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"IT'S YOUR WORLD" -BBC PHONE-IN PROGRAMME

Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala responded to callers from across the globe on February 28, 1993 in the BBC's second simultaneous radio and television broadcast of the "It's Your World" phone-in programme. The Prime Minister reacted to a range of questions that covered the government's position and efforts in issues related to Nepal's nascent democracy, human rights, government priorities, environment, health, immigration, drinking water, water resources, relationships with neighbours etc.

On the issue of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, the Prime Minister provided a categorical answer outlining the steps that His Majesty's Government proposed to take in the coming months to resolve the current crisis. The Prime Minister also specifically sought to reassure Bhutanese refugees whose problems, he said, he understood from his own long experience of life in exile. During the forthcoming SAARC Summit to be held in Dhaka on April 10-11, he confirmed that the issue will be discussed once again with the Bhutanese monarch. Should the talks with the Bhutanese king prove inconclusive Indian intervention will be requested, and should this also fail, the issue will be taken to the international forum, the Prime Minister stated. ■

CANADA DISCONTINUES ASSISTANCE TO BHUTAN

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) recently announced its plans to eliminate bilateral aid programmes to some fourteen countries, seven each in Africa and Asia, in the fiscal year 1993-94. Bhutan which has benefited from Canadian Government assistance in the past, especially in the education sector, now loses generous CIDA aid.

Defending the cuts, CIDA stated that "the reductions did not upset any of the priorities established in Canada's 1988 development assistance strategy, and that cuts were not made that would be detrimental to Canada's foreign policy objectives". Given the present dismal human rights record in Bhutan with about one-sixth of the country's population forced to live in exile, other donor countries may soon follow suit.



NOT WEALTHY FIJIAN

Pondering their fate, two 'adivasi' Bhutanese refugees sit by a pile of bamboos that will be used to construct their new 'home' in Beldangi camp. Tribals of Indian origin, like the refugees of Nepalese ethnicity, they had lived for generations in Bhutan till their eviction by the re-

gime last month. Will the plight of these few human beings, even if they are only tribals, both politically and economically inconsequential, pull the heartstrings of their fellow cousins and stir awake the 'sleeping giant' from its self-imposed stupor? ■

EVICTIIONS CONTINUE

Beldangi camp: February 28, 1993

While the panic and emergency situations created by the flood of refugees during the first half of 1992, when an average of over 10,000 people came each month, has subsided, arrivals in the transit camp at Beldangi continue to average around 100 each day. If encouraging signs of normalcy are received from some parts of southern Bhutan, intimidation and harassment by the administration in other areas continue. Talking to new arrivals in Beldangi II extension, our correspondent came across Ashjit Rai, about 36 years old, who had arrived two days earlier from Dhanesay village in Lamidara under Chirang district. Ashjit Rai along with three others from the same village was arrested by the Royal Bhutan Army on September 20, 1991 and detained in Sarbhang prison. On January 13, 1993 all four were moved to Damphu jail in Chirang. Twenty six days later they were released on condition that they would leave the country immediately. Unknown to

the outside world, the four had languished in jail for sixteen months. Besides the 200-odd prisoners in Chemgang prison near Thimphu whose incarceration is documented, how many other Ashjit Rais presumed missing or dead by their families are still in custody in remote locations?

Padmalal Khandal, a new arrival from Samrang in Samdrup Jongkhar district recounts a different story. In a family of eight, including himself only three were declared F1 (genuine Bhutanese citizens) while the rest were placed in different categories in the recent census exercise. Khandal had married from the same area and has no relatives outside Bhutan. The five members of his family who were made out to be illegal immigrants were ordered to leave the country after paying a fine of Nu 1000.00 (US 30\$) each. Unable to pay this amount, the entire family fled leaving behind their property.

There is no doubt that the planned depopulation exercise of the regime continues even as methods are modified according to circumstances. As opposed to the widespread intimidation and terror tactics of the past, currently the administration appears to be targeting selected localized areas and resorting to less-physical measures to force the people to leave. The regime thus hopes to avoid mass panic and consequent media attention. Meanwhile, it plays up the fact of a few southern Bhutanese moving into the capital as evidence that there is no eviction programme. How many southern Bhutanese villagers have relatives who can give them sanctuary in the capital? Strategies change but the evictions continue. ■

ficially authorized personnel. We are aware that the Review winds its way to the innermost sanctum on the highest floor of Tashichhodzong and, despite our current differences, we would hate to see the dwindling southern forests move about anywhere, especially in the fashion of Shakespearian woods. Therefore, although any financial impropriety that now takes place within Bhutan should not concern those of us in exile, both because many of our dear colleagues may not see their paychecks for long (see editorial) and because the term "anti-nationals" is bandied about at the drop of a hat for all ills befalling the country, we would advise those who do not themselves have a hand in the pie to probe around what remains of the woods in the south; their energetic guardians may be hiding more than just "anti-nationals" for Kuensel. ■

DESTRUCTION OF FORESTS

With unflinching regularity the government mouthpiece Kuensel carries a brief report on its front page

Ngolops destroy plantations

Antinationals felled and stole more than 200 hardwood trees from the Jhari Forest Plantation, Samchi, on February 2, according to reports from the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO).

The DFO said that the plantation was also raided earlier on January 20 during which more than 150 trees had been felled and taken across the border.

"Such raids into plantations have become a major problem to the forest department as we are unable to patrol and check on a regular basis all the plantations and reserve forest areas," said the DFO. "This is because we suffer an acute shortage of manpower."

regarding destruction of forests by "anti-nationals". Equally frequently, hidden among other advertisements not often scanned by foreigners, the weekly also carries Timber Sales Notices. Two samples, both taken from the February 6, 1993 issue, are reproduced.

