

CHAPTER-VII

RESORT TO ARMS

The International Dimensions of the Democratic Movement

There was a dilemma in the Indian Left's approach to the democratic movement in Nepal. The Communists, of course, did not recognise international boundary in their basic ideological position. On the other hand, the nationalist Left, that is to say, the C.S.P. and their likes, refused to treat Nepal as a foreign country. Even in the letters of Jayaprakash the revolutionary cause gets precedence over international conventions. The editorial of the Searchlight, Patna, dated 17th May, 1949, reflects the dilemma clearly.

"If, before the Satyagraha is launched on June 1, the people's demands are not considered, the Government of India should act energetically and take measures which will have a resounding effect on even the impenetrable recesses of the mountain kingdom. Surely if they have time for Malaya, Indonesia and Burma, they can at least spare a thought for our hapless neighbours of Nepal....

"Cutting out all bombast and pretension, the frank fact

remains^{is} that the status of Nepal should be no better and no worse than^{kat-} of Hyderabad or Mysore. That is nature's decree and India's opinion. It should merge in our Union on the same terms as the states have done.... Either the Satyagraha succeeds or the Government of India will put a peaceful end to the intolerable tyranny that has lasted long enough and must no longer live".¹

The Searchlight editorial cited, with approval, J.P. Narayan's recent statement that "If the people of Nepal are not able to establish their own democratic rule, there is even danger of other foreign powers filling the vacuum".²

The reference was, obviously, to the way some of reluctant princely states like Hyderabad and Junagarh had been made to join the Indian Union under the dual pressure of internal political movements and external military intervention/operation. For China was yet absent in Tibet. But Nepal was neither Hyderabad nor Mysore. The British had never exercised their paramountcy over Nepal in the past. The dilemma had its effect on the Government of India's policy towards Nepal. On March 17, 1950, Nehru told the Indian Parliament:-

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1. See The Searchlight, dated 17th May, 1949.
 2. Ibid.

"We have, accordingly, advised the Government of Nepal, in all earnestness, to bring themselves into line with democratic forces that are stirring in the world today. Not to do so is not only wrong but also unwise from the point of view of what is happening in the world today."³

Among the foreign powers, of course, the British retained their interest in Nepal's affairs through their acting ambassador, John Falcon, and the U.S.A. was taking interest in Nepal's affairs. But some thing unexpected happened when, in October, 1949, China made an assault on Tibet and, subsequently, took it over.

J.P. and the Nepalese Revolution

Shortly before Mohan Shumsher's state visit to India to offer all military help and secure corresponding advantage from Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan wrote a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, on January 31, 1950, urging Nehru to press for the release of Tanka Prasad Acharyya, Kharag Prasad and 100 other political prisoners languishing in the jail. The first two had, in fact, spent about ten years in jail.

3. Nehru, Jawaharlal. Speeches 1949-1953. p.146.

J.P., commended Tanka Prasad's selflessness.⁴

In the same letter J.P. warned Jawaharlal Nehru of the new trend of political consciousness among the people of Nepal. The Nepalese were turning to communism. They were becoming anti-Indian and their eyes were towards China and Tibet for deliverance. J.P. sarcastically commented:-

"The Nepalese people have lost faith upon the Indian Government, they are looking for China's help. I hope, China's Communists will not move by the same scruples as your Government do and in the C.P.N. they have a readymade fifth column, they will supply it with necessary tools".

Jayaprakash, further, advised Nehru that his Government could be saved by two ways:-

- (1) By exerting political and economic pressure on the Rana Government by the Indian Government, and
- (2) By rendering all possible help to the Nepalese leader who are fighting for their freedom.⁵

4. J.P.'s letter to Jawaharlal Nehru dated 31, January, 1950, forwarding a letter from Tanka Prasad Acharya to Nehru written in Kathmandu Jail.(J.P.file).

5. Ibid.

The emergence of China as a communist power on the northern border of Nepal created a third factor in the Nepalese politics. Both Jayaprakash and Mohan Shumsher played upon it.

Jayaprakash is reputed to have brought the Red Flag first to Bihar.⁶ He was also instrumental in the forging of the alliance between the C.S.P. and the C.P.I. in the thirties. But in 1942 C.S.P. - C.P.I. relations became extremely hostile and Jayaprakash became suspicious of communist expansion.⁷

Mohan Shumsher promised full support to the Indian Government against China. In 1950, ironically, Nehru did not share the same hostility toward China as Mohan Shumsher and Jayaprakash had. He politely advised Mohan Shumsher to democratise the country.⁸ At the same time, Mohan Shumsher's visit to Delhi led, ultimately, to the signing of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship on July 30,

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6. Personal communication from Bhogendra Jha, on 11.5.95 at his official residence, Delhi.
 7. J.P. was particularly upset by the communist take over of Czechoslovakia in 1948. See his 1948 article "Ends and Means" in Bimal Prasad (edited) A Revolutionary's Quest: Selected writings of J.P. Narayan pp.139-148.
 8. Shaha, op.cit., p.196.

