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WHITHER NEPAL

The recent happenings in Nepal have made even indifferent readers of newspapers sit up and rub their eyes in amazement. For some months past, reports have poured into India of serious unrest in different parts of Nepal. It seems as if there is no government in large areas of this India's border state. Naturally it is not possible to ignore what happens in a state which, apart from being of some importance as a border state, is strategically also of some significance. The urges which clamour for expression in Nepal must not be disregarded and simplified as quarrel between Koirala brothers. Just as what appears as ideological conflict is often the expression of lust for power among different groups in the body politic of a country, it also happens that real problems are sometimes lost sight of and the forces of history are confused with personal rivalries and squables. In Nepal, it is the forces of democracy and freedom which are in deadly combat with those of reaction, and even though lust for power and aggrandisement may be playing its part, the recent developments in Nepal must be viewed in the larger background of this clash of forces. The Ranas who, only a couple of years ago, were in the saddle may have vanished as a serious force to be reckoned with, but the ideology which they represented is not yet defeated. Democracy is experiencing its birthpangs, and no wonder if it

goes under or is at least crippled for many years to come. To revivify it, not only the indigenous elements must combine and assert, but India, Nepal's great and powerful neighbour, must sympathetically understand the grave issues before the people and lend Nepal her helping hand. If India, owing to lack of adequate and proper information, is not able to have a clear and correct grasp of the problems of transition which Nepal is faced with, the infant democracy in that country may be killed, and the lamp of freedom which only recently began to dispel the enveloping gloom will be put out. It is therefore necessary that a correct picture of the convulsions which are stirring Nepal to-day is before the Indian people.

When the Nepali Congress succeeded in putting an end to the Rana-Congress coalition, and set up a purely people's government of the Congress, hope revived in everyone's breast that Nepal would get the necessary relief from the oppressive burdens of the past. Unfortunately, much to the disappointment of the Nepalese people no progress was noticeable. There were two distinct pulls in the government of the day. Although the Ranas had ceased to exist as a group in the ministry, the interests they represented received valiant support from one of the groups in the Nepali Congress ministry itself. The vested interests of the landlords and the insignificant group of industrialists got from Sri M. P. Koirala and his group great support, and the legitimate grievances of the peasants and workers and others were not at all attended to. Whatever beneficial legislation had been enacted during coalition days at the instance of the Nepali Congress wing in the government, was kept in cold storage, and some of it was even repealed. The progressive measures which the Ranas, as a group in the government, feared to resist, this reactionary ele-

ment in the Nepali Congress government unblushingly and unhesitatingly fought and almost defeated primarily on account of the support of the Prime-Minister. The inevitable consequence of bad and unprogressive administration was the lowering of the reputation of the Nepali Congress. This led the Nepali Congress Working Committee to suggest a reconstitution of the ministry in July 1952. The Prime Minister agreed to it in the beginning, but at a later stage, declined to agree to the reconstitution of the ministry by the Working Committee and even refused to attend its meeting in spite of repeated requests to do so to place his point of view and to suggest changes desired by him in the personnel given by the Working Committee. The Prime Minister, looking back, could never agree to the diminution of his authority as it meant withdrawing of support from the vested interests which he had seriously encouraged. The Working Committee took disciplinary action against the Prime Minister and some other ministers. The Maha Samiti (the equivalent of the AICC of the Indian National Congress) endorsed the decision of the Working Committee by an overwhelming majority. But the Prime Minister and his group did not abide by the verdict of the Maha Samity which they had tried to influence with the help of the entire resources of the Counsellors' regime.

It is true that subsequently Sri M. P. Koirala, many a time, came very near to some settlement with the Nepali Congress High Command at Calcutta and elsewhere, but some people from behind the scene always pulled the wire and Matrika Babu fell into their trap. These wire-pullers represented the vested interests in the country. The Maha Samity meeting convinced the world that the Nepali Congress was solidly behind the Working Committee. In retrospect, it

