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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF RED CROSS (ICRC) VISITS BHUTAN

The Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) welcomes the just concluded visit to Bhutan by a delegation of the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC). The purpose of the ten-day visit was to study the condition of the prisons and prisoners in the country. On accepting the request of the Red Cross to visit the country, the Royal Government had substantially improved the conditions of official prisons in the country. However, the practice of unlawful detention, ill-treatment, torture, keeping prisoners in undisclosed places is still rampant. Unchallenged masters in the art of deception, the royal government agencies have been trying to project a good image of the regime by allowing selected international humanitarian organizations to visit the country; the lucky few visitors are permitted access to limited information and provided carefully guided tours of places especially spruced up for the occasion.

The visit of ICRC delegation to the country was certainly a step in the right direction, but it is yet to be seen whether the government will match its words with deeds, or is only playing out yet another act in its repertoire designed to deceive the international community.

NOW THE TURN OF PEOPLE OF INDIAN ORIGIN

Bhote Oraon, 66 year old with his family of four arrived at Beldangi refugee camp in Jhapa on January 22, 1993. The Oraon family was accompanied by five other families comprising a total of thirty five persons from Hangay village, Sibsoo in Samchi district. "I was told to go back to India where my ancestors came from", says Oraon. "You cannot continue to live in Bhutan since you are of Indian origin", Oraon was told by local authorities who ordered the family to leave the country or else face the consequences. The same reason is cited by other tribal madhesia families for their eviction.

The indiscriminate eviction of people from the country shows that the regime is bent upon continuing its policy of "ethnic cleansing". The cold response from the Royal Government on the initiatives taken by His Majesty's Government of Nepal gives us little hope to believe that the present regime is interested in solving the refugee problem and the current crisis in the country.

"I have come to extend the solidarity and support of the Bhutanese people to the Government and people of India, at a time when India faces a very difficult situation", said the King on his arrival in New Delhi at the start of a four day state visit to India on January 4, 1993. Earlier The Times of India in its October 20, 1992 issue had reported that during the proposed visit of the King, the two leaders would discuss a wide range of internal and geo-political issues. Despite what has been said for the consumption of the media, the visit was intended to secure the much needed support of the Indian government to continue the current discriminatory policies in the country and the eviction of southern Bhutanese. At the end of the state visit, the King sounded very optimistic about Indian government support for the regime and its current policies. In sharp contrast to the usual "liberal tone" for media consumption, he said "how can I talk to non-nationals", when asked by reporters whether he is ready to discuss the present crisis in the country with dissidents.

SHAME ON US

Over the past eighteen months we Bhutanese refugees, especially the over seventy five thousand living in the official refugee camps in east Nepal, have been the recipients of hospitality, goodwill and assistance in untold measure. The overwhelming sympathy and generous aid of the international community has enabled us to survive, and their continuing expressions of concern over our welfare generates in us optimism for an eventual return to our homes. Sadly, faced with some repulsive truths in recent months we now begin to wonder - Do we truly deserve to be treated so kindly?

There have been some disturbing developments in the refugee camps lately with reports of indiscipline behavior and increasing rowdiness coming to light. That the impact of such disgraceful conduct has apparently extended even beyond the borders was confirmed when, this January, the Bhutanese national weekly 'Kuensel' reported a case of refugees from Beldangi camp caught after attacking and robbing households in Gopini in Chirang district, and covered another incident at Kalikhola in Gaylegphug district where three persons were killed and one person arrested by security forces. These reports come in the wake of an earlier incident last year

In trying to show his 'solidarity' in return for the goodwill of the Indian government, the regime has very hastily gone into water resource harnessing spree. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Sunkosh Multipurpose Project was signed between the two countries on January 4, 1993. Besides other benefits the project is expected to generate 1525 megawatts of power. Other hydro-power projects underway with the Government of India's co-operation are Chukha II with a capacity of 1,000 MW, Chukha III with a capacity of 800 MW, the 120 MW Bunakha Reservoir Scheme and the 60 MW Kurichu Project. In a politically sound environment, the country had till the early eighties, developed at a pace which the country could sustain. One of the main objectives of the Seventh Five Year Plan (1992-1997) being the promotion of sustainable development with emphasis on environmental protection. Are these manpower intensive projects, conceived in a rush, in keeping with the stated objective? Dependence on expatriates had been greatly reduced

when two persons from Pathri camp were arrested in Dagana. Although the Kuensel is hardly considered the harbinger of truth even among the half a million Bhutanese that still remain in the country, it is a matter of deep regret and shame that subsequent investigations in the camps have confirmed the truth in these stories. The despicable actions of these depraved people is all the more abhorrent since the targets of their nefarious activities were innocent villagers. That persons who themselves survive on the charity and kindness of other fellow human beings could prey on their own brethren seems hardly believable. Yet, as it happens, it is true.

The refugee community as a whole must seriously consider the implications of these revolting acts. On the one hand these isolated incidents falsely lend credence to government claims of innocence with regard to atrocities committed by the security forces and, more significantly, on the other, it calls to question our ability to live as human beings in normal society. Along with fundamental and inherent rights there are also fundamental and inherent obligations and responsibilities. No individual in society can freely exercise his rights if the attendant respect for the rights and privileges of others is absent. We clamor that our rights

during the sixth Five Year Plan that ended last year; national interests have clearly been sacrificed for the self-serving interests of monarchy.