1950,⁹ assuring Nepal of freedom and sovereignty. Two letters, written by the Prime Ministers of the two countries, which remained secret for ten years, assured each other of mutual support in case of foreign invasion.¹⁰

Towards Revolution

By the time the treaty was signed, the relations of the Government of Nepal and India had already soured. According to Girilal Jain this souring was due to the refusal of Mohan Shumsher to consider even the very moderate suggestions of the Government of India towards democratic reform of Nepal.¹¹ In July, 1950, Rammanohar Lohia, Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee of the Socialist Party of India, observed in his report to the Party's eighth National Conference at Madras:-

"Tyranny of a small clique in Nepal has caused a vacuum and, unless its people are actively helped to self rule, Atlantic or Soviet powers would inevitably rush in. The Socialist Party has striven to help the people of Nepal to fill up the vacuum with their own power of a self-rule

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., pp.196-201.

11. Jain, Girilal, India meets China in Nepal, pp.17-18.

movement. The Indian Government must give up its policy of doing nothing until the milk is split and then of crying over it".¹²

On the other hand, the Rana Government of Nepal introduced a set of superficial reforms within Nepal. The Rana Government claimed to have activated the Local Self Government structure. A Parliament was convened on September 22, 1950. Mohan Shumshur also declared that he had co-opted two elected members of the Parliament to the Council of Ministers in accordance with Padma Shumsher's Constitution. (Shaha calls the Council of Ministers 'non-existent').¹³

On September 26-27, 1950, the Nepali Congress at its Bairgania Conference decided to launch a liberation campaign in Nepal.¹⁴ Meanwhile, on September 24, 1950, some persons were arrested on the allegation of bringing arms to Nepal and conspiring against the Rana Government. The arrested persons included Dilman Singh of Nepali Congress, Ganeshman Singh of Praja Parishad, Sundar Raj Chalise and his wife Sushila (not only prominent workers of Nepali Congress but

12. Chatterjee, Bhola, Recent Nepalese Politics, p.55.

13. Shaha, op.cit., pp.196-201.

14. Gupta, op.cit., p.43.

also connected with the ex-Commanding General, Hiranya Shumsher), Colonel Toran Shumsher Rana, Captain Pratap Bikram Shaha and Captain Mohan Bikran Shaha, all active army officers, and some retired army officers like Colonel Nod Bikram Shaha. Some of the arrested officers were connected with Generals Hiranya Shumsher and Subarna Shumsher.¹⁵

The arrests strongly suggested the King's connections with the latest move against the Ranas. The King's movement outside the palace was restricted by the Ranas. He is believed to have refused to sign the order of capital punishment on the detainees advised by the Ranas.¹⁶ The Ranas are also believed to have been planning to despatch the King and the crown prince to Gorkha and put the five-year old grandson of King Tribhuran on the royal throne. It was in this situation of high tension that the King managed, on November 6, 1950, to slip into the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu and then to India. The country was left wide open for the final confrontation between the Ranas and the revolutionaries.¹⁷

On November 7, 1950, the Ranas put the four-year old

15. Shaha, op.cit. p.207.
Srivastava, Nepal ki Kahani, p.148.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

second grandson of King Tribhuvan, Gyanendra, on the throne. Tribhuvan, naturally, refused to abdicate and the Government of India refused to recognise the new Government. On December 6, 1950, Pandit Nehru delivered a speech in the Parliament of India:

"As the House knows, the King of Nepal is, at the present moment, in Delhi along with two other members of the Nepalese Government.... Needless to say, we pointed out to the ministers who have come here that we desire, above all, a strong progressive and independent Nepal.... I should like to add that we are convinced that a return to the old order will not bring peace and stability to Nepal.

"We have tried to advise Nepal to act in a manner so as to prevent any major upheaval. We have tried to find a way, a middle way if you like, which will ensure the progress of Nepal and the introduction of or some advance towards democracy in Nepal. We have searched for a way which would at the same time avoid the total uprooting of the ancient order.¹⁸

Subsequently in a speech broadcast on January 24, 1951, Nehru further said "The settlement in Nepal is a statesman-

18. Nehru, Jawaharlal, Speeches 1949-53, p.177.

like act on the part of all concerned. It marks the beginning of a new era in the history of our sister country".¹⁹

On November 11, 1950, the King reached New Delhi. On November 10, 11 and 12 unauthorised private planes from India (allegedly hired by Subarna Shumsher) dropped Nepali Congress leaflets in Kathmandu valley, Birganj and several places between them.²⁰ On November 12, 1950 a revolutionary Government was formed at Birganj.²¹

B.P. Koirala, Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan

At the beginning of the revolution B.P. Koirala met Jawaharlal Nehru for assistance. Nehru, apparently, behaved rudely with Koirala. Koirala reported this to Jayaprakash and Jayaprakash wrote a hard-hitting letter to Nehru:-

"So this is how you wish to treat a democratic revolution in a neighbouring state: Koirala is doing for his country, as you did for yours, and you speak of putting him in bars and fetters.... One by one you are denying your

19. Nehru, Jawaharlal. Selected Speeches. September 1946 - April 1961, p.437.

20. Shaha, op.cit., pp-212-213, Gupta, op.cit., p.44.

21. Srivastava, op.cit., p.140, Gupta, op.cit. p.44.

noble ideas. You are compromising, you are yielding, you are estranging your friends and stepping into the parlour of your enemies....., But, for heaven's sake, do not let Nepal's freedom be assassinated by your hesitations.... You have all the trump cards - the King and the revolutionaries on your side".²²

On November 20, 1950 Nehru wrote back to Jayaprakash taking offence to the tone of his letters. J.P. replied on December 8, 1950 expressing regret but defending Koirala and his colleagues. He reminded Nehru that the Nepali revolutionary leaders had been living in India for years and treated India as their home.