appears certain that if Shri Matrika Prasad's point of view had received even slightly greater support than the decision of the Working Committee did, he would have been called upon to form a ministry immediately. But the powers that be were not prepared to instal the Congress in power howsoever united and strong it might be, if the progressive element in it controlled the organisation. So the Nepali Congress had to go into wilderness for having tried to put its house in order. To the great misfortune of the country, the King placed himself alongside of the forces of reaction and not freedom and progress with which he ~~was~~ so gloriously identified earlier. The Counsellors' regime was set up, and when the situation deteriorated considerably in the absence of a popular ministry there was a universal demand for ending the regime of the Counsellors. The King's popularity was also very much on the wane, and so it was necessary to have a ministry which could be responsible for everything that happened in the country instead of the King. But the Nepali Congress, in spite of its rising prestige and strength, could not be entrusted with the responsibility of the government unless it could be possible to put Matrika Babu in power again. To call upon the Gorkha Parishad to form a ministry would have exposed the powers that be a little too much; and then the Gorkha Parishad, apart from being a weak organisation as compared with the Congress, was not very dependable either. So it was suggested that if the Congress only composed its differences with Sri M. P. Koirala, a popular ministry could be formed. Not much emphasis was placed on making up with other small groups that had broken from the Congress, which fact has to be noted to understand how the powers that be were keen only on having Sri M. P. Koirala again in the saddle. Meanwhile, the situation in Nepal rapidly deteriorated.

rated necessitating the dismissal of the Counsellors from the government. But the question remained as to who would replace them, How could Matrika Babu be called upon to form a government as long as he led only a splinter group in the Congress ?

The Nepali Congress spared no effort to rescue M. P. Koirala from the snare of the reactionary elements. One of the resolutions passed at the Maha Samity meeting in September 1952, immediately after the endorsement by it of the action taken by the Working Committee, was to the effect that M. P. Koirala would be welcome in the Congressfold as soon as the Congress President was satisfied on the score of his loyalty to the organisation. The door was kept purposely open as the Congress felt that M. P. Koirala could be of use in the organisation once he freed himself from the influence of the vested interests. But the vested interests needed a leader and they would not let him leave them. The Congress President made the first move and sent a common friend to Matrika Babu. Matrika Babu appreciated the move of the President but he got it conveyed to him that since tempers were very high at the moment suitable steps might be taken later. But he gave no indication later of any desire on his part for entering the Nepali Congress as one of its important leaders. It was only in January, 1953 that through the instrumentality of a well wisher of Nepal, Sri Jaya Prakash Narayan, a fresh move was made for rapproachment. The Nepali Congress President, Sri B. P. Koirala, was in Calcutta on his way to Rangoon to attend the Asian Socialist Conference. Sri M. P. Koirala was also in Calcutta at the time. The two brothers met and decided to continue their negotiations on B. P. Koirala's return from Rangoon. Again, Sri Jaya Prakash Narayan met the Koirala

brothers together in Calcutta on his way back from Rangoon and impressed upon them the desirability of composing their differences. Sri Subarna Shumshere met Matrika Babu more than once, and so did B. P. Koirala. And a solution was reached on a certain basis. Letters were drafted as agreed upon, but when B. P. Koirala went to Matrika Babu with the letters, the latter expressed his inability to put his signature without consulting his colleagues. M. P. Koirala however did not care to inform the Congress President of his decision nor did he express any desire to meet him again. In fact he gave out his rejection of the peace move of the Congress President in a press statement wherein he condemned the Nepali Congress High Command in a most unbecoming language. But the Nepali Congress did not give up its efforts to get Matrika Babu back in the Congress fold. His demand that he should have a large number of seats in the Working Committee was conceded; five or even six seats were to be given to his group, although in the old Working Committee he had only two adherents. He insisted upon an assurance that he would be the Prime-Minister again. Even this demand was conceded by the Congress High Command, but his insistence that the Working Committee of the Congress should adopt a resolution to this effect before he would rejoin the Congress and dissolve his Ad Hoc Committee was considered to be unreasonable and injurious to the prestige of the organisation. M. P. Koirala, thereupon, called a meeting of his Ad Hoc Committee of Congressmen and decided to hold a conference of this body with a view to forming a new party. But before their conference met at Birgunj in May '53, efforts were made again by some prominent Congressmen to effect a unity. The Nepali Congress Working Committee even adopted a resolution in April, '53, that the Congress would welcome all those Con-

gressmen against whom disciplinary action had been taken back into its fold and would not resort to any policy of victimisation or vindictiveness in regard to them. It assured Sri M. P. Koirala that if he came back he would be treated with all the honour he deserved. But Matrika Babu was not in a mood to listen to any sensible proposal put forward by the Nepali Congress. When at Birgunj the proposed conference of his Ad Hoc Committee was held in May this year, he told people who approached him with a request that he must not form another party and come to an honourable compromise with the Congress High Command, that times had changed and that there could be a compromise only when the Congress President and the Working Committee resigned and he was made the Congress President. These terms made it clear that he did not care for compromise and was determined to form a new party. And the new party called the Nepal National Democratic Party was born out of the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee Conference at Birgunj. The Nepali Congress which had freed the country from the Rana yoke and given hope to the people was thus betrayed by M. P. Koirala who had gained not a little personally also by his association with this national organisation.

