family by which the succession to political power had been governed under the Ranas gave place to a new set of criteria in which attainment of higher education and record of active service to the people were the most important. The top leadership of almost all the parties in Nepal was composed of such men as had attained a high level of education. (3) Perhaps, this also explains why the leadership came mostly from the Newars and the Brahmans, the two most educated social groups in the country. The role of some of the new leaders during the anti-Rana revolt was also another factor which enhanced their social prestige and established their high place in the parties.

(3) See Table III opposite.
"Indian Origin" of the New Leadership

The "Indian origin" of Nepal's new political leadership was another interesting feature of post-Rana politics. Excepting a few, (4) almost all top ranking leaders of the political parties had either received their education in India or belonged to those Nepalese families who had fled to India during the Rana rule. Among the top leaders of the Nepali Congress, B. P. Koirala, M. P. Koirala, Subarna Shamsher, K. P. Bhattarai and many others came from such emigre families and had received their educational training in India. (5) M. M. Adhikari and Tulsilal Amatya, leaders of the Communist Party, had spent their entire educational career in India. (6) The Gurkha Parishad leader, Bharat Shamsher, received his Master's degree from one of the Indian universities. (7) The unpredictable Dr. K. I. Singh, on the other hand, had worked as a clerk in the Indian army for a long time. (8)

Again, often the kind of political associations with which these men had come in contact in India gave shape to their later political convictions. Thus, for instance, M. P. Koirala's political conservatism, which was one of the factors for his break

(4) Such as Tanka Prasad Acharya, Puspalal and Ranga Nath Sharma.

(5) Nepali Congress Central Office, Kathmandu.

(6) Tulsilal Amatya.

(7) Beni Bahadur Karki.

(8) Kashi Prasad Srivastava, Nepal Ki Kahani (Delhi, 1955). The writer states that Singh was a member of the Nautanwa District Committee of the Indian National Congress. See also Table III.
with B. P. Koirala in 1952, seems to have taken roots during the period when he was a student at the Gandhi Asram, Patna. (9) B. P. Koirala's early relations with the Indian socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan, on the other hand, had stamped on his mind the ideas of radical socialism. (10) Similarly, some of the top Communist leaders of Nepal got initiated to the Communist theory through their contacts with such student organizations and groups as were sponsored by the Indian Communist Party. (11)

In some other ways, this "Indian-origin" of the leaders influenced their political career. First, their long stay in India provided them an opportunity to outgrow the limited horizon of the

(9) Bal Chandra Sharma, Nepal Ko Aitihasik Ruprekha (Banaras, 1951) 394.

(10) It should, however, be noted that B. P. Koirala was able to outgrow the influence of the Indian Socialist leaders. In his later career, he developed an independent attitude which was free from the kind of abstract notions and frustrations which has enveloped the minds of the Indian Socialist leaders. Thus, in a private letter written to a friend, B. P. Koirala observes

J. P.'s "Jayaprakash Narayan" incentive to goodness" is full of flaws and I do not understand the need of discarding materialism in favour of spiritualism in order to achieve good existence. ... I never suffer from frustration. I, on the other hand, suffer from over-abundance of frivolity. I believe in taking things easy, almost in a jocose mood. ... There is no frustration for me.

Extracts from a letter written to Bhola Chatterjee, Calcutta, dated 27 November 1952.

(11) Tulsilal Amatya.
traditional way of life. They got acquainted with the rising tide of Asian nationalism which broadened their outlook and gave them a wider perspective of viewing the changes in Nepal in the context of general awakening in Asia. (12) At the same time, their prolonged stay outside the country and fondness for theories prevented them from understanding in a realistic manner the problems and needs of their country. Their unfamiliarity with home conditions estranged them from the masses. Sometimes the conservative and traditionalist elements exploited this situation by propagating that they were not truly national but subservient to India. It was precisely, in order to counter such propaganda that often these leaders themselves indulged in anti-India agitation and tried to show off their 'independence' of India! (13)

The third feature of the party leaders was their extreme economic insecurity. Owing to the comparative under-development of liberal professional groups such as lawyers, doctors, teachers etc., who had, by and large, provided leadership to India's national

(12) As one of them writes

The political change in Nepal that took place in 1951, may be, in a way, regarded as the impact of events that occurred outside Nepal and is directly related to the background of the general awakening in Asia during the postwar era.