"I do not think Bisweswar committed a crime by hoping that the Government of India would so far deviate from the path of rectitude as to render unofficially the kind of help he sought from it. I am sure, in his position, I would have not only asked the Indian Government to give me that help, but I also would have that Government responsible for upholding reaction and defeating progress if it denied me that help. You have no doubt to take into consideration world opinion and such other matters. Personally, I feel we do more harm to ourselves than otherwise by first taking

22. J.P.'s letter to Nehru, dated 17.11.50 (J.P.file)

tentative steps in a certain direction and then retreating in confusion by fear of world opinion",²³ J.P. wrote. Though the correspondence does not specify the kind of help that B.P. Koirala asked for, it seems that Koirala was interested in getting either arms from the Government of India directly or facility for landing of arms on Indian soil after they were brought from abroad, which Nehru could not possibly give.

According to Bhola Chatterjee, an associate of Jayaprakash, Lohia and Koirala and a participant of ^{the} 1950 revolution in Nepal, Jayaprakash and Lohia were initially opposed to the use of violence. They dropped their objection "only when they were confronted with the choice between passivity and doing nothing and an armed struggle".²⁴ The Nepalese were assured of all co-operation by the socialist leaders.

The C.S.P.'s strategy in the 1950's revolution

The C.S.P. generally decided to activate the party units in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and instructed them to co-operate with the Nepali Congress. Lohia

23. J.P.'s letter to Nehru, dated 8th December, 1950, *op.cit.*

24. Chatterjee, *op.cit.*, pp.57-58.

suggested to B.P. Koirala the following steps:-

- (1) The arms left over during world war II and the Muslim League engineered riots since 1946 and being kept secretly by people in various parts of the country should be collected.
- (2) A number of selected socialists should not only help in the collection of arms but also should be actively associated with the building of the organisation of the armed struggle. Some of the veterans of 1942 and anti-Razakar movement in Hyderabad were contacted.²⁵

The Hyderabad episode has an important place in this narrative of the Nepalese revolution. Not only as a model but also as a material source of arms for the Nepalese revolution. According to Chatterjee, "in 1948 considerable quantities of arms had been supplied to the socialists in their fight against the armed mercenaries of the Nizam. I have participated in that struggle, the principal architects of which were Lohia, Jayaprakash, Mahadev Singh and Aruna Asaf Ali".²⁶

Inspite of Jayaprakash's assistance, however, there was

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

not much success in the collection of arms. The other channel of the planned arms collection was Subarna Shumsher who operated at Calcutta.²⁷ One suspects that Shumsher was looking for arms and amunition left over after the communal riots in Bengal and Bihar. His success was also very limited.²⁸

Chatterjee notes further - "The arms that had been procured (at Biratnagar) were a poor sight, a few automatic pistols, about 3 or 4 revolvers, half a dozen sten guns and Lee Enfield rifles. Although there was no lack of volunteers they had but little acquaintance with weapons. One saving grace was there, however. The Biratnagar unit of Nepali Congress had been able to recruit some of those Nepalese who had served in the police and armed forces under the British in India. No doubt, these men would be quite useful, provided they could be put through a process of political indoctrination".²⁹

The other source of arms could be the foreign countries like Burma where there was a socialist Government. But the matter was delicate and needed the consent of Subarna

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

Shumsher who was in charge of the party's action wing. Jayaprakash wrote a letter to U. Ba Swe, Burmese socialist leader, introducing Bhola Chatterjee who went there for procuring arms.

Gathering Arms

According to Bhola Chatterjee, before journey to Nepal, in a meeting between Koirala, Subarna Shumsher and him "it was decided that, in the event of the Burma Socialist Party agreeing to help us, matters concerning the mode of transport and the place of delivery of arms should be left at its discretion. The Nepalese leaders would make discreet attempts to gauge Delhi's reaction toward this, without confiding anything in particular".³⁰

Bhola Chatterjee, along with Thirbhom Malla, a nephew of Subarna Shumsher and a successful cadet of the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, reached Rangoon on August 10, 1950.³¹ They had to wait for some time to meet U. Ba Swe and his colleagues in the Burma Socialist Party. But the arms could be arranged after a rather long waiting. The Burmese side agreed to make a gift of the required number of Bren

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

guns and Sten guns declining an offer of payment. But they could not bear the responsibility of transportation.

Burma, itself, was in turmoil since the murder of Aung San in July, 1947. The communists and a section of tribal population were in revolt in Burma. U. Ba Swe was leading the Burmese Socialist Party in his struggle against the imperialist forces on the one hand and communist adventurism on the other. The agreement of the Burmese Socialist Party to supply arms to the Nepali Congress in this situation spoke eloquently of its internationalist socialist zeal.

Bhola Chatterjee returned to India to report to B.P. and Shumsher and to make arrangements for the transport of arms as the struggle "could not be launched before arms were received from Burma".³² Meanwhile "it was planned that Sabotage attacks on unguarded or poorly guarded military targets and ... attempts on the lives of the chief architects of the Rana regime should be undertaken".³³

This plan of action was expected to serve two main purposes:

32. Chatterjee, op.cit. pp.78.

33. Ibid.

- (i) each successful execution would have a demoralising effect on the Government and its supporters, and
- (ii) it would destroy the myth of invincibility of the Gorkha army. Kathmandu was chosen as the field of operation.