At the end of 1991, desperately in need of additional resources, the regime justified the harvesting of immature timber from forest plantations in the south by blaming "anti-nationals" who were alleged to have been stealing timber. The logic propounded was: if the government do not undertake extraction, then the "anti-nationals" will. The logic can hardly have convinced the people, for even a moron realizes, and not all Bhutanese are morons, the scale of operations required to illegally extract timber from any forest. While stealing timber even in the most convenient of times is a challenge for professionals across the border requiring an extensive network of

"friends", it is implausible that "anti-nationals" could undertake such a task in the current security environment. Yet stories still appear. The clippings from Kuensel prove a number of points. Foremost, while blaming dissidents the government itself is busy extracting young timber as evidenced by this particular sales notice. Second, since this is only one in a series of notices originating from the Samchi Forest Division over the past year, it also demonstrates the time and effort that has been required even from a well equipped government agency to undertake timber extraction hardly a job that could be done, in stealth, by dissidents. Most significantly, it conclusively proves that there is "something rotten" in the yonder forests of Samchi since this is not the first report regarding hundreds of hardwood trees valued at thousands of Ngultrums conveniently meeting their fate from saws other than those officially handled by of-

Timber Auction Notice No. 13

The under mentioned timber suitable for both industrial and local use will be sold in open auction on 18th February, 1993 in the premises of the Divisional Forest office, Samchi. Timber are depoted at Tashijong under Samchi Range and T.D.U. Depot at Samchi.

Details of lot measurement and terms and conditions of sale can be collected from the office of the undersigned during any office hours of working days.

1. Mixed broad level hardwood logs : 25,000.00 cft.
2. Sal pole : 1,149.31 cft
3. Sawn (mixed hardwood) : 5,197.33 cft

Total : 31,346.64 cft.

Divisional Forest Officer, Samchi

EDITORIAL

THE INK-WELL OF TRUTH

This January, in front of an accommodating Indian media, the Bhutanese monarch managed to hide his pent up frustration and desperation behind a barrage of bluster and mock-bravado. Back in his kingdom, however, the brave front apparently gave way to royal rage. Addressing an especially convened meeting of all Ministers and departmental heads, the king flayed his officials, making abundantly clear royal displeasure over the inept and ineffective bureaucracy. Obviously the brief sojourn had proved educational. Alarmed at finding out that the truth was filtering out to the world despite his regime's propaganda efforts, the monarch expressed his ire over the abject failure of the administrative machinery to deflect the pressures created by a "few disgruntled elements" in exile. Threatening officials with dire consequences, the king demanded immediate corrective measures. If only life was that simple.

Spurred on by the initial success in deceiving the world, the regime, in the mistaken belief that it could continue to fool all the people all the time, went ahead with its diabolic plans against a section of helpless citizens. Today, despite the expensive and massive campaign to woo the media, the regime has to contend with a world that has largely seen through its charades, as evidenced by matters for this issue which originate from such distant places as Washington D.C., Baharam and Holbaek. It meets with the occasional success, as in the FEER Yearbook article (reviewed in this issue) courtesy of Brian C.J. Shaw, our then unnamed rotund journalist hero of an earlier editorial in the December issue of Bhutan Focus, forerunner of the Review. But, the protestations of 'respected' FEER and Shaw notwithstanding, in the days to come there will be even fewer Shaws and McGirks (Independent, London) willing to sell their souls whatever the royal offer.

The royal command demanding the minions to provide the desperate regime with necessary cover is, therefore, like most royal commands, unreasonable and unrealistic. They can do no more than what is already being done; a few with authentic fervour and zeal befitting the need to protect their self-interests, some with the unquestioning diligence that is the hallmark of tested bureaucracy, and yet many others with routine competence nurtured by the spectre of fear of authority. All these efforts combined, however, cannot alter the truth. They may resort to supporting and promoting royal lies either out of self-interest, loyalty, or fear, but lies cannot forever be disguised for the truth. Truth will defend itself. They may even succeed in getting the rare Shaw or McGirk to write a few eulogies for the regime, for they know well and truly that the pen is, indeed, mightier than the sword. Alas, Majesty, the pen is mighty only as long as it refills itself from the ink-well of truth.

CASH-CRUNCH AND LAYOFFS IN SHANGRI-LA

Besides the recognition of danger signals with regard to changing world opinion about the regime, the poor state of the government coffers was apparently equally to blame for the royal frustrations and consequent fury at the above meeting. Although huge amounts have been pledged by the international community for Bhutan's Seventh Five Year Plan, with India alone committing US \$229 million, generous royal largesse in the process of image-building over the past few years has taken its toll on domestic reserves. The situation has not been helped by the real anti-nationals who have not missed the opportunities to help themselves while the nation goes through a trauma. While the "family" itself, willingly and unwillingly abetted by the administration, has busied itself transferring funds to its own accounts, the off-the-record transactions that have been necessitated by circumstances have enabled others close to the coterie to also fill their pockets. Amounts allegedly paid to helpful friends across the border are inflated many-fold for record purposes. The proceeds of sales of seized horticultural orchards and products (close to a hundred percent during the past two seasons) are minuscule in the record books when compared to actual transactions.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in terms of legal tender within the kingdom, the government is on the verge of bankruptcy. Rumours abound, not entirely unfounded, about the government's inability to pay its workers for long. The regime has resorted to various means to raise domestic resources; real estate and other assets have been regularly auctioned, enterprises 'privatized', and southern Bhutanese property confiscated and their sales proceeds withheld. Overdrafts from the State Bank of India based on collateral provided by accounts overseas have reached saturation levels and, reportedly, no more can be squeezed through this channel. The exercise of selling gold across the counter by the Royal Monetary Authority (payment accepted in Indian currency only in an open affront to the poor Bhutanese Ngultrum) was completed a year ago; both the reserves and sales proceeds have already been exhausted. To further add to the regime's woes, New Delhi was perhaps not quite as forthcoming as usual this January.