(13) Thus M. P. Koirala told the present writer in 1960,

The trouble is that we, all the leaders, were provided with training in India and we think in terms of Indian politics (even though we give anti-India slogans). But in India an organized middle class has already been built up, while it had never been allowed to grow in Nepal.
movement, most of Nepal's party leaders came mainly from those emigre Nepalese families who had been deprived of their traditional means of livelihood by the former Rana rulers. (14) For these men, therefore, politics became an exclusive profession. The question of political survival for them also became an economic proposition. This is why they were often forced to compromise their political idealism with opportunism which, in a large measure, accounted for the lack of ideological clarity and long-term goals in politics.

Next to this class of leaders there grew up another type of political workers who held important places in the parties but whose influence did not extend beyond a particular area, group or community. They came mainly from those groups of petty landowners, middle class intelligentsia, and caste and tribal leaders who had felt the need to activate themselves in politics in order to safeguard their traditional social and economic interests. As a rule these men were conservative in outlook, but at the same time they were more conversant with the problems affecting their particular group, area or interest than the leaders of the former type. They had vested interest in politics and, therefore, did not favour any radical change in the economic or social set-up of the country.

**Party Recruitment and Ranks**

In all the four major parties of Nepal, as discussed in the previous Chapter, the majority of workers came from the peasant groups, though both the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party claimed that a good section of the students and the intelligentsia

(14) See Table III.
joined their ranks. The regional representation of the rank and file in these parties showed that the majority of them came from such areas as the Terai and the Kathmandu valley. This might have been due to two factors. First, the people of these places were politically more conscious than those living in other parts of the country. Secondly, the impact of the changes after 1950 was felt most in these places. In Kathmandu, however, it appears that the predominant Newar population was more sympathetic towards the Communist Party than the Nepali Congress. (15)

As to the method of recruiting the ranks it seems that, excepting the Nepal Communist Party, no political parties developed any hard and fast rule. Often it was on the leading local workers that the top party leaders at Kathmandu depended for enrolment of new members. Obviously, in view of the difficulties in communication and transport they had to leave everything in the hands of their local workers. As such, the imposition of discipline or strict adherence to any particular political principle also became impracticable. This is why organizational discipline was minimal

(15) Werner Levy writes

The Newars of Kathmandu Valley, best educated and long suppressed by the conquering Gorkhas of the hills, are attracted by the democratization symbolized by Subarna Shamsher and the intellectualism personified by the Brahman B. P. Koirala.


This may be Levy's personal impression. The present writer found no trace of such attraction for these two leaders among the Newars. In fact, the only two persons whom the Newars respected as their leaders were Ganeshman of the Congress and Puspalal of the Communist Party, both of whom belonged to their community.
in most of the political parties. (16) This, however, did not matter so long as the parties were in the opposition. But once power was attained conflicts arose among the various local workers who clamoured for official favours and tended to quarrel among themselves. This is again one of the reasons why so many party ministries failed as a result of factionalism and indiscipline among the ranks.

It is difficult to say what factors or motives governed the attitudes of the ranks and led them to join one party or another. Often it was the accentuation of economic difficulties and political uncertainty which led a fraction of the urban population to participate in political movements. Among the educated unemployed youths of Kathmandu, for instance, there were many who joined the extremist parties to find easy solutions to their economic problems. With the rural workers, on the other hand, traditional considerations were more important. Sometimes they joined a particular party simply because their village or community leader happened to be in it. Their political motive thus sprang up from their loyalty to feudal tradition. Again, some people joined parties in order to obtain

(16) Reporting at the Sixth Conference of the Nepali Congress at Birganj, in 1956, the general secretaries commented that the Congress organization suffered from the following weaknesses - 1) insufficient contact between the central and local committees; 2) in many places individual pressures determined party activities, and 3) many times the Congress Working Committee took the decision to build area committees for co-ordinating the works of the central and local committees, "but how far they have been given a practical shape, it is not for us to say."

Nepal Pukar (Kathmandu), 8 (26 January 1956) 11-3.
practical advantages in the form of employment or financial help. But when these rewards did not easily come to them they left their respective parties without hesitation. This is the reason why so many small groups or personality-dominated parties like the Samyukta Prajatantra Party, the Rastriya Praja Party or the Praja Parishad got the support of a large number of workers at the time of their formation but lost their support when they failed to fulfil their immediate demands.