While in New Delhi, in a sharp departure from normal diplomatic norms, the King went out of his way to blame the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh for the communal tensions in their respective countries after the Ayodhya incident and the consequent cancellation of the SAARC Summit. He was also critical regarding the usefulness and future of SAARC even as his own Foreign Minister deplored the frequent Summit cancellations and suggested the search for mechanisms which would prevent nations from derailing this vitally important forum.

In a bid to taint the current struggle for human rights and democratic reforms in the country, the King went beyond his borders looking for excuses. In particular, the Leftist Parties in India were blamed for supporting dissidents. The slip was to cost him dearly. Almost immediately on return from New Delhi,

on 22nd January, the King left Thimphu for Calcutta on a "private visit". Not surprisingly, the private visit was covered in great detail by the government mouthpiece Kuensel which had photographers at hand for all his private moments with the state leadership. It reported that the King "took the opportunity to brief the media about the joint venture projects with Government of India, met the Chief Minister of West Bengal and the Central Commerce Minister". While the damage-control visit was clearly made to mend fences broken down by the King's irresponsible utterings in Delhi, it may imply greater problems as more personae are unnecessarily dragged into an 'internal matter' of the country. Unfortunately, for Thimphu, the highly respected veteran elderly statesman at the helm of affairs in West Bengal for decades is not a man who is likely to be taken in by the manipulative efforts of the autocratic regime.

TEK NATH RIZAL PRODUCED IN COURT

1440 days after abducting him from Nepalese soil and keeping him shackled in continuous solitary confinement, the Bhutanese regime has registered a case against Tek Nath Rizal, a former representative of the people in the National Assembly and Royal Advisory Council, on December 29, 1992.

Tek Nath Rizal, a member in the National Assembly from Lamidara in Chirang district, was elected to the Royal Advisory Council by the National Assembly in October, 1984 to represent the people of Chirang and Samchi districts. In 1988 the royal government began a census exercise in the southern districts based on the 1985 Citizenship Act. While the Act contained specific provisions that discriminated against Bhutanese of Nepalese ethnicity settled in the south, the people became agitated by the manner of implementation which appeared to be explicitly designed to ensure that genuine citizens based on 1958 as the cut-off year could be categorized as illegal immigrants. Presuming this to be the result of misinterpretation by the administration rather than a deliberate government policy, the people, according to accepted practices for taking their grievances to the monarch, approached their elected representatives to seek a remedy from the king. Tek Nath Rizal sought an audience and apprised the monarch of the fears of the people and begged a review of the situation which had caused his subjects in the south grave anxiety. On being commanded by the monarch to submit

DISSENT IN THE MONK BODY

Kuensel briefly reported the resignations of two senior monks from the Tongsa and Dagana Dratshangs. Besides stating that each had served only a year of their term no further details were provided. The unprecedented dissent by the Tongsa monk body which resorted to a massive postering campaign around Tongsa and Bumthang, naturally went unreported. This dissension, allegedly due to interference from the new royal family in ecclesiastical affairs, is adding a new dimension to the problems faced by an already beleaguered regime. No doubt, the Bhutanese society is keeping itself abreast of the recent happenings despite the best efforts of the government to keep a tight lid in the media.

have been trampled upon and seek to secure them, but can we shoulder the responsibilities and fulfill the obligations necessary to safeguard and protect these rights in society?

Granted that there is only a handful among us who have either been misled or are of criminal bent of mind. The latter group of people cannot be many and can be controlled by appropriate administrative measures. However, it is our collective responsibility to reason with and, if necessary, deal firmly with misguided elements who adopt vile and intimidatory tactics to hold an entire community to ransom. The dense settlements and idle time available to refugees naturally breed disturbing elements which, if allowed to go unchecked, can become a major problem as the plague progressively expands. That this will hinder resolution of the crisis and further delay repatriation to our homes is only one end of the problem, the other end, when this scourge of society moves with us back to our homes, has far greater damaging potential. The control of this disease cannot be left in the hands of any one individual or organization - if we recognize the problem and its long-term implications then each one of us must shoulder our responsibilities and make the effort to protect our community and society. Living in exile as refugees is no excuse. In fact, it is now more than ever that people must come forward to face the challenges. If we cannot meet this challenge head-on, and stand up collectively against the few depraved individuals, then we can expect to be further shamed. We can also forget our visions of a peaceful future in our homeland.

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EDITORIAL

KING JIGME IN INDIA : CLOSING ANOTHER DOOR

For a monarch who in recent years has been kept extremely busy with matters of state causing him to be sorely missed in a number of international summits, the new year has meant a great deal of travel for King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The warmth of New Delhi's reception in the unusually chilly January weather apparently raised the metabolism in the royal heart resulting in some outrageous utterances. Not quite satisfied or, more likely, to correct a few brash slips made in the capital, a historic 'private visit' to Calcutta was hastily organized towards the end of the month.

Much will undoubtedly be made by the government about the success of the royal visit to the two Indian cities. Given that lately the regime is accustomed to seeing only the immediate political gains, the euphoria generated within the regime by the king's visits may be justified. The Indian media dutifully provided adequate coverage, the Indian statesmen accorded the monarch due courtesy, and the spirit of goodwill and mutual friendship was amply demonstrated. But, in the final analysis, can King Jigme Singye Wangchuck's recent excursions really be considered a political success, either from the monarch's or the nation's point of view?