In September Chatterjee made an unsuccessful trip to Rangoon. A few more unsuccessful visits were made later. At the same time, the Nepali Congress sent Ganeshman secretly to Kathmandu to plan and execute the liquidation of Mohan Shumsher and other senior officials. In September, 1950, also, the Nepali Congress formally declared its decision to abandon the technique of non-violent action. The Working Committee of the Party was dissolved. Its president, M.P. Koirala, was given all executive powers and made dictator of the Party.³⁴

According to Chatterjee Delhi agreed to the strategy of pressure in order to bring Mohan Shumsher to the path of sanity though not to go in for a war.³⁵ Mohan Shumsher responded by formally convening the promised Legislature on September 22, 1950. The Nepali Congress rejected the call to join it and the Government of India told the Government

34. Ibid. p.80.

35. Ibid.

of Nepal that the reform measures were inadequate. On September 29, Mohan Shumsher announced that a Nepali Congress plot to kill senior officials including himself had failed.³⁶ Ganeshman was arrested by the Ranas.

The Kathmandu plot having failed the Nepali Congress became imp^aetient. It decided to resume the effort at arms procurement from Burma as well as to talk with the Government of India. Chatterjee went again to Burma and returned without success on October 24. Meanwhile on October 23, the Nepalese leaders met at Patna and decided that Delhi had given a restricted "go ahead" signal. "In effect this boiled down to the fact that the N.C. was permitted to conditional use of Indian territory as its base of operation", writes Chatterjee.³⁷

In this context two significant decisions were taken:

- (i) No final date should be decided upon until arms were received from Burma; and
- (ii) The action would be connected with the moves of the King whose position was critically threatened because

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

of his support to the Nepali Congress.³⁸ The Nepali Congress also decided to continue with the institution of the King as he was a friend of the revolution. The Government of India was in complete agreement with the Nepali Congress's support to the King.

It was also agreed that the main bases of the Nepali Congress operation would be Biratnagar in eastern Nepal and Birganj in Central Nepal, two towns bordering on the Indian towns of Jogbani and Raxaul respectively. There would be a number of other strategic bases between the two towns.³⁹ It was expected that once the military operation was launched, the people of Nepal would have a major upsurge and overthrow the Ranas.

The Chinese invasion of Tibet, on 23rd October, 1950, hastened the pace of event. The Indo-Nepal peace treaty was signed under pressure on October 30, 1950. But the things did not stop there. On October 31, Chatterjee reached Rangoon for the delivery of arms. On November 3, the air

38. Ibid.

39. Chatterjee, Ibid., pp.84-85.
According to Shaha the commercial plane that brought the first consignment of arms from Burma belonged to the Himalayan Aviation of which Mahair Shumsher was the managing director. It landed in an abundant World War II airship in north Bihar.
Shaha, op.cit. p.237.

craft chartered by the Shumsher brothers reached Rangoon and brought the arms to Patna. These were stocked at the house of Devendra Prasad Singh. A wireless transmitter installed in the house sent radio messages to the Nepali Congress leaders asking them to reach Patna. On November 6, the regional leaders of N.C. met at Patna.⁴⁰ Interestingly, on the same day, the King of Nepal slipped into the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Bholā Chatterjee wrote:-

"No final day for the launching of the struggle was yet fixed, the reason for which, however, was not disclosed to the general assembly of men. The top echelon of the leadership had very pertinent reason to keep the date open, for secret messages from Kathmandu had for the last few days been giving increasing indication of an imminent confrontation between the palace and the Prime Minister".⁴¹

Though there is no record of communication from the Nepali Congress to the palace, it is possible to surmise that such communication existed either through the Nepalese subjects at Kathmandu or the Indian Mission there. Chatterjee speaks of "Clandestine messages of hope and

40. Chatterjee, *ibid.* p.95.

41. *Ibid.*

expectation" from the Nepali Congress to the King.⁴² He also points out that the Indian Ambassador C.P.N. Sinha had been in communication with the palace before November 6.⁴³

The Military Operation

The overall command of the Biratnagar - Birganj axis was placed under Subarna Shumsher. Thirbhom Malla and Tej Bahadur were directed to lead the attack from Birganj which was the nearest border point from Kathmandu. The first move would be for the establishment of position of the Nepali Congress with a view to an assault on Kathmandu. The Biratnagar contingent would be supervised personally by B.P. Koirala.

The other points were left to the local leaders.⁴⁴ On November 7, 1950, in a message to the people of Nepal, B.P. Koirala proclaimed the loyalty of the revolution to the King and called upon the people of Nepal to revolt against the Rana usurpers.⁴⁵

Even before the actual military operation of the Nepali

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Chatterjee, Ibid., p.95.