Sri M. P. Koirala was advised, even as a small group in the Nepali Congress to seek the co-operation of other political parties which did not count for much, but which might, to some extent, make it easier for him to claim the right to form a ministry. Tanka Prasad, Dilli Raman Regmi, Kedarman and others were approached by M.P. Koirala for their co-operation, and it was given out with appropriate fanfare that a united front of these odd groups had been formed. It may be mentioned that some of these groups kept on oscillating between the Nepali Congress

and Sri M. P. Koirala according as they felt the one or the other had a greater chance of forming a ministry. However, in the course of a few weeks only the united front broke down. As mentioned earlier, Sri M. P. Koirala then organised a conference of his group at Birgunj in May and a new party called the Nepali National Democratic Party was brought into being there. Subsequent developments bear out the belief that the vested interests, which strove to prevent the Nepali Congress from being called upon to form government were responsible for the organisation of this new party which would put an end to all moves for composing the differences between the Nepali Congress and Sri M. P. Koirala's group in it. Conceivably, it was also prearranged that as soon as possible Sri M. P. Koirala, as President of the new party, would be entrusted with the task of forming a ministry in co-operation with some other parties. The Nepali Congress was, of course, to be excluded from the government as the course of negotiations in May and June of this year clearly indicates. But since Tanka Prasad and Dilli Raman Regmi would not co-operate, it became a little difficult to invite Sri M. P. Koirala, the leader of a splinter group in the Nepali Congress recently baptised as a political party, to form a government. At one time, all pretence of having a good look about the business was given up, and Sri M. P. Koirala was about to form government in May of this year. It is said all arrangements had been made for swearing in of a ministry with M. P. Koirala as Prime Minister even if nobody else co-operated. But some behind-the-scene developments occurred and, at the last moment, the idea was dropped. But this was a serious setback for the vested interests, and efforts were made for bringing in the Nepali Congress and others to enable M. P. Koirala to form a ministry. It came to be increasingly realised that without the Nepali Congress in the ministry, no government had any

chance of real success. The Nepali Congress was fed up completely with the intrigue politics of Kathmandu, and had adopted the attitude that it would not have anything to do with a ministry unless it was the Nepali Congress that was called upon to form it, as the most important political party in the country. But the King misguided by the vested interests and the reactionary elements in the country, was totally prejudiced against the Nepali Congress and was ^{not prepared to} the responsibility of forming a ministry. What actually happened was that M.P. Koirala was asked by the king to explore the possibilities of forming government. This development was somewhat unexpected as it was difficult to believe that the process of democratic development which had started so well in Nepal would be reversed in this manner. The Nepali Congress was approached again by Sri M.P. Koirala armed with his mandate. Although some very important men in the Congress were against having any truck with Sri M.P.'s efforts to form a ministry, it was also felt that considering the awful deterioration in the country's situation and with a view to ensuring general election in 1954, the Nepali Congress could co-operate provided it was a coalition government with effective parity for the Nepali Congress in it to implement a minimum agreed programme. No agreement, however, could be arrived at with M.P. But to the amazement of the people of Nepal, Sri M P. Koirala's ministry was sworn in on the 15th of June this year even though M.P. had failed completely to get the co-operation of any other party or individual of repute. A new situation had arisen, and the Nepali Congress condemned the formation of the government in unmistakable terms by its resolution passed at a meeting of the Working Committee and District representatives in the third week of June. Reaction triumphed again, and the interests which the Counsellors' regime stood for and gave its

support to found in Sri M. P. Koirala's ministry even abler support. In actual fact this support meant little inside Nepal, but from the point of view of obtaining India's sympathy and the approval of the outside world, the vested interests and the reactionary elements scored a success. How long this success would endure and to what extent reaction would derive sustenance from this shortlived victory nobody can say.

After the ministry was formed, fresh efforts were made to rope in the Congress. The Congress leaders stated categorically that they had gone too far already in their anxiety to save the country from catastrophe and unless their terms were accepted, they were not at all prepared to join the government. On the 26th of June '53, Sri M.P. Koirala saw the Nepali Congress President, and agreed to the terms of the Nepali Congress. The King whom Sri B. P. Koirala as also Sri S. P. Upadhaya saw expressed his satisfaction over this agreement and fully approved of it. Sri M. P. Koirala, a day or two later, wrote to B.P. in reply to a letter from him saying that he had to secure the acceptance of the Nepali Congress terms from his Working Committee. Sri B. P. Koirala saw the King again to acquaint him with this exchange of letters and the slight hint he saw in M.P. Koirala's letters that there might be some difficulty also. The King told Sri B. P. Koirala that the Prime Minister had met him the same day and conveyed to him that there was practically no difficulty and now all that he had to do was to convince some of his colleagues, which would soon be done. Sri B. P. Koirala left Kathmandu for Calcutta on the 29th of June to consult his doctor about his health. Meanwhile the vested interests and the reactionary elements got busy and Sri M. P. Koirala was obviously pressed to back out of the agreement he