While the regime may bask in the glory of accomplishment measured in terms of pleasantries exchanged and promises made, astute analysts will not have failed to note the conspicuous absence of Indian commitment to either the current Bhutanese regime or its prevailing policies. It is true that despite the alleged press freedom in the world's largest democracy, on the question of foreign policy there is a definite closing of ranks both in the media and amongst political parties. Going by this knowledge, that the Bhutanese king was, in the Indian print media, permitted to display total assertiveness regarding India's support for his government indicates the latter's willingness to provide the monarch adequate rope. However, that this rope could eventually serve a sinister purpose is evident from the pointed refusal on the part of Indian leadership to publicly issue a single sentence of corroboration. The Bhutanese monarch emphatically issued statements to the Indian press that "both India and Bhutan agree...", "both the Indian Prime Minister and I agree...", "both Mr. Jyoti Basu and I agree..." etc. Much as it may cause discomfort and pain, Thimphu would be advised to note and recognize both the ramifications and dangers implied by the conspicuous absence of public substantiation of the king's impressions by Indian leaders in New Delhi and Calcutta.

The expressed purpose of the royal visit was to display the monarch's solidarity with India and the Indian government in the aftermath of the Ayodhya fall-out. Such kind thoughts are indeed laudable except that it would be difficult to find a precedence where a foreign Head of State or Government ever visited a country going through domestic turmoil with intentions or hopes of making a difference. Internal problems are, after all, internal affairs that seldom brook outside interference. The kind gesture, in any case, was not followed up through visits to riot-torn areas to lend credence to Royal Government claims.

Indeed, according to informed and reliable sources within the Royal Government, the real purpose of the state visit was, besides the selling of the Sankosh Multi-purpose project, to extract a commitment from the Government of India to assist in the abduction/extradition of two senior dissidents currently in Nepal. The attempt to reduce a national problem to the level of isolated individuals is an incredible display of naivety. Individuals can be incarcerated; they can be silenced. But it is impossible to cripple the power of ideas and progressive beliefs. What transpired during the talks between the two leaders remains a secret but it is likely that the generous frame of mind of the Bhutanese monarch with regard to the development of the country's water resources has, for the immediate future, generated reciprocal magnanimity on the part of the Indian leadership. This perhaps explains the sudden royal outbursts that seemingly exude confidence. On the other hand, it could quite possibly be a sign of desperation resulting from less than favourable responses on critical issues.

Whatever the reasons, the brave but irresponsible statements of the Bhutanese monarch have put paid to bilateral efforts between Nepal and Bhutan to resolve the crisis. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck has clearly decided to continue his policy of closing door after door behind him. Interestingly, the diametrically opposing views expressed almost simultaneously by the king and his Foreign Minister regarding the future of SAARC is an indicator of the differing positions within the regime. Moreover, the impression that had been carefully choreographed for the external audience, of a moderate monarch struggling to keep hard-liners at bay, has also been irreversibly altered during this visit. Desperate situations obviously call for desperate measures; the regime has finally exposed itself and shown, through its willingness to barter national resources for political support, that it is determined to hang on to absolute powers whatever the cost to the nation.

For Bhutanese refugees who have waited anxiously for the face-to-face meeting between the Nepalese Prime Minister and King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the two postponements of the SAARC Summit and its current indeterminate status may, on the surface, be a cause for concern. However, there is no doubt that the postponements have come as a blessing in disguise. The meeting between the two leaders would have indicated no more than the mood and disposition of the Bhutanese monarch; this he has now made public through the Indian media. The monarch's outbursts on Indian soil and the unveiling of his policy based on concessions to India in exchange for support has not escaped the notice of genuine Bhutan lovers who see the inherent dangers accompanying such a self-gratifying strategy. Countries that have established ties with the Dragon Kingdom have begun to sense the potentially damaging consequences for the nation, and are preparing to commit themselves to the solution process. In her efforts to make the Bhutanese regime see reason, Nepal can thus count on cooperation and meaningful support from the international community.

Necessary Reasons in the Royal Breast

Recorded history indicates that throughout most of mankind's existence, those who enjoyed power and authority in organized society asserted their right to command respect and insisted on or extracted obedience. They cloaked their abuses with celestial sanction coining such phrases as the 'divine rights of the Kings.'

The birth of the United Nations in 1945 heralded a new dawn and held out to the world new hope and promise. In consummating the Charter of this Organization, the international community repudiated once and for all such doctrines that centered on unlimited State authority. Three years later, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Thus was placed human values at the center of all activities. This stands today as the test for civilized conduct of national and international behavior.

Today we still question whether those that exercise power do so in measured respects for the rights of all. Not quite, for across the globe there are peoples who continue to suffer under regimes that resort various means to subjugate their citizens. Our own land suffers from a renaissance of the medieval curse, probably because ours is an ancient land and our people inheritors of an ancient heritage. We still have enthusiastic adherents who believe that the King and his courtiers can do no wrong. Even a hint of such suggestion is sedition and treason. They prefer, instead, to live in antiquity, worldly wise, fearful of stepping into the present lest they find themselves out of tune with the times.

The regime in Bhutan, of course, is not given to such insensitivity and irrationality. It means business and it applies its own standards with true royal grace. That this does not correspond to international standards and civilized human behavior is immaterial. The only concern is to ensure the perpetuity of an all-powerful hereditary kingship, and the perks and privileges of the ruling clique. All else is incidental. Even if it means treating half her citizens, to be precise the population of Nepali ethnicity, as hostile and scheming for their depopulation. Even if it means their indiscriminate lock-up and evictions, introduction of dress codes and imposition of fines for non-compliance, closure of schools and restrictions in admission, and other such intimidatory regulations to ensure their abject submission to the whims and fancies of the regime.