III

Political Functions of Non-Party Groups and Institutions

In view of the weakness and limited function of the political parties various other factors, groups and institutions which were not strictly political in character came to play an increasingly important role in Nepalese politics. The Crown, for instance, which had been an inactive force in the earlier times, came to occupy the central stage in politics after the fall of the Ranas. Similarly, in spite of the loss of political power, the landowning classes and the Ranas found enough opportunities to safeguard and further their sectional interests in the unsettled conditions of the country. Other traditional factors such as caste and religion also played an important role in shaping the course of politics. Hence, a passing reference to these non-party elements, groups and institutions and the manner in which they influenced the course of political development becomes necessary.
Role of The Crown in Politics

In a system where political leaders and parties came to be generally distrusted the very 'non-political' character of the Crown made it the most powerful political force in the country. As a traditional institution the monarchy received willing support from the largest sections of the people. Secondly, in view of the failure of the parties to provide a popular and stable government, the Crown gradually came to represent in the popular eye the only symbol of political unity and governmental stability. Thirdly, the popular image of the King underwent a revolutionary change after the fall of the Ranas. King Tribhuvan's role as the "liberator" during the anti-Rana revolt made the royal family dearer to the heart of the people. They came to believe that the King alone was in a position to help them and bring immediate redress to their sufferings. As one writer puts it, "the King ... can answer our needs. If he fails to initiate proper steps, our future is dark." (17)

Thus, the traditional position of the Crown and its new image as created after the revolution provided the sources of power to the King to become a strong political force in the country. After his restoration, he took such measures as could bring under his control the actual instruments of power such as the army, the police and the administrative services. He passed various acts and ordinances which gave legal sanction to his increasing authority. Later, he used the politicians and the parties in a manner which

brought them into discredit. The latter, on the other hand, either due to their differences or limited influence and resources, failed to put up a combined resistance to the royal scheme of personal autocracy. As a result, it was not difficult for the King to ban all the political parties and impose a partyless form of Government in 1960.

The Landowning Aristocracy and the Ranas

The loss of political power did not automatically put an end to the hold of the Ranas and their kinsmen on the country’s economy. As a landowning class they still constituted the strongest force which resisted all attempts at changing the old basis of feudal proprietorship on land. Even the King, who had obtained more real powers than the parties, found it an impossible task to bring any drastic reform in the traditional system on land. (18)

Apart from defending their economic interests, some members of the Ranas and landowning families came to play a more active role in politics. Some of them openly organized political parties with the help of their dependants and supporters. Again, in some parties wealthy Ranas played an indirect role by becoming their sole financier. In such cases the very existence of such parties depended on the backing of their wealthy supporters. This also explains why sometimes leaders of small factions grew very powerful and boasted that money was never a problem for them. (19)

(18) The programme of land reforms which Mahendra promulgated in 1955 was not implemented due to the opposition of these landed groups. See Gorakhpatra (Kathmandu), 55 (14 September 1955) 1-4.

(19) See K. I. Singh’s Press interview, The Statesman (Calcutta), 1 December 1957. He even claimed that during the election his Party had spent over 50,000 rupees. Kalpana (Kathmandu), 22 November 1959.
in the Nepali Congress there was a belief in a section of the ranks that it was Subarna Shamsher who, as the Party's financier, dictated its policies and programme. (20)

But as an economic group, the Ranas and the associated families failed to organize themselves into an organized class. Among the Ranas themselves there were different factions and groups based on traditional stratification of their social and economic positions. Together they represented, if anything, a force which was opposed to all progressive measures. In order to safeguard their interests and foil such attempts as could threaten their interests, they encouraged the forces of political anarchy and sometimes, as in 1960, organized anti-social elements to defy authority.