Just as tempers fray in households as resources vanish, matters obviously came to a boil in Thimphu after the 'successful' visit to India. Unjustly berating senior civil servants for leading the government to such dire straits, and unfairly putting the entire blame on the bureaucracy, the monarch announced that the strength of the government administrative machinery would be reduced by fifty percent. Reportedly, the questioning of the wisdom behind this royal decision met with the harshest words of rebuke and threats of the entire Cabinet being dismissed in the event that Ministers failed to achieve the royal objective.

From the moment the ill-conceived strategy against Bhutanese of Nepalese ethnicity was put into effect, the regime has committed one blunder after another. Each action to correct an earlier mistake has only resulted in further mishaps. The current decision fits neatly into the same pattern; only this time, if the royal command is obeyed, as it must be, the consequences of dismissing half the number of civil servants could be far more disastrous for the regime.

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT 1992 REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS : BHUTAN

[The full, unedited text of the Bhutan chapter of the United States' State Department Report on Human Rights for 1992 is reproduced below. See also Media Reviews... on page 3.]

The Wangchuck dynasty of hereditary monarchs has ruled Bhutan since 1907. Located in the Himalayas between India and Tibet, the small kingdom has been able to escape domination by any external power since the 10th century. King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1952-72), while retaining strong executive powers, took several steps to move the kingdom towards a more representative political system, including the creation of a National Assembly, a Royal Advisory Council, and a Council of Ministers. There is no written Constitution or Bill of Rights. The present monarch, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, on the throne since 1974, has continued Bhutan's social and political evolution, although progress has been seriously disrupted by civil strife involving ethnic Nepalese. Buddhists constitute approximately half of the population; another third of the population, mostly from the southern districts, is of Nepali Hindu ethnic origin.

Internal security is maintained by the Royal Bhutan Police, a force of about 5,000, assisted by the Royal Bhutan Army, with approximately 7,000 lightly armed men.

A large majority of the population is illiterate and rural and lives on subsistence agriculture in a largely barter economy. India is Bhutan's principal source of foreign assistance and main trading partner. Tourism is a potential source of foreign exchange; however, the government restricts access by the outside world in an effort to minimize the spread of foreign influence and limits the number of tourists to about 3,000 a year.

The human rights situation deteriorated further in 1992 as the government continued to implement a 1985 citizenship law and related legislation designed to "Bhutanize" the country. The target of the policy is the ethnic Nepalese minority, whose growing percentage of the population was perceived by the Drukpa Buddhists as a threat to their culture. The citizenship law retroactively stripped citizenship from Nepalese immigrants who could not document their presence in Bhutan prior to 1958 and ethnic Nepalese born in Bhutan who could not prove that both their parents satisfied the requirements for citizenship under the 1985 law. These are nearly impossible requirements in a country with widespread illiteracy, which only recently adopted administrative procedures. Tens of thousands were declared to be illegal immigrants and were forcibly evicted from the country. Still more fled the country voluntarily in the face of officially sanctioned pressure, reportedly including arbitrary arrests, beatings, rape, robberies, and other forms of intimidation by police and the army. By the end of the year, some 72,000 ethnic Nepalese had arrived at refugee camps in southern Nepal. Up to

20,000 are believed to have taken refuge with relatives in India. Exiled ethnic Nepalese leaders organized the Bhutan People's Party (BPP) and the Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) to resist Bhutanization, which they see as an attempt to suppress their ethnic and cultural identity and drive many of them out of the country. The government, which outlawed the BPP in 1990 as antinational, accused it in 1992 of kidnaping and killing government officials, as well as intimidation and extortion of southerners who did not support its cause. Other human rights abuses include:

denial of the right of citizens to change their government; limitations on the right to a fair trial; restrictions on peaceful association and assembly, and worker rights; and traditional cultural practices which result in some gender discrimination.

[Footnote : Bhutan and the United States do not have diplomatic relations, and U.S. officials travel there infrequently. Since few scholars have published studies on the Bhutanese polity or society, information on Bhutanese practices which bear on Human Rights is often incomplete. End Footnote]

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS SECTION I RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM:

A. Political and other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no independent confirmations of such killings. The Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB), an organization of ethnic Nepalese Bhutanese operating primarily in Nepal, accused government forces of targeting dissidents for execution; the government denied such accusations and pointed to an order by the king for police and army forces not to use lethal force when dealing with dissidents or demonstrators as evidence of its desire to avoid bloodshed. In the report issued in August, the government charged the dissidents with responsibility for 46 murders and acknowledged that 4 dissidents had been killed since the outbreak of hostilities in late 1989.

B. Disappearance

The HUROB, as well as Nepalese and Indian Human Rights groups, interviewed hundreds of ethnic Nepalese in southern Bhutan, Nepal, and India. They reported numerous instances since September 1990 of police and army forces rounding up men suspected of supporting the resistance movement. The HUROB claimed hundreds of these men were never seen again after being taken away; it presumed they were either being held by the government without charge or had been killed. These claims could not be confirmed; however, the consistency of the stories

among so many people lent them credence. The government denied such disappearances took place; it claimed a total of 4 dissidents were killed in military actions and 28 arrested. It accused HUROB and other organizations (BPP, Student's Union of Bhutan, BNDP) of carrying out "antinational" propaganda campaigns.

C. Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Ethnic Nepalese refugees in India and Nepal recounted to Human Rights groups hundreds of cases in which police and army forces had allegedly beaten, raped, and robbed suspected supporters of the resistance and their families. The HUROB claimed government authorities regularly tortured detainees and prisoners; there was no independent confirmation of these charges, but their credibility is enhanced by the number of similar accounts. The government denied these allegations. However, the recent conviction of three government officials in southern Bhutan on charges related to intimidation of ethnic Nepalese lends credence to these claims.

D. Arbitrary Arrests, Detention, or Exile

Bhutanese law contains no specific guarantees against arbitrary arrest, and until recently there has been little discussion on reforming the country's highly traditional criminal justice system. The November session of Bhutan's National Assembly witnessed an unprecedented public debate about criminal procedures and produced a new National Security Law which eliminates mandatory death penalty for treason. The government previously cited the death penalty as an excuse for the delay in trying those held on charges related to the unrest in the south.

On February 4 [1992], the government released under an amnesty decree 313 prisoners detained but never tried, for "antinational activities." It released another 45 militants under a similar amnesty on September 11. According to the government, a total of 1,526 people accused of "antinational activities" have been released under amnesties since the outbreak of hostilities in late 1990. As of late 1992, about 200 people were being held in Bhutanese jails on charges related to political unrest in southern Bhutan. Charges against 41 of these detainees were forwarded to the High Court for a trial that began on May 18. In judgments handed down late in the year, 32 of the defendants were found guilty and given sentences ranging from 9 months to life in prison. Five defendants were acquitted. Exile is not formally used as a form of punishment. However, political opponents of the government have been driven from Bhutan along with ethnic Nepalese (See Section 2.D.).

Contd. Page 4...

MEDIA REVIEWS 1992 U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT

GULF NEWS, Baharain, February 6, 1993
U.S. REPORT CITES ABUSES IN BHUTAN

The U.S. State Department which has so far been silent on the plight of Bhutan's Nepalese minority who are fleeing the tiny kingdom, now says the human rights situation in the country is not satisfactory.

"The human rights situation deteriorated further in 1992 as the government continued to implement a 1985 citizenship law and related legislation designed to 'Bhutanise' the country," states the latest State Department report on human rights worldwide.

The chapter on Bhutan points out that the "target of the policy is the ethnic Nepalese minority, whose growing percentage of population was perceived by the ruling Drukpa Buddhists as a threat to their culture." Tens of thousands of Nepalese-speaking Bhutanese have left their country since late-1991. Officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Nepal say the refugees are still streaming into eastern Nepal from India which shares a border with Bhutan.

According to the State Department report, some 72,000 Bhutanese refugees had arrived at camps administered by the UNHCR by the end of

last year. Some 20,000 others have taken refuge in India.

The refugees say they have been forced to leave their villages by the Bhutanese government. The leaders-in-exile here assert that it is a deliberate attempt to depopulate the country of people of Nepalese origin who were a third of Bhutan's population.

The State Department report contends that most people have left voluntarily in the face of "officially sanctioned pressure" including arbitrary arrests, beatings, rape, robberies and other forms of intimidation by Bhutanese police and army. Thimphu has been accused among other things of denying citizens the right to change government, curbing rights for fair trials, restricting peaceful association and assembly, and worker rights.

The nine page report observes that "there is no written constitution or bill of rights" in Bhutan which is ruled by Buddhist Drukpa rulers. The Drukpas, fearing that their unique mountain culture will be swamped by Nepalese speakers, is forcing people of Nepalese origin to leave, the report said. ■

HIMAL, Kathmandu, Jan/Feb 1993
BHUTAN UPDATE

The United States' Department of State released a "Country Report on Human Rights" on Bhutan, which was prepared for presentation to Congress. Unable to go beyond secondary information in most cases (the United States does not have diplomatic relations with Thimphu), the report banks on what it considers reliable information. It goes beyond non-committal Amnesty phraseology, however, to say, for example, that corroborating information "lends credence" to claims by Lhotshampa refugees of disappearance, torture, etc.

Much of the report is descriptive and non-accusatory, but the State Department summarizes findings as follows: "In recent years assimilation has given way to Bhutanization... The (1985) citizenship law retroactively stripped citizenship from Nepalese immigrants who could not document their presence in Bhutan prior to 1958 and ethnic Nepalese born in Bhutan who could not prove that both their parents satisfied the requirements for citizenship under the 1985 law. These are nearly impossible requirements in a country with widespread

illiteracy, which only recently adopted administrative procedures. Tens of thousands were declared to be illegal immigrants and were forcibly evicted from the country. Still more fled the country voluntarily in the face of officially sanctioned pressure, reportedly including arbitrary arrests, beatings, rape, robberies, and other forms of intimidation by police and army."

Foggy Bottom apparently prefers to believe that its estimated 100,000 refugees (in Nepalese camps and those living with relatives in India) are Bhutanese and not Nepalese-speakers from the Indian Northeast as Thimphu would have it. Says the report, "In a Bhutan population of less than 700,000, the departure of over 100,000 people constitutes a major demographic change." ■

"IN QUOTES"

"We are convinced that these people have physically come from Bhutan and we have recognized them as being of concern to the High Commissioner for Refugees on humanitarian grounds." Tahir Ali, UNHCR Representative for Nepal, quoted in *The Nation*, Bangkok, December 21, 1992.