45. The Hindustan Standard, November 8, 1950.

Congress was undertaken, Nepal was in ferment. According to Shrivastava, in Western Nepal people signed a pledge of blood from their thumb not to rest before the end of the Ranashahi and to stake their lives in the struggle for freedom. In Eastern Nepal lakhs of Limbu-Kirats revolted, on November 8, at Lumbini, Buddha Balli and Kapilabastu, the villages associated with the name of Gotama, the Buddha.⁴⁶

BirganJ Operation

On November 10, 11, the military operation began at BirganJ. Between 200 AND 300 men captured the town in an attack from RaxaUl under the command of Thirbhom Malla and Tej Bahadur. Thirbhom was killed in the operation. Tej Bahadur was given the mandate FOR the emergency administration of the town. The Bara Hakim of the town, Som Shumsher Rana, and other officials with their families were arrested and taken to the Indian side of the border. On November 12, the Governor was released from captivity by the Government of India.⁴⁷

46. Srivastava, op.cit. p.149-150.

47. Chatterjee, op.cit., p.103, Shaha, op.cit., p.213.

Biratnagar Operation

The Biratnagar operation on 11th November was less equipped than the Birganj operation. The forces there were divided into two columns. Girija Prasad Koirala, and Bishwabandhu Thapa were to lead the first column that would seize the armoury, the police station and the residences of three local officials. Tarini Prasad Koirala and Bhola Chatterjee were to lead the second column that would occupy the army headquarters, the prison and the treasury. The total strength of the Biratnagar contingent was 150. They were to assemble, after their operation around the official residence of Local Government. The early operation was successful but the final assault on the Governor's resident was defeated with several casualties including Kuldeep Jha, a prominent socialist from Bihar.⁴⁸

The smaller operations planned in other places could not materialise. But Birganj was retained by the Nepali Congress volunteers for a week.⁴⁹ According to Kashi Prasad Shrivastava the Birganj rebels took about Rs.45 lakh from the local treasury and the Government of India seized

48. Chatterjee op.cit. p.105.

49. Shaha, op.cit. p.214.

Rs. 35 lakh from it at the Delhi airport.⁵⁰

Operation in Western Terai

According to Srivastava the Nepali Congress could not make proper arrangement in Western Nepal. Yet, at Nautanwa^a, for a long time, Dr. Kunwar Indra Singh, a homeopath, and Shrivastava himself had been preparing for a rebellion. K.I. Singh had taken part in the freedom movement of India when he came in contact with the President of the Gorakhpur District Congress Committee, Professor Sibban Lal Saksena^h. He had been a member of the Nautanawa Congress Committee and had contested, with a Congress ticket, for Nautanawa Town Area Committee. When the revolution broke out in Nepal, Singh was an important official of the Local Committee of the Indian National Congress. He also set up a strong branch of Nepali Congress at Nautanawa.

Immediately after the departure of the Nepal King for India, Singh prepared for an assault on Bhairahawa, the headquarters of the Butwal district in mid-western Tarai.⁵¹ The Nepali Congress deputed Mahendra Bikram Shah (a former member of Nepal Democratic Congress) as the commander of the

50. Srivastava, op.cit., p.150.

51. Srivastava, Ibid., p.151.

Western Front. He supported the plan for assault on Bhairahawa.

The assault on Bhairahawa was led by Dr. K.I. Singh and Colonel Kharāga Bahadur Singh Garung. The local Governor was willing to surrender but was encouraged not to do so by one Gopal Shumsher who claimed to be the commander of the rebellion in the western sector. According to Shrivastava, Gopal Shumsher was a fraud.⁵²

The assault on Bhairahawa took place at 5 A.M. on 15 November. The strength of the rebels was between 100 and 150 well-trained men and two hundred followers.⁵³ Shrivastava says that on the first day of battle, 2 Government soldiers died and 3 became injured. The rebels lost one soldiers while many were injured.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Shaha says that by 8 A.M. the Government side killed about 12 and wounded about the same number of rebels. An hour later the Nepali Congress volunteers mostly dispersed.

Several outbreaks occurred in different parts of Nepal and a fresh assault was made by the people's army on

52. Shrivastava, Ibid., p.151-152.

53. Shaha, op.cit., p.214.

54. Shrivastava, op.cit., 152.

Bhairahawa on November 18. Several Government forces were killed and wounded. On that day, however, the Government forces recaptured Birganj.⁵⁵

The focus of the rebellion now shifted to mid-western Nepal. Bhairahawa became the seat of the revolutionary leadership which called for the establishment of a revolutionary Government. On November 21, about 500 delegates assembled at Bhairahawa and elected K.I. Singh as the military Governor of Western Nepal. K.P. Shrivastava was appointed Prime Minister and Colonel Kharga Bahadur Singh Gurung as the Commander-in-Chief. The election of ^{the} new Government was held in the presence of Shibbanlal Saksena. While returning from Bhairahawa to Nautanawa, Saksena was hit by a bullet of the Ranas' soldiers. Krishnadas Bhatta, one of his colleagues, became a martyr.⁵⁶

On November 23, the rebels captured the Bhairahawa post and jail. The next day the Rana army attacked and injured Kharga Bahadur Singh Gurung and four of his soldiers. Dal Bahadur became a martyr. Yet the rebellion spread out all over the Western Nepal and continued till the middle of January 1951.

55. Shrivastav, Ibid., 153.

56. Ibid.

The Role of the Government of India

The position of the Government of India was unenviable. In the first place, it carried the legacy of the British empire which made it a suspect as cherishing a design to annex Nepal. In the second place, the nationalist and the socialist zeal about the liberation of Nepal hammered on virtually the same thing. Thirdly, the annexation of Hyderabad through police action was the immediate precedent confirming such suspicions. Fourthly, the asylum granted to the Nepal King on November 6, 1950, strengthened the suspicions about the King, the Nepali Congress, the Indian-Socialists-Nationalists and the Government of India working in close liaison.⁵⁷ India was afraid of adverse international opinion particularly in the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference scheduled in January 1951. On November 12, the Government of India informed the British High Commissioner at Delhi that it was not aware of the presence of rebellious activities inside India. On the other hand, it would simply be inhuman to ignore the plight of the Nepalese King. Therefore it adopted a middle path.