Traditional Interests

Owing to the absence of large-scale participation of the people in political movements and the failure to reconstruct the country's economy on new lines, the traditional basis of Nepalese society remained unchanged. The basic pattern of life in villages and isolated communities remained more or less the same as in the past. There the forces of tradition and caste, and the individual's obligation to his own community or tribe continued to be the governing factors in social activities. Hence the impact of new ideas was felt only by a handful of intelligentsia and middle class

(20) During his stay at Kathmandu, this writer had many times heard this complaint from the Congress workers. But this does not seem to be entirely true. A strong section of the Party was all along opposed to Subarna Shamsher's leadership. Further, this writer came across some private letters of B. P. Koirala which leave no doubt that in the Nepali Congress it was he who was the guiding spirit, not Subarna.
civil servant groups at Kathmandu who hoped that they could build a new society from the top through achieving political power.

Yet, since this minority group of elites needed the support of the people to realize its aims, it exploited such sentiments as could appeal to them most. As a result, slogans of religion and caste entered politics. Some parties used caste and religion as convenient vehicles to decry their political rivals. (21) During the election, caste and religion were important factors which governed the success or failure of many candidates. (22) In 1960 a violent uprising took place at Gorkha merely because a fanatical group incited the people to overthrow the elected Congress Government in the name of a household god. (23) In certain parts, traditional interests were expressed in the form of separatist or local movements. The demand of the Terai people for an autonomous state or the Kiranti movement of 1952 were organized on such basis. But often, these parochial demands which seemed to break up the political unity of Nepal had roots in the economic sufferings of the people. The widespread unrest in the Terai, for instance, took place because of the injustice and the economic exploitation which the people of this region had suffered under the Rana regime.

(21) B. P. Koirala stated to the present writer that many leaders condemned him as a sinner against religion because he did not wear the sacred thread which was the caste mark of the Brahman. Some parties even alleged that B. P. Koirala had desired the removal of Siva Lingas (symbol of Lord Siva) to the museum.

(22) S. K. Bhattarai, Secretary, Election Commission, Kathmandu.

(23) See Chapter Five, 195-6.
In similar manner certain associations and parties as organized by depressed caste-groups or backward tribes indicated how economic, social and traditional interests got merged to produce parochial and communal tendencies in politics. (24) Similarly, linguistic divisions between the Madhesia (Hindi-speaking Terai people) and the Parbetiya (Nepalese speaking hill people), caste differences between the Brahmans and the non-Brahmans and social divisions between the Newars and the Gorkhalis produced new tensions and conflicts the full impact of which has yet to be seen in future political developments of Nepal. (25).

Traditional Institutions in Politics

In a situation where the sphere of politics remained largely undefined and uncertainty about the future loomed large, it was natural for the non-political institutions to take more than a passive interest in political activities. Hence, as two organized groups, the Army and the bureaucracy in Nepal came to wield an indirect influence upon the processes of politics.

The Army. Unlike the armies in many Asian States in which the official class represents the cream of an educated modern

(24) These organizations were, to name a few, the Nepal Anjuman Islah, Depressed Class Organization, Akhil Nepal Pariganit Jana Vikash Sangh, etc.

elite, (26) the Nepalese Army remained largely a monopoly of the Ranas and some other privileged families who occupied its higher offices on a hereditary basis. The social composition of army officers did not undergo any basic change even after the fall of the Ranas. As such, like the landed aristocracy, army officials represented a bulwark of the traditional and vested interests of the society. As a conservative group, they resented any efforts made by the politicians to introduce reforms in the army organization. Sometimes they exerted influence to remove such politicians from the Government. Thus, one of the reasons for the fall of K. I. Singh's Ministry, as he himself was reported to have said, was the personal antagonism of certain top Rana officials towards him. (27) Similarly, it was suggested that B. P. Koirala's Government alienated some top-ranking army officers because it had proposed to bring certain changes in the army organization. (28)

As an instrument of power, however, the Nepalese Army remained loyal to the King inspite of the attempts made by several politicians to incite it to stage a coup. The reason why the Army did not take sides against the King was that its interests did not come into clash with those of the latter. Secondly, both the Kings, Tribhuvan and Mahendra, took special care to enlist the support of army officers and their men towards their regime. Compared to other


professions, they were given higher salary, and greater comfort and security in their service. Thirdly, so long as the privileges and needs of army officers were attended to, they did not care to get themselves unnecessarily involved in politics. Such an attitude also conformed to the traditions of the Nepalese Army. (29) Finally, as the lower posts in the Army were filled by poorer sections of the hill peasantry, the feeling of commonness and identification of interests between them and the top officers could not easily grow up. This gulf in social rank and economic disparity between the two classes of the Army also prevented it from playing a more dominant role in politics.