"Politics will be more stable with people displaying faith and dedication in their rulers while communal strife and crime will increase." —Prediction for the Female Water Bird Year (1993-94) in the *Dhatho*, Bhutanese astrological calendar, carried by *Kuensel*. Astrology or syco-phancy?

"If the talks between the King of Bhutan and myself fails, I will invite India to resolve the dispute. If India does not take interest, then I will take the matter to the international forum... As regards the violation of Human Rights, I have also suffered. I was in exile. I know the sentiments and emotions of the people who are in exile." —Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in the BBC radio and television programme, "It's Your World", on Feb 28, 1993.

MEDIA SCAN

MASS EXODUS FROM THE LAND OF BUDDHA

Shortly before Christmas, photographer, radioman and globe-trotter Sv. Aage Lorenz Christensen from Holbaek, stayed in one of the huge refugee camps in southeast Nepal where 70,000 people take refuge after fleeing from the small Buddhist country Bhutan. He interviewed and photographed ethnic Nepalese who came forward and spoke about torture, burning of houses and rape of women by soldiers in Bhutan. Bhutan claims the opposite; that it is a question of Nepalese terrorism and that Nepalese are illegal immigrants. Bhutan is one of the main recipients of Danish Development assistance and DANIDA follows the situation closely.

MASS EXODUS FROM BUDDHIST BHUTAN - MAIN RECIPIENT OF DANISH AID

Photographer from Holbaek among 100,000 Forgotten Refugees
In the south of Nepal, over the last one and a half years, huge camps have been built for refugees from the neighbouring tiny Buddhist country, Bhutan. It is a refugee problem which has gone largely unnoticed in the world press. Photographer and radioman Sv. Aage Lorenz Christensen from Holbaek has visited the camps and tells of torture and violation of human rights in Bhutan which is the main recipient of aid from DANIDA. According to Sv. Aage Lorenz who has taped his interviews for broadcast over Denmark Radio this spring, Bhutanese soldiers have burned down houses or have forced the people to torch their own homes; political prisoners have been tortured, burnt with red-hot clothes irons; a woman was raped by 12 soldiers.

The more than 70,000 refugees in Nepal and presumably 25,000-30,000 in India have fled during the last couple of years. They are of Nepalese origin, but have proved their Bhutanese citizenship to Sv. Aage Lorenz. At the same time the Bhutanese government claims they are illegal immigrants...
To many westerners Bhutan is a Shangri-La, a Buddhist paradise of peace which has not been spoilt by mass-tourism and materialism... In Bhutan schooling and medical help is free, GNP is higher than, for example, Nepal, and the country is to a large extent self-sufficient in agricultural products. The refugees now live in camps, ten people together protected by four bamboo walls and a plastic roof. Sv. Aage Lorenz, who cannot believe that they would have willingly opted to leave, says that the Nepalese settlers were allowed in by the Bhutanese many years ago to cultivate and live in the southern part of the country where they do not themselves reside.

Now that the Nepalese are there, they must enjoy equal rights like everyone else. Should Denmark support a country which violates human rights, he questions, and shows a letter from the Lutheran World Service in Kathmandu which calls upon donor countries to reconsider giving aid to Bhutan in order to pressurize the Bhutanese government. Lutheran World Service is a sister organization of the Danish National Church Emergency Aid.

Danish assistance to Bhutan has increased over the last few years. This year's projects are planned for an amount of 50 million kroner, and it is intended that the aid stay on that level: "We have followed the situation with worry. Bhutan is a very good example where Denmark as a donor country has a direct influence", says the chief of the Asia Department of DANIDA, Mr. Michael Sternberg. "If it is right that Denmark has any influence, then I can only be pleased", reacts Sv. Aage Lorenz. On the other hand, if that is true, then a passage must be opened for the return of the refugees to Bhutan...."

Translated from the daily *VENSTREBLADET*, Holbaek, Denmark, January 9, 1993.

A HIMALAYAN TRAGEDY IN THE MAKING

Nepal is bearing the brunt of an episode of human suffering, sheltering over 80,000 Bhutanese refugees fleeing their homeland because of gross human rights abuses....

The Nepalese, majority of them Hindu, migrated to Drukpa Buddhist Bhutan from Nepal and Sikkim over the past 125 years....

The UNHCR which set up six camps in eastern Nepal's Jhapa and Morang districts maintains that it is dealing with genuine refugees....

Observers however point out that the key to resolving the issue lies with India, and minimal pressure for that matter from New Delhi could easily nudge Bhutan into action. New Delhi has maintained that the Bhutanese refugee issue can only be settled bilaterally between Kathmandu and Thimphu, but authorities in Nepal's Home Ministry point out that the Himalayan nation is not the country of first asylum for the refugees as they had to pass through India....

The Nation, Bangkok, December 21, 1992.

ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW - 1992 YEARBOOK

"Pro-Bhutanese sources have accused respected periodicals and newspapers of repeating exaggerated and unsubstantiated claims." This single sentence in the three page account of Bhutan's Political/Social Affairs, Foreign Relations and Economy/Infrastructure for the year 1992 best sums up the myopic view of the editors at FEER. Starting with the prejudiced premise that most refugees are not Bhutanese, and hence the deliberate use of "pro-Bhutanese" and not the more correct "pro-government", the "respected" periodical permits its sole contributor to pen down propaganda of the royal regime straight from the pages of *Kuensel*:

The report summarizes the current crisis in the following words: "During the 1980s, the king implemented a series of educational and language measures to strengthen nation's identity. In 1989, a policy known as Driglam Namza was launched that called on all Bhutanese to wear national dress in public, reduced the number of foreign visitors allowed into the country, halted television broadcasts from India and issued work permits to non-nationals. Despite the apparent acceptance of these measures by Bhutanese of Nepalese extraction living in the southern region of the country, during 1990-91 disaffected members of this group left for India or Nepal, claiming the government's policies to be "un-democratic." Some have since become involved in a campaign of terrorism and intimidation to establish a "Gorkha" homeland in Bhutan, and have raided isolated Bhutanese communities from across the adjoining Indian border in an effort to drive out the inhabitants." The editors at FEER, depending entirely on the report of one individual, are clearly guilty of being out-of-sync with the times. Only this can explain the deliberate ignor-

ing by FEER of changing realities and equations in the context of the Bhutanese issue. During the year, the media in general, 'respected' or otherwise, and governments and agencies the world over have substantially changed their outlook as a result of bits of truth about Bhutan finally emerging. Yet, despite the altered circumstances, FEER devotes itself entirely to flaying one organization, the Bhutan People's Party (BPP), and attempting to make a case for a nexus between this Party and "Greater Nepal" and "Gorkhaland".

From the vivid display of "Gorkha phobia" in the report it becomes difficult to assess whether the contributor himself, during his many annual pilgrimages to the country, may have first sowed the seeds of this idea to the regime (the Bhutanese government being the first to latch on to the bogey of "Greater Nepal"), or whether he is simply a propagating agent. Be that as it may, FEER now has the dubious distinction of remaining the only publication that subscribes to this outrageous theory. With even the indomitable Bhutanese Foreign Minister often forgetting, wisely, to pull out this rabbit from his hat, FEER, which has woven a fantastic tale, has its task set out to correct itself in the next Yearbook. A more powerful microscope at the editorial desk to separate fact from fiction even if they originate from its own sources, a greater degree of research, and a change of contributors may allow it to regain the title of 'respected' periodical.

Naturally, in the chapter on the Economy, the report presents the developments during the year in glowing terms, accentuating the 'successful' fourth Round Table Meeting of donors where pledges were laced with lavish praise for the regime's effective use of funds. Rel-

evant phrases are conveniently and liberally quoted. That these commitments are project-tied and have not helped the regime to extricate itself from the internal financial quagmire (see editorial) is another matter, and does not rate a mention. The record of purchase of a second aircraft provides the editors with yet another opportunity to take a shot at dissidents "mooted in mid-1990, but postponed for financial reasons with the rise of terrorism and arson in southern Bhutan".

The highlights during the year, according to FEER, in the area of Foreign Relations include the fact that the king's decision to skip the originally scheduled SAARC Summit in Sri Lanka "had no lasting impact on the organization", the proposal of the SAARC Fund by Bhutan, visit of top Indian Army brass to Bhutan (the thanks (sic) for valuable Indian military assistance "and especially for close cooperation and support, particularly in the past two years") and the eighth round of Sino-Bhutan border talks. Ironically, perhaps deliberately, the chapter ends with "Bhutan co-sponsoring a UN resolution on the situation in Burma, condemning the breaches of human rights by the regime".

That the editors at FEER have taken extraordinary precautions not to be swayed by 'exaggerations' in other 'respected' periodicals and newspapers is obvious. They have opted to remain steadfastly loyal to their sole contributor and refused to scan the media regarding significant developments on Bhutan, especially relating to the "southern problem". While keeping up a pretense of covering 1992 events with a smattering of data related to the year, the contributor has managed to present the government view, almost completely irrelevant and clearly outdated, and utilized the opportunity to make-good for favours received. ■

U.S. Report ... From Page 2

E. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The judicial system consists of local, district, and national courts. Criminal cases and a variety of civil matters are adjudicated under an 18th-century legal code, revised in 1957, which applies to all Bhutanese regardless of ethnic origin. Judges appointed by and accountable to the king are responsible for all aspects of a case, including investigation, filing of charges, prosecution and judgments. Appeals to higher courts are permitted, and final appeals may be made to the king. The legal system does not provide for jury trials or the right to a court-appointed defense attorney. The Bhutanese legal system has no provision for lawyers or solicitors, although it does allow for the appointment of a "Jambi" (a person well versed in the law) if the defendant so desires. Questions of family law, such as marriage, divorce, and adoption, are resolved separately according to traditional Buddhist law for the majority of Bhutanese and Hindu law in areas where persons of Nepalese origin predominate.

The government reportedly holds one political prisoner, Tek Nath Rizal, an ethnic Nepalese. Rizal, a former member of the Bhutan National Assembly and founder of HUOB, was abducted in 1989 from eastern Nepal where he had fled after clashing with the Bhutanese government over ethnic Nepalese rights. Rizal is being held on charges of conspiracy and treason. Two other prisoners of conscience, Josen Gasmere (sic) and Sushil Pouhrel (sic), were released in 1992.

F. Arbitrary Interference with privacy, family, Home, or Correspondence

There are no written guarantees of privacy, but cultural tradition is highly respectful of personal privacy. At the same time, the government places great emphasis on promoting national integration. For example, in 1989, by Royal decree, the wearing of Bhutanese national dress was made compulsory for all citizens. Anyone found violating the decree may be fined or sentenced to jail for a week. In the north the decree is not widely enforced, except in government offices, while in the south officials appear to enforce the decree rigorously. According to Human Rights groups, police regularly conduct house-to-house searches for suspected dissidents without offering explanations or justifications.