The Government of India's most immediate concern was to ensure the safety of the legitimate ruler of Nepal, King

57. Shaha, op.cit., p.213.

Tribhuvan. It was afraid of Rana army violating the diplomatic immunity of the Indian Embassy of Kathmandu and arresting or harming the King. The Government of India decided to shift the King and his family to India. The permission to do so was obtained from the Ranas only after giving them an assurance that the King would not play politics from the Indian soil.

Secondly, while extending indirect support to the Nepali Congress on the Indian soil, the Government of India had to look after the interest of the Nepal Government. Thus on November 12, the Government of India got Colonel Som Shumsher Rana, the Barahakim of Biratnagar, released from the captivity of the Nepali Congress. On November 13, it intercepted a plane carrying Nepalese leaders with a quantity of arms and 3.5 millions of Rupees (taken from Birganj treasury) and subsequently returned the money to the Nepalese Government. Thirdly, by November 16, the Government of India issued strict orders to the State Government of West Bengal, Bihar and U.P. not to allow armed men going across the border.⁵⁸ For one month the restrictions were kept. But on December 20, they were relaxed in view of the Anglo American reluctance to stand by Tribhuvan. An aircraft carrying rifles and ammunition supplied by Shaikh

58. Shaha, op.cit., p.214.

Abdullah of Kashmir, was allowed to be unloaded. (This second supply would have been impossible without the Government of India's connivance).⁵⁹

The Government of India had no intention to recognize Prince Gyanendra as a King. For a long time Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was pressurised by the Nepalese Ambassador as well as the British Ambassador to avoid making an announcement of its intention of not recognizing Prince Gyanendra. It was only on November 26, that Nehru, at a meeting at Jamshedpur, publicly declined to recognise Gyanendra.⁶⁰ The continuous pressure on Nehru from the Government of Nepal did not produce any effect. On December 8, 1950, the Government of India handed over a set of proposals for constitutional reforms to the Rana Government.⁶¹ The Government of Nepal kept this memorandum in the dark till December 19, 1950.⁶²

The Ranas had set up Gyanendra as the prince and were planning to set up a Regency Council through the Constitution. That was planned to be passed in the

59. Shaha, op.cit., p.237.

60. Shah, op.cit., p.223.

61. Gupta, op.cit., p.46.

62. Ibid, Shah, op.cit., p.230.

Parliament convened on 24 December. Under the pressure of the Government of India Mohan Shumsher dropped the idea of Regency Council from the Constitutional proposal. Negotiation with the Government of India was resumed on December 25. By January 2, 1951, the Nepalese negotiators accepted the King's return subject to approval of the Parliament. (Constitute Assembly) But the approval was a foregone conclusion.⁶³ On January 8, 1951 Mohan Shumsher announced the acceptance^{of} the Government of India's demand and the revocation of the decision of the Nepalese Parliament on November 7th, 1950 about the installation of Gyanendra. Mohan Shumsher gave two reasons for the change of stance:-⁶⁴

- (i) the refusal of the Government of India to recognise Gyanendra and
- (ii) increasing lawlessness within Nepal.

Return of the King

Padma Shumsher requested the King to return to Nepal and promised the following steps:-

- (i) election to a Constituent Assembly to be held on the
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63. Shaha, op.cit., p.233.

64. Ibid., p.234.

basis of universal suffrage.

- (ii) formation of an interim cabinet with equal representation of the Ranas and the common people and
- (iii) a general amnesty for political prisoners.

On January 10, 1951 the King made a public statement welcoming the Maharaja's proclamation and promising to do his part "with the full sense of duty and having the good of my people as my only concern".⁶⁵ These developments were probably unexpected by the Nepalese fighters. M.P. Koirala's initial reaction was one of *disillusionment* while D.R. Regmi, leader of the still surviving faction of Nepal Rashtriya Congress, who had given a general support to Koirala without taking active part in the fight, in a statement from Calcutta on January 9, 1951, criticised the excesses of the "freedom fighters" and welcomed Mohan Shumsher's offer to set up a Constituent Assembly. Finally, on January 16, 1951, M.P. Koirala made the following statement:-

After consultation with the Government of India about the situation arising out of the declaration of the Prime Minister of Nepal and the statement thereupon by His

65. Quoted in Shaha, op.cit., p.235.

Majesty, the King of Nepal, and in response to the appeal made by the Prime Minister of Nepal "we have decided that in order to create suitable conditions for negotiations there should be a cessation of all operations at once. We, therefore, direct all workers to stop hostilities of every kind and we appeal to every one in Nepal to assist in the restoration of peace. We are grateful to the Government of India for all that they have done in the cause of reforms and progress of Nepal. We accept the advice given by the Prime Minister of India at this juncture and we fully trust that the problem of Nepal will soon be solved satisfactory".⁶⁶

The above statement completely exposed the support of the Government of India to the Nepali Congress and yet the Government of India would not leave the field to the Nepali Congress fighters alone. It wanted the King to take command of the situation and establish a democratic set up through the compromise between the Ranas and the Nepali Congress. Pandit Nehru appealed to the Nepali Congress fighters to lay down arms and work for peace and stability in the country. As late as January 14, 1951, B.P. Koirala and Subarna Shumsher reached Delhi and unsuccessfully pleaded with ^{the} Government of