The Administrative Services. On the other hand, the minority of literate privileged groups, which formed the core of a bureaucratic order at Kathmandu, were the most dogged elements to resist attempts at reorganizing the old administrative structure. This bureaucratic class was composed of those families of the Ranas, the Brahmans, the Khattris, and the Newars who had traditionally come to hold important places in the administration and were in constant fear of losing their jobs under the new system. As such, they resented interference of politicians in the administration and tried to undermine their authority when they happened

(29) It is worthwhile to note how an earlier writer describes this tradition:

The Nipalese soldiers are at all times, and under all circumstances most singularly obedient to "the powers that be," and they obey the constituted authority - be it Rajah, Rani, Prince or Minister - most unhesitatingly.

to be ministers. Thus, often a dispute between a minister and a departmental secretary at the Singha Darbar (Secretariat) developed into an administrative bottleneck and created disorder. Again, with the growth of a comparatively modernized educated intelligentsia new factions grew up in the administration. In the absence of other independent professions, the new intelligentsia demanded employment in the administrative services. The old bureaucratic families, on the other hand, resisted the entry of new elements into the administration. A glimpse of the confusion thus created can be found in the following excerpt from a confidential report of the Government:

The administrative machinery of the Government of Nepal had a system of its own, suiting the old autocratic type of Government and since the coming of Democracy a new system of the working in the Government had been introduced in the form of secretariat working. But the old system of working having been as strongly entrenched as before and the new one not having taken its roots firmly, because of inexperience or unwillingness or lack of drive, the two systems, the old and the new, are always in clash against each other. Consequently, there is hardly any clear-cut system at present, and even a variable chaos rules in the working of the administrative machinery of the Government of Nepal. (20)

Thus, on the whole, the role of the administrative classes seemed to have been inimical and adverse to the democratizing process of the country.

(30) The Concept and Objective of Reorganization (O & M Division, Singha Darbar, Kathmandu, n.d.) Appendix A, 64.
IV

Other Forces and Factors

End of Isolationism: Nationalism

Apart from political and non-political groups, and traditions and institutions, certain other factors also began to work in politics. Among them was Nepal's growing contact with the outside world which gave an added impetus to the growth of Nepalese nationalism. The new era which dawned after 1951 witnessed the birth of a natural urge among the Nepalese to participate in world affairs as an independent nation. This new urge was reflected in Nepal's efforts to gain admission to the United Nations and to enter into diplomatic relations with other countries. Foreign affairs and attitudes on foreign policy also found an increasingly important place in the manifestos and programmes of the political parties.

But the sense of insecurity which resulted from Nepal's peculiar geographical position as sandwiched between the two giant powers - India and China, introduced a negative element in Nepalese nationalism. This negative element found expression in cries of foreign interference raised by the Government and the parties alike. As political awakening remained limited to a handful minority, slogans like defending the country's independence from foreign interference were freely used to arouse the nationalist sentiments of the masses. The extremist parties made no hesitation to point out that by foreign interference they invariably meant India.
Thus, for them anti-Indianism became a part of the new nationalism. This negative anti-Indian approach went a long way in influencing both governmental and party activities in Nepal.

Absence of Public Opinion

On the whole, the attainment of political freedom did not bring any perceptible change in the old pattern of political life. Yet, inspite of the failure of the parties and the Government, some kind of popular opinion might have developed in Nepal if a large section of the people had received elementary education, in some form or other, to realize the value of political freedom. But this did not happen. In a total population of over 9 million only 2 per cent received some kind of education to be called literate. (31) This literate minority, on the other hand, did not signify the growth of a new educated middle class which could have worked as an agency to impart political education to the masses. In the absence of such a class, inter-communication among various groups, castes and communities on the basis of new occupational pursuits could not take place. As a result, organized social and cultural activities which could have served as means of introducing new ideas remained largely unknown to the people.