had reached with the Nepali Congress. It was perhaps felt that with the Nepali Congress in the government on its terms, the ministry might come in the way of the vested interest having everything their own way. For full two weeks, Sri M. P. Koirala kept completely silent even though newspapers gave out B. P.'s press interview that an agreement had been reached. Sri M. P. Koirala did not know if it was possible for him to back out, and so he waited. But the vested interests got alarmed and coerced Sri M. P. Koirala into denying that there was any agreement. Sri M. P. Koirala not only went back on his plighted word, but said extremely offensive things at Biratnagar on the occasion of his party meeting to shut the door altogether. He repeats *ad nauseum* that the Nepali Congress would be welcome to join the government but does everything possible to see that it (Nepali Congress) does not do so.

With the resources of the government at their disposal, M. P. Koirala and his Nepali National Democratic Party have launched a campaign of vilification against the Nepali Congress, Nepal's premier political organisation. The Nepali Congress is painted as being anti-King and anti-India. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Congress, in its manifesto and constitution, has expressly laid down that it believes in constitutional monarchy. Nepal is a backward country and monarchy acts as a cementing force. What the Congress objects to is the lowering of the position of the monarch which is inevitable if the King is not impartial and also appears to be so. Who does not know in Nepal and partly in India and elsewhere also that the King is biased against Nepali Congress and is favouring M. P. Koirala no matter how people reacted to it. Even in the transition stage before the general election, the

people of Nepal must feel that the King is developing as a constitutional King and is not influenced by his personal prejudices. It is only then that they will retain their much needed faith in the institution of kingship. M. P. Koirala and his colleagues, in their desire to keep themselves in power, do not tender correct advice to the King and constantly poison his ears against the Nepali Congress. It is M. P. Koirala backed by vested interests who is primarily responsible for whatever loss of faith may have occurred in the institution of Kingship. Whoever is interested in the progress of the country must rise above the temptation of using the King for his personal ends and do nothing that may estrange the King from the people. The Nepali Congress believes in constitutional monarchy, and this is why it criticises the King when he acts on the basis of his personal likes and dislikes disregarding the conditions obtaining in the country. The prestige of the King must not diminish.

It is fantastic to suggest that the Nepali Congress is anti-India. In fact there is no political party in Nepal desirous of friendly relations with India than the Nepali Congress. If the Congress demanded the withdrawal of the Indian advisers and the Indian Military Mission from Nepal, it was mainly with a view to avoiding deterioration in the friendly relations between the peoples of the two countries. Just as M. P. Koirala and his associates endeavoured to widen the gulf between the King and the Nepali Congress and also succeeded in their sinister efforts to a large extent, the Indian officers in Kathmandu have, to some extent at least, brought about misunderstanding between the Nepali Congress and India. These officers do not seem to be interested at all in the development of Nepal on proper lines; they want only that their interests should be safeguarded and they should be the virtual

rulers in Nepal. The Nepali Congress is opposed to their machinations and resists their moves. The Nepali Congress leaders found in the Indian advisers an unIndian outlook which was quite unlike that of the Indian leaders. In exasperation at being foiled in their efforts to hoodwink the people of Nepal these people give the Nepali Congress a bad name in India. They send mischievous and false reports to India about the activities and strength of the Nepali Congress in order to secure India's support for what they do in Nepal. Their continued presence in Nepal has annoyed the Civil service so much that no work is done in the Secretariat at Kathmandu. Most of them conduct themselves in an overbearing fashion and everyone's pride is hurt. What these officers do is perfectly understandable. Most of them are steeped in the old traditions of India, before freedom was attained. In India, they are kept in check because the democratic forces have asserted themselves and the leaders of the people are at the helm of affairs. But in Nepal the situation is a little different. Democratic traditions have just started getting built up, and naturally India's advice is heeded and given a great deal of importance. The Nepali Congress being the most popular political party on account of its struggle against autocratic rule and its success against it, has the strength and imagination of taking the country on the road to progress and prosperity. And as long as the Congress is able to have its way, it cannot allow democracy to be submerged and all kinds of expensive experiments to be foisted on Nepal by these officers. A poor country like Nepal can ill afford to imitate the pattern of administration that India has. These officers, therefore, try to frustrate the Nepali Congress thinking it to be the main stumbling block in the fulfilment of their schemes. But how can this be done unless it is established in India