66. Quoted in Shaha, op.cit., p.236.

India against the settlement.⁶⁷

K.I. Singh went on with his armed struggle in the Western part of Nepal. This called for a joint military operation of the Governments of India and Nepal in Western Tarai even after King Tribhuvan's return to Nepal and establishment of an interim Government.⁶⁸

C.P.N. and the Revolution

Another group that opposed the Delhi Settlement was the Communist Party of Nepal.⁶⁹ This Party had been formed in 1949 through a number of organisational meetings from April to September. Its founders like Puspallal, Monmohan Adhikari and Tulsilal Amatya had been active participants in the democratic movement in Nepal. But as the Communist Party of Nepal they could not take part in the struggle because the Party had not been formed before 1949. The Communist Party of India, on the other hand, was banned in West Bengal in 1948. As much of the Communist activity in eastern India

67. Shaha, op.cit., p.238.

68. Ibid. Also Srivastava, op.cit. p-163.
The Delhi Settlement acknowledged Tribhuvan as the King. There was a decision to have an elected Constituent Assembly for drawing up a constitution of Nepal and interim cabinet of 10 members, consisting equally of the representatives of the Ranas and the people would function meanwhile.

69. Shaha, op.cit., p.239.

was controlled from Calcutta, many Bengal Communists had to go underground after the ban. The Communist activity on the Nepal border was thus scattered and lacked co-ordination.⁷⁰

Yet Monmohan Adhikari went to jail for two and half years in March 1947 in connection with the Biratnagar jute mill strike. That strike showed a co-operation between the communists, the Congress Socialists and the Nepali National Congress.

Puspalal and Tulshilal Amatya⁷¹ had gone to jail because of their participation in the 1947 Satyagraha. Puspalal was connected with Nepali National Congress and Amatya with Praja Panchayat movement.

The opposition of the Communist Party of Nepal to the Delhi Settlement seemed to follow from a number of factors. Anirudha Gupta points out the impact of the adventurist policy of the Communist Party of India⁷² which followed from the adventurism of the Cominform that saw the transfer of power in India as a deal between imperialism and the local bourgeoisie.

70. Personal communication from Indradeep Sinha, and Bhogendra Jha, Senior Communist Leader of Bihar.

71. Biodata of Tulsilal Amatya personally communicated.

72. Gupta, Anirudha, op.cit., p.200.

There was a second factor. The emergence of China as a communist country on the northern border of Nepal and India inspired a certain kind of adventurism that was furthered by the adoption of the "China line" by the Indian Communist movement. This was reflected in the following draft statement of the Polit bureau, Communist Party of India:-

'It might be possible that our comrades in Nepal, where there is only a small and young party unit, may be able to successfully utilise the present national upsurge and the struggle that is going on there, boldly advocate this form of struggle and adopt it as and when the conditions are mature. The Nepali people, militant by tradition, inspired by the victories of the liberation army of China on their border, might in a short time take to this guerilla form of struggle before some other terrorists in India, where the Party and people's movement are stronger, will be able to take up this form of struggle due to several reasons.⁷³

The C.P.I. Strategy

Before going into the assessment of the role of the

73. CPI Polit Bureau Draft Policy Statement of November, 1950, in M.B. Rao (ed.), History of the Communist Party of India, vol. VII, 1948-1950.

Communist Party of Nepal, therefore, it would be advisable to assess the general strategy of the Communist Party of Nepal since the departure of the British. The C.P.I. had collaborated with the C.S.P. until 1940. In fact, it led the left consolidation group that had gathered around Subhas Chandra Bose in the wake of the Bose - Sitaramayya contest over the Congress presidency. When, however, Bose decided to quit Congress at the Ramgarh Conference, the CSP and the CPI refused to join a block that would challenge the leadership of the Congress. Having passed through the trauma of World War II the CPI was expelled from Congress in 1945. The differences with Congress began to grow. But, in August 1947, it welcomed Independence.

Yet in February-March 1948, at the Second Congress at Calcutta, the CPI decided that India was in fact not quite independent, that British imperialism had transferred power to the Indian bourgeoisie, its collaborator, in order to maintain its exploitative grip over the Indian economy. This led to an adventurist policy of ' strikes, agrarian struggles, general strikes, political strikes, rising to higher forms, ending in insurrection and capture of power - leading to socialism'.⁷⁴ When this line proved unproductive,

74. 'Introduction' in M.B.Rao (ed.), Documents of the History of the Communist Party, vol. VII, 1948-1950, p.X.

the Central Committee of the party elected in June 1950 adopted the Chinese path of agrarian revolution as demonstrated in Telangana".⁷⁵

As far as the Nepalese democratic movement was concerned, however, full credit must be given to the Indian Communists in showing interest even before Jaya Prakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia stepped in. Sajjad Zaheer, a Communist, working in the CSP as well as the AICC secretariat at Allahabad, brought out the first open accusation of the Ranashahi in Nepal (in Janata, 1939). In 1940 four communists were detected trying to infiltrate into Nepal. During the subsequent period, inspite of the growing CPI-CSP rift their support to the Nepalese democratic movement continued. The Nepalese democrats, on their part, sought and obtained support from the CPI and the CSP as well as from the Congress radicals like Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Shibbanlal Saksena. The Nepalese communists were in the democratic movement too.⁷⁶

The CPI helped the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal. In the early years of the CPN the CPI guided its political line as is revealed by the correspondence between

75. Ibid., p.XI.

76. According to Indradeep Sinha the CPI helped Napalese democrats in holding secret meetings on the Bihar border.

the Nepalese communists and the CPI leaders. The two Indian personalities that appear in this correspondence quite frequently are Biresh Mishra, a Bengali-speaking communist of Assam and a kind of 'frontier man' in the CPI with wide experience in the north-east Indian hills, and Nikhil Chakraborty, in charge of international contacts of the underground party.⁷⁷

The CPN Strategy

As a newly formed party, the Communist Party of Nepal started off by publishing translations of three Marxist books in Nepali.