The regime is clearly prepared to go to any length - coercion, threats or jails - to ensure the subjects would want to 'voluntarily' leave the country. This is the 'mantra' that guides the administration. Consequent State violence against the people have been degrading; the harshness of government repression inhuman. Their crime - their ethnicity. One finds a close parallel with the order of the 17th century Spanish king banishing Jews from his kingdom. He had justified his action by "extremely grave reasons relative to my duty to maintain subordination, tranquillity, and justice among my subjects, and other urgent, just, and necessary reasons which I reserve in my royal breast."

The truth, in this instance also, surely lies hidden in some breast. But, the 'necessary reasons' are patently obvious. Benevolent as the regime pur-

ports to be, this can only be attributed to its concern for the security and stability of the nation and the well-being of its people. Inspired thus, it sets out to translate its profound ideology of 'One Nation One People' into reality. Only, the inherent bias in its propagation was unintended; the aftermath purely incidental. What of the consequence? No attempt to give the blatantly biased concept anationalist cloak could succeed for it was deliberately intended to impinge upon people's pet beliefs and prejudices. The consequent physical scars, psychological stress and emotional strain are telling on the country. The survival of the very nation is at stake.

Sadly, this is a reality in a country enjoying membership of the United Nations for over two decades and pledging that it "endorses the purposes and principles stated in the United Nations Charter and declares that it accepts the obligations incumbent upon Members of the Organization and solemnly undertakes to fulfill them". Ironically, this is taking place in a land blessed with timeless Buddhist precepts of non-violence, tolerance and universal brotherhood. In total contempt for Buddhist values and in gross betrayal of the international community, the regime has made a mockery of all that the United Nations symbolizes.

The clarion call to nationalism urges sacrifice for the nation. Many are misled, some willingly and others by compulsion, to join this nationalist brigade. Nationalism is translated by the regime to mean support for the old orthodox order politically, economically, culturally and socially. To the regime, nationalism also means support for the sole objective of maintaining the status quo by ordering political and economic strategies to strengthen its hold. In truth, it is the vested interests and the overriding selfishness of the regime that is masquerading in the garb of nationalism. If, in any manner, one can help prop up the government, he is a true nationalist - a son of the 'Palden Drukpa'. What does this imply for an individual? Total subservience to the regime and surrender of one's conscience to the powers-that-be. Is this nationalism? For the regime, it is, true and real. Interest of one family and clan taking precedence over the interest of the people and country.

Nationalism is not negativism; it is not defeatism. It is a positive and active force. It means intimate and passionate desire for the good of a nation. It means to build, not destroy; it means to provide, not deprive. This implies duty - duty not obscured by blind loyalty but based on one's conscience and recognition of right and wrong. This means encouragement as well as criticism: a forward push when the country is moving in the right direction, a check when the direction is questionable. Nationalism dictates that the good of a nation must not be compromised for the sake of the few who benefit from the existing order and, therefore, object to change. Political and social institutions, if they stand in the way of human growth, creativity and the country's interest and its progress, require to be changed.

Institutions must, after all, by nature be dynamic. They need constant renewal and sustenance if they are to remain relevant under changing

Circumstances. This renewal, however, cannot be had externally. It cannot come through loans, grants or concessions. Neither can it be reinforced through assurances and proclamations from without, nor by tying up national destiny with the interest of outside forces. Token gestures are not concessions. Let there be no illusions. Self-recovery must be generated from within. The question that, however, needs to be answered is this: Is the system, a relic of the past and obviously out-of-date, insensitive to the nation, living in waste and bent on creating misery for others, deserving of national sympathy?

OUT-OF-TURN PROMOTIONS IN THE ARMED FORCES CONTINUE

Since the beginning of the current political crisis, increasing favors have been bestowed on the Armed Forces in the country. The spate of politically motivated promotions continue with the elevation of one Captain to the rank of Major on 11th January and one Major to the rank of Lt. Colonel in the Royal Body Guards on 19th January. For their 'contribution' in dealing with current dissidence in the south, on 19th January, the King awarded promotions to four officers of the Royal Bhutan Police also resulting in three new Majors. The fact that no act of gallantry was performed by the officials who were merely performing their normal duties does not warrant such out-of-turn promotions. The strength of the security force of the country also does not justify the unlimited creation of senior posts.

Promotions are normal in an administration but the present spate of increasing favors bestowed on the senior officers in the Armed Forces shows the insecurity and sheer desperation of the present institution of monarchy. The desperation is also exemplified by some haphazard appointment in the civil service. In sharp contrast to the practice in the armed forces, the Director in the Department of Power who has over a decade of experience heading various Departments in the Government has been unceremoniously shifted to the Department of Information to look after one of its minor divisions. This is perhaps unavoidable in a situation when the regime is looking for ardent supporters rather than efficient people in important positions. We can learn from history and from our own neighbours; the regime may be well advised not to create a monster which will ultimately be impossible to control. Instead of allowing things to worsen, nationalist forces in the country should act now rather than remaining helpless bystanders.

RED CROSS FUND RAISING DRIVE IN UK

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) the Red Cross Society in the United Kingdom has begun a campaign to raise funds for the welfare of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. While ensuring additional flow of assistance to refugees, for the first time, the campaign takes to the streets abroad the cause and plight of Bhutanese made homeless by a ruthless regime, a move which will undoubtedly help in creating greater awareness regarding the current Bhutanese crisis in the UK.

**REVIEW : AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT,
DECEMBER 1992, AI INDEX: ASA 14/04/92**

BHUTAN : Human Rights Violations against the Nepali Speaking Population in the South.