that the Congress is not what it used to be before ? So efforts are made to weaken it in Nepal and also its hold on the imagination of the Indian people. Some of the Indian press correspondents are made use of for confirming the reports these officers might be sending to Delhi. All this is bound to cause ill-will and bitterness. And it is also to avoid this that the Nepali Congress demanded their withdrawal. It is a mistake to think that Nepali Congress is opposed to the good advice of the Indian advisers as will be evident from the value it attached to the advice of some of the Indian advisers, such as Sri Nagesh and Sri Brij Narayan. It is largely in this background that the Nepali Congress also expressed itself in favour of the withdrawal of the Indian Military Mission. There is no doubt that the Military Mission invited at the instance of the Nepali Congress itself, has done a good job in the matter of re-organising the army. But a general impression came to prevail that the Mission was somehow not conducting itself properly and dissatisfaction grew. It is largely because of a general feeling of discontent against the Indian advisers that the Indian Military Mission also came to be disliked. The Nepali Congress is not and cannot be opposed to advisers from India or the Indian Military Mission provided this atmosphere of distrust is eliminated. This will require the disappearance of the vested interests, which these advisers have created for themselves in the country. Nobody in Nepal likes them to-day, and the volume of resentment that exists against them is indeed very great. The Nepali Congress was unable to close its eyes to this estrangement between India and Nepal and since it was felt that these Indian advisers are, to a large extent, responsible for it, it demanded their withdrawal.

It is Nepal's misfortune that India does not have a correct appreciation of the role of the

Nepali Congress and these Indian advisers in Nepal. It is the Nepali Congress which is India's friend; these Indian advisers, for their own selfish interests, are ruining Nepal and damaging the reputation of India in Nepal. This must stop forthwith. But how can this happen unless India knows the truth about the situation in Nepal? It may be relevant to point out that there is no organization in Nepal other than the Nepali Congress whose leaders took part in the freedom movement of India and invited sufferings for themselves. The Congress President, B. P. Koirala, was associated intimately with India's struggle against British Imperialism, he courted imprisonment twice in India. In 1942, when the Indian National Congress started the historic Quit India revolution, Sri B. P. Koirala addressed a letter to the Prime Minister of Nepal advising him not only to prevent the use of the Nepalese government forces in India and elsewhere to bolster up British Imperialism, but also to move the British government in India not to use the Gorkha troops in India for suppressing the revolt of the Indian people. He approached a large number of Nepalese youngmen in India to get them to move in the matter of creating a suitable atmosphere among the Gorkha troops in India so that they might desist from suppressing the Indian revolution. Sri Surya Prasad Upadhyay, a member of the Nepali Congress High Command, Sri R. P. Upadhyay, General Secretary of the Congress, Sri Ganesh Man Singh, Sri Krishna Prasad Upadhyay, Sri Gopal Prasad Upadhyay, Sri R. P. Giri and a host of other important Nepali Congress members were arrested in India for being associated with the Indian movement for freedom against the British government. Now, it is this organisation led by these people, namely the Nepali Congress, which is branded as being anti-India? Is it not an irony of fate that this

should be so ? The Nepali Congress feels very unhappy and sore that anyone in India should imagine that it (Nepali Congress) is anti-India.

Nepal is extremely disturbed today. From many parts of the country reports come in of complete absence of any government. Extreme elements, both of the right and the left, are trying to exploit the situation to their advantage. Nepal is burning in the absence of a stable and strong government. The present government which for the purposes of internal peace and development is perhaps even worse than the Counsellors' regime it has replaced, is utterly incapable of handling the situation. But Sri M.P. Koirala, in his insatiable greed for power would have no one's co-operation except on his own terms, no matter what happens to Nepal. At the Maha Samity meeting of his party at Biratnagar on 12th July '53 and at his press conference at Patna on the 16th of July '53 he expressed himself like one intoxicated with power. How does he expect to secure anyone's co operation thus? Perhaps he does not care. The Ranas also did not care. Power blinds one to realities. But perhaps he thinks that by vilifying the Congress which raised him to his present heights he can obtain the support of the Indian people and others. He perhaps feels that so long as he can do this he will suppress any expression of discontent with which Nepal is seething to day. He will soon realise how wrong and unwise he has been in appraising the situation in the country. Nepal is awake and it cannot be held up long on its journey by the forces of reaction, and soon democracy will be on the march in this hapless country.

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