- (i) The Communist Manifesto.
- (ii) Society and Individual^{vid} in Soviet and
- (iii) People's Democratic Dictatorship in China.⁷⁸

The Party also published "Pachic Prachar Patra". Later the paper was renamed as Pacthik. It was a monthly paper.⁷⁹

The Communist Party of Nepal set up different frontal

77. The correspondence presents only pseudonyms which have been verified with the help of Abani Lahiri.

78. Report dated 29.5.50 (Communist Party of Nepal's report).

79. Ibid.

organisations like Nepal Progressive Study Circle, All Nepal Peace Committee and Nepal Kalyan Karini Samitee.⁸⁰

Nepal Progressive Study Circle:

The N.P.S.C. was formed in Calcutta with a few members. But gradually the membership of the circle grew faster. The circle established its centre in different parts of Nepal. Firstly, it established one branch at Palpa, two centres at Biratnagar Town and one at Biratnagar Mazdoor area. This young Party of Nepal had decided to open one centre at Darjeeling because some progressive students of Darjeeling District were interested to join and open its branch there.⁸¹

Kalyan Karini Samitee:

Darbhanga district of Bihar gave good response to the formation of the Kalyan Karini Samitee whose aim was to give relief only.⁸²

All Nepal Peace Committee:

The A.N.P.C. was formed in Calcutta by the month of July 1950. The committee published a manifesto asking the

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

democratic and peace loving people of Nepal to join the committee.⁸³ About two thousand manifestos were circulated among the people. Nepal Pukar the journal of Nepal Democratic Congress also published the manifesto and it was widely appreciated and responded to by the people.

The Party started slowly building its organisation within Nepal according to the manual, "Principles of Party Organisation". It chose Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Birganj, Pulpa and Nepalganj for initial work. But it could send only a few members to Kathmandu (capital) and to Biratnagar (industrial town) at first.⁸⁴ Subsequently, a few communists reached Pulpa and Nepalganj and Birganj as well as Kathmandu.⁸⁵

According to a secret report of Puspapal (Pseudonym is Rahaman) dated 29.5.50. "The joint conference of Nepali National Congress and Nepal Democratic Congress held in Calcutta in April last, 1950 gave us a good opportunity to contact kisans of different parts of Nepal who had come to the Conference.... Our comrades went into the delegates' camp and explained to them our aims and objectives and exposed

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

the treachery of their leaders. There were also some Congress honest work^{er}s who had studied Maxism and read our publications. They were eager to keep contact with us". They decided to form a Mazdoor Kisan Sangh after some months.⁸⁶

The dilemma of the communist movement arose here. In the words of Pushpalal "at first we adopted the policy of Left Sectarianism towards other organisations. Due to this policy we could not win over those honest Congress workers who were in favour of our party and Marxism".⁸⁷

Bhogendra Jha denies that the Communists had no role in the 1950 revolution. He claims that, though most of the members of the party were underground at that time, but those who were not underground, like the Bihar and U.P. communists, supported and participated in the armed struggle hand in hand with the Nepali Congress.⁸⁸

It appears, however, that even by the end of 1950, the C.P.N. was not able to overcome the Left Sectarianism which the Communist Party of India was still suffering from. The

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.

88. Personal communication from Bhogendra Jha on 11.5.95.

manifesto of the Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh (ANKS), that was drafted in October, 1950, saw Indian Capital as the "junior partners" of Anglo-American Capitalism.

"So far their greedy eyes were fixed on the market alone of our country, now they have turned to our land too. So far by starting factories in Biratnagar etc., they took away to their country the money earned by the hard labour of our brothers, now according to recent Indo-Nepal treaty they will be able to exploit us becoming the master of our land also.

"This feudal autocracy the Government of Nepal are selling our country to foreign brigands and on the other hand increasing their fleecing of the people day by day".⁸⁹

The strength and the weakness of the Communist Party of Nepal was a legacy of the communist movement in India. The early growth of Communism in Nepal as well as in India, was hand in hand with the nationalist - democratic movement. After the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal the Left Sectariaism of the CPI rift the CPN. But unlike the C.P.I. which lost heavily due to its secterianism, the C.P.N. seems to have gained. For the

89. Manifesto of the Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh - draft forwarded by Rahman (Puspa Lal) to Madhavda (Biresh Misra) on 24.10.50.

C.P.N. was successful in combining its class-hatred for the Indian Capitalists with the patriotism of the Nepalese people, while the C.P.I. split in 1964 essentially on the question the "National Bourgeoisie". Nepal did not have the "National bourgeoisic". Her "enemies" could easily be located in a foreign capitalist class. The Nepal Communist Party, of course, suffered split due to mainly factional reasons. But in ^{the} 1990's they were able to unite and, when they united, they captured power in the general election. It is not within the scope of the study to examine the zig zag development of the Nepali Political Parties after the 1950-1951 revolution.