After intense persuasions and a long wait, in January 1992, Amnesty International (AI) was accorded royal permission to visit Bhutan at the "invitation" of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The regime, adept at orchestrating conditions and situations, obviously believed in the abilities of its administrative machinery to hoodwink the delegation. That, for once, this did not quite succeed is evident from the report.

The AI report, issued a year after the week-long visit to Bhutan, also covers results of field missions to the refugee camps in eastern Nepal and subsequent developments over the course of the year. AI welcomes the steps taken by the government with regard to prison reforms and the decision to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit the country "but believes that further safeguards are needed to ensure that there can be no continuation of human rights violations". It must, however, be noted that prison reforms publicized by the regime have come almost a full year since AI's visit, and only weeks before the arrival in Bhutan of the ICRC delegation in January 1993. Will these reforms stay, or were they initiated on a temporary basis for the benefit of the visiting team?

The government, which had followed an intimidation and depopulation programme district-by-district, sincerely believed that it would be an easy task to take the delegation on a guided tour that would avoid specific locations. This was not inconceivably difficult considering that protocol staff have routinely carried out only such exercises in the past. Unfortunately for the government, the AI delegation had done its homework well and requested a visit to Chirang district which was then the area undergoing systematic repression. For obvious reasons the government declined stating that "it was not possible to visit the latter (Chirang) for security reasons." The negative response itself substantiated many fears.

The report attributes the present political crises in Bhutan to a series of arbitrary measures introduced by the government with regard to census and Driglam Namsha - "the tradition characteristic of and practiced by Northern Drukpa population" with the objective of concretizing the 'one nation one people' concept. The AI report concludes that "arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment and torture including rape, particularly in the period after the demonstration in September, 1990" took place.

CITIZENSHIP

With regard to the central question of citizenship, the report mentions Bhutan's first census, held in 1969, which "reportedly enumerated 931,514 inhabitants" while the 1988 census, which is continuing till date, has classified many Nepali speaking people as non-nationals who have been "subsequently forced to leave the country." The report also notes the National Law of Bhutan, 1958,

on citizenship and the 1977 National Assembly amendment and states that "A further amendment in 1985 confirmed what has become the fundamental basis for citizenship:" documentary proof of "residence in Bhutan since before 1958"

It must be emphasized that this physical requirement of proof of residence in 1958 cannot be met by most Bhutanese. If the rules are to fairly applied, almost all northern Bhutanese would be stateless, too. Another important observation that stems from the above is the lie perpetrated by the Bhutanese regime that has spanned three decades. If a government can continuously and consistently lie to the world about its population, which it now admits to being around 600,000 instead of the 1.2 million it claimed until only a year ago, how can it be expected to tell the truth about anything else, especially those that concern its own wrong-doing?

NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

The AI report also accurately reflects measures adopted by the government to promote a 'national cultural identity'. Inter-marriages between the Northern and the Southern Bhutanese were encouraged with cash incentives. "In April 1989 the National Assembly determined that the cultural traditions of the Northern Bhutanese, Driglam Namsha, should be further emphasized". The

wearing of Bhutanese dress, even in the absence of government insistence, was already beginning to be accepted by all. Yet it was made compulsory overnight and the policy implemented with vigorous zeal mainly to provoke sentiments of southern Bhutanese. Similarly, the No Objection Certificate (NOC) referred to in the report was specifically aimed at the Nepali speaking southern Bhutanese to deny them opportunities for education, jobs, trainings etc.

DISSENT, OPPOSITION AND ARBITRARY ARRESTS

The report briefly but clearly outlines how various people suspected of dissent were arrested and three of them even abducted from Nepal. Many were also abducted from Indian territory.

Undoubtedly, some people in exile have waged personal vendettas against informants and security forces. Furthermore, taking advantage of the situation, miscreants from across the border have been highly active. Yet the government continues to blame 'anti-nationals' for all misdeeds, even those that were carried out by the security forces. All essential services - hospitals, schools, postal services etc. were suspended in the South with the excuse that 'anti-nationals' would 'attack' these establishments. Yet there is little hard evidence linking destruction and dissidents. Instead there are people, forced to act as informers and guides, who can cite names of security force personnel, dates of attacks and amounts extorted or stolen from villages by

government raiding parties. These same cases have been reported by the government as being the work of 'anti-nationals'. In many cases people have witnessed destruction of houses by security forces; there are people who have even been forced to participate at gunpoint.

The report states "raids on the homes of Nepali speaking southern Bhutanese by groups of Royal Bhutan Army personnel and arrests of occupants became commonplace after the September 1990 demonstration". Those arrested were beaten with "canes, batons, sticks or rifle butts. Their hands had been tied behind their backs" and they were left to sleep "on the bare floor without bedding". It has quoted victims outlining their experiences at the hands of the security forces. It also mentions a case where security forces looted money, gold and silver from villagers.

AMNESTY

Amnesty is granted to a person who has committed an offense against the state. In Bhutan hundreds of innocent villagers are rounded up and put into prison without trial for no reason at all, they are tortured. Later King Jigme shows his 'magnanimity' and grants 'amnesty'. The government readily provides data on such 'amnesties'. However, it fails to provide data on the number of prisoners held and the detention locations.

UNFAIR TRIALS

The report covers the existing judiciary system which operates without a system of lawyers and jury. AI's request to be allowed to witness the trial of 41 people "arrested on suspicion of involvement in 'anti-national' activities" was denied by the government because "it would not be acceptable to our officials and people to have a person from outside the country to observe these trials". AI expressed its concerns regarding the lack of distinction "between those offenses against the Tsa Wa Sum (king, country and people) which involve violence and those which do not"

PRISON CONDITIONS AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY

AI's concerns regarding prison conditions and the inhuman treatment of prisoners is reflected in the report. Many innocent prisoners have died as a result of maltreatment and inadequate medical attention. The report has noted some cases of death in custody. Many more such deaths have gone unnoticed.