SECTION 2

RESPECT FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. Freedom of Speech and Press
Bhutan's population, whose adult literacy rate is around 12 percent, is relatively unaffected by the print media. The government's weekly newspaper Kuensel is the country's only regular publication, but Indian and other foreign newspapers are distributed without government interference. Bhutan has no television. In 1989 the government ordered the dismantling of all television antennas to prevent people from watching programs originating outside Bhutan. The government radio station broadcasts for 3 hours daily in the four major national languages (Dzongkha-the language of western highlands, Nepali, English, and Sharchop). Criticism of the king is permitted in the National Assembly but not in the public media. The use of Nepalese language in schools was banned at the end of 1990. Public schools in the south, closed throughout 1991, began to reopen during 1992.

B. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

No written guarantee of these freedoms exist. Bhutanese may engage

in peaceful assembly and association only for purposes approved by the government. Political parties are discouraged. The Bhutan People's Party and the Bhutan National Democratic Party, organized by ethnic Nepalese Bhutanese in exile, have been labeled "terrorist and antinational" and, according to the government, "have no standing inside the country." Both parties advocate a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy and claim wide support in southern Bhutan.

C. Freedom of Religion

Buddhism is the state religion. The government subsidizes monasteries and shrines and provides aid to about half the kingdom's 12,000 monks. The monastic establishment enjoys statutory representation in the National Assembly and Royal Advisory Council and is an influential voice in public policy. Citizens of other faiths, largely Hindus, enjoy freedom of worship but may not proselytize. Under Bhutanese law, conversions are illegal. The king has declared major Hindu festivals to be national holidays, and the royal family participates in them. Foreign missionaries are not permitted to proselytize in the kingdom, but international Christian relief organizations are active.

D. Freedom of Movement within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

There is freedom of movement within Bhutan for all Bhutanese citizens, and there is no bar on emigration or foreign travel. For many years Bhutanese seldom traveled inside or outside the kingdom, but the construction of roads and the establishment of air links with New Delhi, Calcutta, Dhaka, and Kathmandu encouraged travel. Bhutan's southern border with India is open, and people residing in the immediate areas freely cross this border. Indians from other regions who enter Bhutan by airplane or stay in hotels must have visas and fall under the overall limitation of about 3,000 tourists per year. By treaty, Bhutanese are free to reside and work in India.

For several years, Bhutan has sought to reduce the ethnic Nepalese population by implementing a 1985 Nationality law that significantly tightened the requirements for transmitting citizenship. Until 1985, citizenship was transmitted as long as at least the father was a Bhutanese citizen under the 1958 Nationality law (which granted citizenship to all ethnic Nepalese then residing in Bhutan). The 1985 law tightened this standard by requiring that both parents be Bhutanese citizens in order to transmit citizenship. Residents of Bhutan who could not satisfy this new requirement were retroactively declared illegal immigrants. People losing their citizenship under the 1985 law may apply for naturalization, but only after satisfying a rigorous set of standards including proficiency in the Dzongkha language and proof of residence in Bhutan during the previous 15 years. Exile political groups complain that the law makes unfair demands for documentation on largely illiterate people in a country that has only recently adopted basic administrative procedures. They claim many ethnic Nepalese who have been in Bhutan for generations were expelled because they were unable to document their claims to residence. The government denies this allegation and asserts, for example, that the word of village elders is an acceptable substitute for written documentation. Beginning in early 1992, increasing numbers of ethnic Nepalese from Bhutan began arriving in refugee camps in eastern Nepal. By year's end, 72,000

Bhutanese had arrived in five camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its cooperating agencies. Up to 20,000 more are believed to have left Bhutan and settled with family members in India. In a Bhutan population of less than 700,000, the departure of over 100,000 people constitutes a major demographic change.

The government claims those who have been expelled are Nepalese citizens who came to Bhutan to work after the 1958 citizenship decree was issued. It also claims that the majority of those arriving in Nepal have left voluntarily after selling their land and property. Many refugees, however, claim that they were pressured to leave by local authorities. These pressures are said to include the threat to confiscate property, denial of public services, and physical intimidation.

SECTION 3

RESPECT FOR POLITICAL RIGHTS

THE RIGHT OF CITIZENS TO CHANGE THEIR GOVERNMENT
Citizens of Bhutan do not have the right to change their government. Bhutan is a traditional monarchy, with sovereign powers vested in the king. The government has resisted democratic changes. It is a highly elitist system, with decision-making centered in the palace and involving only a small number of officials in the civil and religious establishment. Although the present king and his father have made some attempts to integrate women and southerners (ethnic Nepalese) into the body politic, the system is still dominated by the male members of an aristocracy of Tibetan Buddhist ancestry. Political parties do not exist, and their formation is discouraged by the government. The Bhutan People's Party (BPP), founded in 1989 (sic), was outlawed in 1990 as antinational. The BPP operates primarily out of Nepal and India but claims support in the predominately Nepali southern regions. The Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP), founded by ethnic Nepalese exiles in February 1992, also was outlawed. The 150-member National Assembly is composed of 105 members elected by limited franchise (heads of family in the Hindu areas, village headmen in the Buddhist regions), 12 elected by the monastic establishment, and 33 high-level officials of the government administration appointed by the king. Its principal functions are to enact laws, approve senior appointments in the government, and advise the king on matters of national importance. It also provides a forum for presenting grievances and rectifying cases of maladministration. Voting is by secret ballot, with a simple majority needed to pass a measure. The king cannot formally veto legislation passed by the Assembly, but he may refer bills back to it for further consideration. The Assembly occasionally has rejected the king's recommendations or delayed their implementation, but the king has always had enough influence to persuade the Assembly to approve legislation he considers essential or to withdraw proposals he opposes. Government officials may be questioned by the Assembly, and Ministers can be forced to resign by a two-thirds vote of no confidence.

