

Nepal were attempting to establish new international contacts in an effort to protect and perpetuate their rule. They were quite naturally fearful and suspicious of the new Indian rulers, who were natural allies of the nascent democratic forces in Nepal. But the fate of Ranaism was closely bound up from the very beginning with the fate of British imperialism in India. Prior to the conclusion of the treaty of 1950 between Nepal and India, as well as for some time following conclusion of the treaty, pro-Rana groups in and outside Nepal disseminated mischievous propaganda to the effect that India had definite designs on Nepal's political independence. Such propaganda did not cut much ice anywhere, however, since India's sympathy for the nationalist and democratic political forces in Nepal were too well-known to be misconstrued.

Despite India's well-meaning advice the Ranas refused to change with the times and associate the people with governmental administration in any vital way. Free India was committed to a policy of helping the cause of nationalism and democracy in Nepal. In a very real sense, the movement for democracy in Nepal had its origin on Indian soil and, to a large extent, the Indian nationalist movement served as a model and an inspiration to the Nepalis. Many a Nepali had cast his lot with the Indians in their struggle for freedom. Furthermore, at a time when the Rana rule was faced with the greatest crisis in its history, caused by the withdrawal of the British from India, the hereditray Rana Prime Ministers of Nepal proved incapable of the courage, foresight and statesmanship demanded by the circumstances. The 1948 constitution was the only practical and constructive step devised by the Ranas to meet the problem created by the changed situation. However, it was rendered ineffective not by lack of cooperation from the Nepali people but by want of sincerity of purpose on the part of the Ranas themselves. As the people were denied any fundamental rights inside the country, the democratic movement in Nepal itself had to be organized under serious limitations. The leaders had to be away from the main sphere of political action, and in the early days of the movement there was little or no opportunity for them to have open mass contact with the people.

Movement for Democracy in Nepal

Taking advantage of India's attitude towards political reforms, the democratic movement of Nepal, which was at that time being

organized from India, strove to mobilize Indian public opinion in its support. Inside Nepal, King Tribhuvan became the centre of the hopes and loyalties of the democratic forces. His sympathies for the popular struggle against the Rana regime were an open secret to the Nepali people. Tribhuvan had already been implicated in a plot against the Ranas in the 1940s.

Matters came to a head in September 1950, when the Rana government announced the unearthing of a plot to assassinate the Prime Minister and a number of high officials. On 6 November, 1950 King Tribhuvan sought asylum in the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu. Two days later, despite the efforts of the Rana government to contact him and prevent him from leaving the country, he was flown to India.

This event coincided with the launching of a popular insurrection by the Nepali Congress. Meanwhile, Tribhuvan's three-year-old grandson, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who was left in the palace by the royal family, was proclaimed King by the Rana government. The Indian government continued to recognize Tribhuvan rather than his grandson as Head of State. The Government of India pressed diplomatically for Tribhuvan to be returned to the throne and for constitutional reforms to be introduced immediately to make the Nepali government more representative of the people. Maharaja Mohan Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, the Prime Minister, felt compelled to meet these terms only after he was faced with a serious decline in support from the Rana family itself.

The events of the autumn and winter of 1950-51, i.e. the abolition of the rule of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers and the Royal proclamation pledging constitutional rule to the people, brought Nepal into the world arena in the context of the changing pattern of politics in South Asia. The process of change in Nepal in 1950-51 was accelerated by China's establishment of control and authority in Tibet, where China before had had merely a shadow of sovereignty sometimes described as suzerainty. India's moral support for the cause of a broad-based regime in Nepal, as against the autocratic rule of the Rana family, was based on the consideration that a democratic Nepal would be a greater asset to India and the world in facing the global challenge of communism and the danger of Chinese communism in particular.

Internal Political Developments, 1950-60

The Government of India played an important role in the nego-

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Retrospect and Prospect

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I could heartily wish a law were enacted, that every traveller, before he were permitted to publish his voyages, should be obliged to make oath before the Lord High Chancellor that all he intended to print was absolutely true to the best of his knowledge; for then the world would no longer be deceived as it usually is, while some writers, to make their works pass the better upon the public, impose the grossest falsities on the unwary reader. I have perused several books of travels with great delight in my younger days; but having since gone over most parts of the globe, and been able to contradict many fabulous accounts from my own observation, it hath given me a great disgust against this part of reading, and some indignation to see the credulity of mankind so impudently abused. Therefore since my acquaintances were pleased to think my poor endeavours might not be unacceptable to my country, I imposed on myself as a maxim, never to be swerved from, that I would *strictly adhere to truth*; neither indeed can I be ever under the least temptation to vary from it, while I retain in my mind the lectures and example of my noble master, and the other illustrious Houyhnhnms, of whom I had so long the honour to be an humble hearer.

—*Nec si miserum Fortuna Sinonem*

Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba finget.

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

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