AI has disagreed with the government contention that prison conditions are harsh because of the general level of poverty and welfare in the country, and that shackles were necessary as detention facilities were not sufficiently secure to prevent escapes. "AI is concerned that the harsh prison conditions to which prisoners were exposed were by no means simply due to lack of resources but also appeared to be in some respects the result of deliberate government policy: the denial of access to relatives, the ban on corre-

spondence and the routine use of shackles as a form of punishment, all of which are in contravention of international human rights standards"

AI RECOMMENDATIONS

The report, while remaining concerned with the violation of human rights in the country, concludes by welcoming measures taken by the government to improve the human rights situation but recommends that these initial steps be reinforced by institutionalization of further safeguards. It draws the government's attention to a set of practical and detailed safeguards of universal application which include all United Nations covenants and principles. It further recommends that all prisoners of conscience be immediately and unconditionally released, and urges the government to consider the adoption of measures in internationally recognized human rights standards, which refer particularly to prisoners who have been arbitrarily detained.

MEDIA SCAN

The imposition of Driglam Namsha was one thing. Much more serious for the Lhotshampas was the Government's sudden decision after the 1988 census to make the 1985 Citizenship Act retroactive to 1958. As a result, even those already holding citizenship cards were told that their cards were now invalid - unless they could produce land tax receipts prior to 1958. Lack of written records often made this impossible. Most refugees are political innocents, still bewildered by this sudden change in policy after 1988. Some can only attribute it to the King's marriage: "Maybe he ended up with too many advisers from his new family," says Khageswara Mishra, formerly a civil servant, and now assistant secretary at Goldhap camp in Jhapa.

The first person to run the gauntlet of Tsa Wa Sum was Tek Nath Rizal, a member of the Royal Advisory Council. In April 1988, he appealed to the King to rescind the new citizenship requirements. After being briefly imprisoned and subsequently harassed, Rizal left for Nepal in 1989, where he founded the People's Forum for Human Rights, a forerunner of the BPP. With the connivance of the Nepalese (prior to Nepal's democratic revolution in April 1990), Rizal was returned to Bhutan, where he is still in prison. Amnesty International is calling for his unconditional release.

A further blow to the Lhotshampas was a "green belt policy" proposed by the Government, along a kilometre-wide east-west corridor, which they viewed as an insidious attempt to uproot them in the name of "soil erosion control". In February 1989, the teaching of Nepali in Bhutanese schools was banned and after pro-democracy demonstrations in September 1990, schools and hospitals in the south were closed. Martial law was then imposed and from this point on, according to the refugees, harassment by the army of the demonstrators' families started in earnest.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other aid agencies working in Jhapa have documented many cases of rape and some of torture. But by far the worst torment for refugees appears to have been a sinister campaign of fear. One ex-diplomat described his family's experience: "My grandfather emigrated to Bhutan. I spent 11 years in the diplomatic service, six of them in Delhi. After my brother took part in the pro-democracy rally, my family was persecuted. The Government confiscated my father's cash crops and demanded two months' forced labour. Eventually he was forced to sign a Voluntary Leaving Certificate, with only token compensation for his land." This story - with minor variations - is repeated throughout the refugee camps by teachers, peasants and doctors - even by ex-police workers. Many still have their citizenship cards which the Government claims are forgeries made in India. In any case, it adds, those in the refugee camps are not really Bhutanese citizens.

Every week, Kuensel, Bhutan's sole newspaper, brims with reports of violence instigated by so called anti-nationals against innocent Lhotshampas and the security forces. The Government-controlled newspaper quotes students and yak herders alike as being ready to go south and fight for their country. This is what the average Bhutanese citizen of the north reads, for there is nothing else: television was banned two years ago and foreign magazines are available only on a carefully selected basis. Undoubtedly, some acts of violence have been committed against Government forces in the south; also the Lhotshampas would be the last to deny the existence of illegal immigrants who originally came to work on the roads. This is as annoying to them as to the Government. And yet, for every accusation made against them, the refugees calmly recite dozens more stories of atrocities committed by the army and police, who have been promised land in return for their loyal service in the south. Many speak of whole villages razed to the ground.

As part of a privatisation drive, more travel agencies are being set up. Even the Bhutan Tourist Corporation went private in 1991, courtesy of the King's father-in-law. The newly doubled Druk Air fleet of two BAe 146 aircraft will soon allow 4,000 people to visit the kingdom each year. Rest assured: Bhutan will not sacrifice itself on the altar of mass tourism, but it may yet be forced to follow Nepal down the painful path to democracy.

Carol Hobson in the Royal Geographical Society Magazine, "Geographical", London, January 1993.

"IN QUOTES"

"Our hopes, our hearts and our hands are with those on every continent who are building democracy and freedom. Their cause is America's cause". — 42nd President of the United States of America, Mr Bill Clinton, in his inaugural address on January 20, 1993.

"As we move away from the Cold War, a lot of countries will be moving towards democratic systems of government and free market economies. These changes will inevitably cause disorder". — Mr. Andrew Natsios, Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Food and Humanitarian Assistance, USAID, quoted in WFP Journal 22.