Press

Other than education, an organized press giving articulate forms to the needs and desires of the people might have played a

(31) See Census of Population of Nepal 1952/54 A.D. (Department of Statistics), Kathmandu) 39-41. Kathmandu had the highest proportion of literacy i.e., 50 per cent for males and 19 per cent for women. According to the Census this was because "of the greater availability of schooling for its inhabitants, and also because Kathmandu is the national Capital and chief commercial centre and so attract the more literate people."
role in formulating public opinion. But though, after the revolution, newspapers and periodical publications rapidly multiplied in number, (32) the press as a forum of public opinion remained largely non-existent in Nepal. This can be accounted for by the fact that the circulation of most of the Nepalese newspapers remained confined to small groups at Kathmandu. (33) Secondly, as most of these papers were attached to one political group or another, (34) they merely served as organs of such groups and did not reflect any public opinion. Finally, the importance of an organized press and its influence were not realized even by those who had joined the journalist profession. Commenting upon the conditions of newspapers and the kind of press associations which functioned at Kathmandu, the Nepal Press Commission's Report observes:

Many newspapers are started and closed by individuals or limited groups of individuals, and as journalism is not yet regarded as a profession, even the memberships of these /Press/ associations are not stable.

(32) After the revolution, as many as 24 dailies, 30 weeklies, 10 periodicals and 40 monthly journals were started in Nepal. Under the Ranas, there was only one paper controlled by them viz., the Gorkhapatra. See Press Kamisan Ko Report (Kathmandu, 1958) 109.

(33) Out of 11 dailies only 2 had a circulation of over 500. Only the official Gorkhapatra had a circulation of over 3,000. Ibid., 30-51.

(34) Almost all the political parties had their own official organs. The prominent ones among them were:

1) Nepal Pukar (Nepali Congress)
2) Kalpana (Nepali Congress)
3) Rashtrayani (Gurkha Parishad)
4) Nasal (Communist Party)
5) Samyukta Prayag (Samyukta Prajatantra Party)
6) Lokyarta (Praja Parishad).
Anybody who starts a paper today joins one or both of the associations and, as soon as his papers closes down, his membership too becomes invalid. ... (35)

Thus, in the absence of modern forms of associations and organizations which serve and shape popular opinion, the introduction of democracy and party-system in Nepal appeared more as an imposition than a voluntary acceptance of the new way of life.

V

Thus, in conclusion, it could be said that the political problems of Nepal during the period 1950-60 were largely administrative, economic and social. The forcible ousting of the Rana rulers was followed by the disruption of the traditional system of government. On the other hand, the existing administrative structure proved not only insufficient but obstructive to the growth of democratic and popular rule in the country. Hence the first task which confronted Nepal's new rulers was to build, from the very foundation, a new system of government which could, in a word, fulfil the role of a welfare state. Their second immediate task was to initiate a series of reforms to revolutionize the backward and static agrarian economy of the country and to bring general improvement in the living conditions of the peasantry. The third major task before them was to instil in the minds of the people an interest and a willingness to accept the changes they had proposed to carry out at the time of the revolution.

(35) Press Kamisan Ko Bipart, n. 29, 121.
But the difficulties in the way of fulfilling these tasks proved insuperable. In the first place, the democratic and progressive forces, which began working in Nepal after the fall of the Ranas, were as yet too weak to bring any substantial change in the attitudes of the people. The impact of the revolution remained confined only to certain groups of people at Kathmandu and in some parts of the Nepal Terai. On the other hand, the traditions of autocracy and the control over the country's economy by the old ruling classes still remained the biggest hurdles in the way to political progress and economic reconstruction. The failure to remove these hurdles brought confusion in politics. As a result of splits and rivalry among the leaders, political parties began to multiply in number. The ousted Ranas and the adventurist politicians took full advantage of the situation to further their personal ends. In the process, the people in general failed to grasp the value of popular rule or democracy which the politicians professed to build in the country. For them the main problem was as yet economic viz., general improvement in their living condition; possession of the land which the peasants tilled, and better means of transport and communication.

Thus the task of building democracy in Nepal involved, in short, the problem of revolutionizing the basis of the country's economy, the problem of laying the foundation of a new administrative system devoted to all-sided developments in the lives of the people and, finally, the problem of initiating a great social reform to break unhealthy traditions of the past and to re-organize
isolated villages, communities and tribal units into an all-Nepal society. Considering the enormity of these tasks and problems, it is easy to understand why the political developments of Nepal took such an erratic and irrational course as described in the foregoing pages. By and large, the problems which cropped up during the period 1950-60, as discussed in this study, still remain to be solved by the makers of present day Nepal.