SECTION 4

GOVERNMENTAL ATTITUDE REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NONGOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

There are no local Human Rights groups active in Bhutan. International Committee of Red Cross representatives held discussions with government officials in Thimpu in

December [1992] and reached agreement to begin prison visits in January. The HUOB, representing ethnic Nepalese dissident opposition, claims to be based in Bhutan but operates primarily from Nepal. The government allowed a high-level Amnesty International delegation to visit Bhutan for 6 days in January. The delegation met with senior government officials and traveled to the southern district of Samchi, but their request to visit the district of Chirang, where there have been hostilities, was turned down on security grounds. Several other international groups and individual investigators have been denied access to Bhutan.

SECTION 5

DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE, SEX, RELIGION, LANGUAGE, OR SOCIAL STATUS

The origins of the 1985 Nationality law and the government's subsequent "Bhutanization" drive lie primarily in the ethnic composition of Bhutan. The country's ruling Buddhist majority feared that their culture would be overwhelmed in the long run by the Hindu ethnic Nepalese, whose percentage of population had risen to a third by 1991. The Indian annexation of neighboring Sikkim in 1974, where just such development occurred, was seen as an object lesson. Early efforts at halting the unfavorable demographic trends focused on tightly limiting immigration, restricting employment and residence of the Nepalese to the southern portion of the country, an attempting to assimilate the existing ethnic Nepalese. Attempts at assimilation included liberalizing policies on intermarriage, educating some students in regions other than their own, and giving priority to economic development in the south.

Over the last decade, the king has allocated 2,500 acres of land to landless households in southern Bhutan, and several hundred farmers and orange growers have been given special loans, according to Bhutanese government sources. By law, southerners may own land and establish business in the north, and northerners have the same right in the south. Nonetheless, it is reportedly still difficult for non-Buddhist (except government officials) to buy property in Buddhist areas. In recent years assimilation has given way to Bhutanization. Measures aimed at preserving national identity requires the wearing of Bhutanese dress, make the teaching of Dzongkha compulsory, and ban the teaching of Nepalese. The Nationality law retroactively stripped citizenship from ethnic Nepalese who could not document their residence in the country prior to 1958, a near impossibility in a country with widespread illiteracy, which only recently adopted administrative procedures. Tens of thousands were declared to be illegal immigrants and forcibly evicted from the country. The 1985 reform also stripped citizenship from ethnic Nepalese born in Bhutan who could not prove that both their parents satisfied the requirements for citizenship under the new law. Still more fled the country voluntarily in the face of officially sanctioned pressure, re-

portedly including arbitrary arrests, beatings, rape, robberies, and other forms of intimidation by police and the army.

Exile student groups accuse the government of revoking the foreign scholarships of students from Nepalese families and discriminating against Nepalese in government hiring. Families with ties to the palace and senior levels of the government are strongly favored in their access to state scholarships for foreign education. Nevertheless, the king has also made a serious effort to send other qualified candidates for education overseas as well drawing particularly from Bhutan's prestigious civil bureaucracy.

Bhutan has not developed either a rigid caste system or customs which sequester or disenfranchise women. Family land is divide equally between sons and daughters. Bhutanese traditionally place girls in a lower status than boys, however, and girls receive poorer nutrition and less medical attention than boys. Boys outnumber girls by about two to one in primary schools and seven to one at secondary level. The disparity between the higher mortality rates of females versus male infants has resulted in an overall ratio of 97.2 females per 100 males, one of the lowest in the world.

The sexes mix relatively freely, marriage may be arranged by partners themselves as well as by their parents, and divorce is common. Polygamy is still permitted, a man is allowed by law to have three wives, but polyandry is no longer sanctioned. Marriage registration is compulsory, and legislation favoring women in matters of alimony has been enacted. About 10 percent of the persons employed by the various government ministries and departments are women. There is no evidence that violence against women is a problem in Bhutan.

**SECTION 6
WORKER RIGHTS**

A. The Right of Association
Trade Unionism is not permitted, and Bhutan has no labor unions. Bhutan is not a member of the International Labor Organization.
B. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively
There is no collective bargaining or legislation addressing labor-related issues pertaining to the small industrial work force, which makes up less than 1 percent of the population. There are no export processing zones.
C. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor
As far as is known, there is no law prohibiting forced or compulsory labor, but it is not practiced.
D. Minimum Age for Employment of Children
There are no laws governing the employment of children. Children are not employed in the industrial sector, but many assist their families in the traditional economy.
E. Acceptable Conditions of Work
As noted above, there is no legislation addressing labor issues. There is no legislated minimum wage, standard workweek, or health and safety standards. Labor markets are highly segmented by region, and monitoring wage developments is inhibited by the preponderance of subsistence agriculture and the practice of barter. The largest salaried labor market is the government service, which has an administered wage structure last revised in 1988. Only about 18 industrial plants employ more than 50 workers. Apart from a few of these larger plants, the entire industrial sector consists of home-based handicrafts and some 60 privately owned small or medium-scale factories producing consumer goods.

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION

Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	7,966	1,645
Goldhap	Jhapa	7,877	2,400
Beldangi I	Jhapa	14,452	3,062
Beldangi II	Jhapa	22,462	5,471
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,855	3,600
Pathri	Morang	16,596	4,700
Total		79,208	20,878

Cumulative births: 1,626
Cumulative deaths: 1,888

The above figures are as of Feb. 28, 1993