"Amnesty International has collected testimony of arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment and torture, particularly in the period after demonstrations in September 1990". — Amnesty International, London in its 1992 report on Bhutan.

(The following article by David Orr, an Irish freelance foreign correspondent based in London is reproduced here from WFP Journal 22)

BHUTANESE FLEE PERSECUTION

Despite severe malnourishment and extreme calcium deficiency, 18-month-old Mon Maya Tamang is expected to live. Her mother has been feeding her high energy milk every two hours and slowly the child's condition is improving.

The baby became sick at the end of March, soon after arriving at the Maidhar Refugee Camp in southeastern Nepal, explains the nurse in the paediatric feeding centre. During the first four months of this year, up to 20 Bhutanese children a day were dying in the refugee camps in Nepal. With nothing but pulses and rice to eat, the health of many small children quickly deteriorated, but with the introduction of a more balanced diet and improved medical facilities that number had dropped to three or four per day by early summer.

It took the Tamang family five days to walk from their hilltop home in southern border to the Indian border. With money from the few cattle they sold before leaving, they were able to continue their journey to Nepal by truck.

Ethnic Nepalese, the Tamang family are victims of a programme of systematic persecution being conducted by the Bhutanese Government in the southern part of the country. Earlier this year, Mr. Tamang, a subsistence farmer with no real interest in politics, was charged with committing "anti-national activities".

Accused of supporting

Bhutan's illegal pro-democracy movement he was made to sign a document written in the official Dzongkha language which, as a Nepali speaker, he did not understand. By signing it, he unwittingly relinquished his house and farm. The other eight families in the hamlet of Khibesha were similarly harassed and forced to flee to refugee camps in southeastern Nepal.

By mid-summer there were 62,000 Bhutanese refugees living in five camps, three of which were built on sites allocated by the Nepalese Government in the Terai area, the grain basket of Nepal, where migrants from the Nepalese hills continue to settle illegally on the already populous plain. The arrival of thousands of refugees has further stretched local resources. The refugees first started to arrive at the beginning of 1991 and by this summer there were 300-400 new arrivals per day.

The World Food Programme has provided 6,000 tonnes of food aid for the refugees this year and a further 7,800 tonnes is to be approved. The WFP ration is distributed in the camps by local and international NGOs, who also provide complementary food aid.

The refugee crisis has its origins in the insecurity of the Bhutan's feudal system, which is opposed to any form of cultural or political diversity. A small mountain kingdom, wedged between India and China, Bhutan is one of the world's poorest countries. In the

north, live the Drukpa people who are of Tibetan stock, speak the Dzongkha language, wear Drukpa dress and follow Buddhism. Whereas the south is populated by immigrants of Nepalese origin, language and dress, who are mainly Hindus.

Alarmed by the increasing numbers of ethnic Nepalese, who now make up about half the total population, and determined to suppress the increasingly insistent pro-democracy movement in the south, the Drukpa-dominated Bhutanese Government began arresting political activists in 1990. By last year, the army had begun to move systematically through whole communities. Many second or third generation residents have been denied citizenship and summarily expelled, while those with legal papers have been intimidated into leaving. Tales of imprisonment, beatings and torture are widespread.

Tara Nidi Krasi, a 25-year-old subsistence farmer with no declared involvement in politics, was charged with supporting a group opposed to the Government. "I was arrested by the army and taken to jail where they locked me in a latrine for a week," says Tara Krasi. "For three days I had no food or water. Then they took me into the jungle and started beating me. I was afraid I would be killed so I signed a confession." Tara Krasi was released in February of this year after 16 months in jail. He says he was beaten regularly, had to sleep naked on a cement

floor and was made to clean the latrines with bare hands. His back is covered in scars, as are his wrists which became infected after being forced to wear tight manacles for long periods. While he was in prison, his wife was beaten up by soldiers. She was pregnant and lost her child. A total of 14 family members, including Tara's parents, are now refugees in Nepal. At the beating at the hands of the army last year, his father's left arm is paralysed and his mother has difficulty moving her arms. "I was told I would be shot if I stayed", says Tara Krasi. "Everything we had in Bhutan has been left behind: our fields, our orchards, our house. We sold our cattle to get money for the journey."

Sita Maya Gurung, 26, the wife of another farmer accused of supporting the democracy movement, says soldiers came to her house one night when her husband was in jail and beat her. "They took me to the local army camp and lashed me in a room with an officer who raped me. Afterwards I had to sign a form giving up everything to the Govern-

ment: our fields, our orchards and our house. Even our citizenship cards were taken." During the eight months that her husband spent in jail, she says she was badly beaten, had his thighs crushed in a kind of vice and was deprived of food. He is no longer a strong man and suffers from back-ache and pains in his legs. Before leaving home, the Gurung family heard on the radio of the relief camps in Nepal. They reached the Indian border on foot and met many people they knew. All the 200 families of their village now live in the camps.

As the Maidhar camp lies on the bank of a river which floods in the summer monsoon it had to be evacuated. By June, the transfer of thousands of people to the new camp of Goldhap was well underway. At the new sites wells were sunk, latrines and huts dug and a school and a health centre built. But for the people desperate to return home, there is something frighteningly permanent about the construction of so many buildings, even if they are only made from bamboo and plastic sheeting.

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION

Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	7,934	1,845
Goldhap	Jhapa	7,797	2,400
Beldangi I	Jhapa	14,415	3,062
Beldangi II	Jhapa	20,447	3,535
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,658	2,700
Patthri	Morang	16,523	4,172
Total		76,774	17,714
Cumulative births:		1,561	
Cumulative deaths:		1,868	

The above figures are as of January 31, 1993.

T.N. Rizal... Contd. from pg 1
his points in writing, Rizal solicited the help of senior southern Bhutanese bureaucrats and submitted a petition, jointly signed by the then two southern Bhutanese councilors, on April 9, 1988.

Rizal, who by virtue of his position as Royal Advisory Councilor was also a member of the Cabinet, was forbidden from participating in the June 1, 1988 Cabinet session when the petition was termed seditious and tantamount to treason. He was subsequently arrested, detained and tortured. Although an elected member, his services were terminated. He was released after being forced to sign a confession-cum-agreement which included, inter-alia, a stipulation barring him from meeting more than three people at a time. The tension of constant surveillance and fear of being arrested with fatal consequences, as per the agreement, forced him to leave the country in July, 1988. After spending some time with friends in India, he sought sanctuary in Birtamod, Jhapa, Nepal.

Meanwhile, conditions in Bhutan had deteriorated with the regime introducing new discriminatory policies and regulations. This increased the fears of southern Bhutanese. Rizal who had maintained his links with people in Bhutan remained fully aware of the situation. The People's Forum for Human Rights was formed in exile at Birtamod under the Chairmanship of Tek Nath Rizal. It is significant that contrary to allegations of 'political motivation' of southern

Bhutanese, the first organization in exile chose to address the basic issue of fundamental rights in the kingdom. However, before any serious activity could be initiated Rizal was abducted from his house by agents of the royal government abetted by Nepalese police on November 15, 1989. He was flown out of Kathmandu under escort by a special Druk Air flight.

Subsequent to the arrest of Rizal the number of people outside the country increased as many youth fled Bhutan fearing arrests. Even in the absence of Rizal the people in exile rallied behind PFHR under new leadership. On September 7, 1991, PFHR was formally renamed the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) with all the existing office bearers retaining the same offices in HUROB, and Rizal continues to be its Chairman.

According to the government's only weekly, Kuensel, "Tek Nath Rizal will be tried on nine specific charges which include acts of treason against the Tsa Wa Sum, attempts to create misunderstanding and hostility between the royal government and the governments of friendly countries, instigating and writing seditious literature against the Tsa Wa Sum, sowing communal discord in the kingdom, and personally organizing and initiating underground activities against the royal government. Tek Nath Rizal has been charged with fomenting and masterminding the current disturbances in Southern Bhutan, beginning with the deliberate misinterpretation of the royal government's

census policy in 1988 to planning, directing, and coordinating subversive activities against the royal government before his extradition from Nepal at the end of 1989. Some of Tek Nath Rizal's objectives undermined the sovereignty and independence of the Kingdom itself, according to the spokesman of the Home Ministry. The Home Ministry spokesman pointed out that every charge against Tek Nath Rizal could be categorized as treason since they constituted serious violations of both the Thrimshung Chhenpo (General law of the land) and the National Security Act, 1992."

The decision of the regime to produce Rizal before a court of law would have been welcomed were it not for the fact that the malafide intentions of the government are patently obvious. The regime kept Rizal in custody for over three years in the absence of any specific charges while it continued with repressive measures that led to the escalation of the crisis. The government has now come up with a case built primarily upon circumstances and events that have taken place while Rizal was held incommunicado in solitary confinement. Rizal has undeniably been the rallying point for all Bhutanese in exile. However, the extrapolation by the regime to implicate him for events over the last three years clearly signifies the extent of fabrication of charges.

1. Rizal who has been incarcerated since November 15, 1989, is being charged with violations of the National Security Act enacted only in

1992, a legally improper and unacceptable procedure.

2. Rizal has already been penalized for his part in "writing seditious literature", the April 1988 appeal to the king, and hence cannot be retried for the same crime.

3. The charges against Rizal with regard to "fomenting and masterminding the current disturbances in Southern Bhutan" is a case of extreme extrapolation of events and circumstances. Rizal had already spent 11 months in solitary confinement before the September-October, 1990 peaceful demonstrations by the people in southern Bhutan against the repressive policies of the government.

4. Rizal cannot be charged with "sowing communal discord" since he was already in prison for exactly a year before the regime itself took the issue to the other communities in November 1990. Till then all other ethnic communities remained largely unaware of unrest in southern Bhutan generated by government policies and regulations.

5. The charges against Rizal for "personally organizing and initiating underground activities against the royal government" and "planning, directing, and coordinating subversive activities against the royal government before his 'extradition' from

Nepal at the end of 1989" can only hold in a country where an individual cannot express dissent against violation of fundamental rights by a government. Until the time of Rizal's abduction, the only platform created was the People's Forum for Human Rights to protest the blatant violation of human rights in the kingdom. 6. The charge that "Rizal's objectives undermined the sovereignty and independence of the kingdom itself" is exactly the reverse of the contention made by Rizal in his appeal of April 9, 1988 wherein, as an elected representative of the people, he petitioned the monarch for immediate justice to avoid a situation that would place the nation in jeopardy.

It is evident that the decision of the Bhutanese regime to produce dissidents, unlawfully detained for years, before the courts is only a ploy to deceive the international community. It is also evident from the summary of charges, mostly relating to dissent against government policies, that the regime continues to misinterpret the concept of Tsa Wa Sum. The intentional misinterpretation of this adaptation of the Triple Gems of Buddhism to signify "King, Country and Government" rather than the intended "King, Country and People" results in any questioning of the regime's policies being treated as seditious.

Read The Bhutan Review and update yourself about the latest situation and events in Bhutan.
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