

The Bhutan REVIEW

Monthly

News, Views and Reviews

VOL 1 No. 3

March 1993

Rs. 3/-

INDIA TO THE REGIME'S RESCUE Rs. 250 Million Loan

According to a news flash broadcast over the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) on March 19, 1993, India and Bhutan have signed a loan agreement that will enable the Royal Government to draw upon financial assistance to the tune of two hundred and fifty million Indian Rupees from the Government of India. While announcing the signature of the loan agreement in Thimphu between the Indian Ambassador to Bhutan, Pushkar Johari, and the Bhutanese Finance Minister, the government painstakingly, but misleadingly, emphasized that this was in the nature of routine transactions normally undertaken between the two governments. It is true that the State Bank of India which has a controlling share in the operations of the Bank of Bhutan has, in the past, permitted overdrafts to the Bank of Bhutan, read government, based solely on commercial considerations. However, the contention of the government, in a bid to conceal the desperate pecuniary situation, that the loan arrangement is routine is blatantly false; this is absolutely the first time that the two governments have signed a purely monetary loan package.

The significance of this generosity on the part of the Indian government, which makes available to Bhutan Rs.100 million in cash immediately and Rs.150 million in the next fiscal year, still remains unclear. However, it has provided the regime, desperately in need of resources to stay afloat, with some breathing space. But if, in the guise of 'controlling' the situation in the south, the funds are misutilized as has been the case so far, no amount of injection of resources from considerate neighbours is likely to be enough.

WFP ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

The World Food Programme (WFP) which has, since the beginning of 1992, been providing food-aid to Bhutanese refugees in Nepal recently announced from its headquarters in Rome on March 11, 1993 that it will provide additional food assistance to about 85,000 Bhutanese refugees for the next six months. During the period April - September 1993, WFP will supply 8,800 metric tonnes of rice, lentil and other food items for the refugees. While announcing the assistance, WFP stated that the number of refugees had gone up to 77,000 in January 1993 compared to 10,000 during the same month last year.

APRIL 10 - 11, 1993 : THE LONG AWAITED SAARC SUMMIT



Will SAARC help them return home ?

"We would like to see them return to Bhutan with honour", said the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala of Nepal while explaining the efforts made by His Majesty's Government towards resolving the problems of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The Prime Minister was talking to journalists at Tribhuvan International Airport on March 28, 1993 on his return from a three day visit to Varanasi in India. The twice postponed 7th SAARC Summit is finally scheduled to take place between 10-11 April, 1993 in Dhaka. In this regard, the Prime Minister also indicated that he would meet with King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to discuss the Bhutanese refugee problem. The meeting between the two leaders has been long overdue and Bhutanese in exile are hoping that this will ultimately pave the way for their early return home. Any deliberate attempt to delay the process of solving the current crisis in the kingdom is in no one's interest.

BHUTAN CONFERENCE IN LONDON

On March 22-23, 1993, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London organized a conference, "Bhutan - A Traditional Order and the Forces of Change." The convenor of the Conference Dr. Michael Hutt, South Asia Centre, SOAS, conceived the idea of such a Conference after he visited Bhutan in September 1992. During his visit to the kingdom, Dr. Hutt met with the king and had an opportunity to discuss the southern issue at length. During this meeting, the king had told him, "We are adaptable people, we are open to ideas" (Himal, Sept/Oct 1992). This may inspired Dr. Hutt to organize the Conference in order to get all those concerned with the current crisis in Bhutan to discuss the issue. However, those opposed to the 'forces of change' were so strong that he was unable to allow dissident participation and, therefore, besides an impressive collection of intellectuals and journalists, only the Royal Government was represented.

Participants at the Conference included academics and experts on Bhutan. Dr. Michael Aris, Prof. Leo Rose and Prof. A.C. Sinha who have all written books on Bhutan were some of the better known academics who were in attendance. Dr. Aris spoke on "Conflict and Conciliation in Traditional Bhutan" and made some very enlightening statements aimed at the government. "The Role of Monarchy in the Current Crisis in

Bhutan" was presented by Prof. Leo Rose, who provided some pertinent views on the current crisis in the kingdom. Prof. A.C. Sinha presented a paper "Bhutan: Political, Cultural and National Dilemma."

Journalists participating in the Conference included Kanak Mani Dixit of Himal, Kathmandu, Nicholas Nugent of the BBC, London, and Kinley Dorji of Kuensel, Thimphu. While the first two participated as journalists, Kinley Dorji had to forgo his journalistic instincts and carefully put up a calculated defense of the government views. Dixit through his paper, "Bhutan and 'greater Nepal'" tried to dispel the 'Greater Nepal' bogey which had been conveniently used by the Royal Government.

There was yet another category of participants - the Bhutan supporters. The UNDP Resident Representative in Thimphu, Terrence Jones who sat quietly throughout the Conference apparently made the trip to London solely to act as a chaperone for the group of three government officials whose trips were generously funded by him, utilizing United Nations' resources, of course. Jigme Thinley, Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs had done his homework well and, as expected, appealing on the basis of preservation of the Drukpa culture tried his best to defend every aspect of the current repressive policies of the government. Not to be outdone, Brian C.

Shaw, our hero of this issue joined this group, changed the topic of his originally intended paper (The King, Lyonpos, Dzongdags and peasant-farmers: power-brokering and 'democracy' in Bhutan in the late 20th century) and made a distinct fool of himself by sharing his skewed perceptions on the "southern problem" and "Nation-Building in Bhutan." In doing damage to the government position, Shaw was ably assisted by Thierry Mathou of the University of Sorbonne whose blind support for the regime resulted in irreparable damage both to his own and the regime's credibility. Environment and regime friendly Bruce Bunting from the World Wildlife Fund, talking on the "Environmental Ethic for the 21st Century", mentioned how 'Buddhist economics approaches the world in a more holistic manner and places the highest value on peace and nonviolence'. He found it convenient to ignore one-sixth of the country's population in exile as a result of 'nonviolence' on the part of the Buddhist government.

Language policy, art and architecture, textiles, Bhutanese Buddhism, diplomacy, and development were

some of the other topics that were discussed during the Conference. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees which is supporting Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal also sent an official. Through him the official version of the UNHCR regarding the refugees was made known to the participants, thus going a long way in dispelling the untruths being circulated by the government.

According to neutral observers who attended the Conference, the tone was clearly one of reproach for the existing policies of the regime and the prevailing government position. It is significant that this impression was created despite strong government attendance and support for the regime by a large number of speakers at the forum. The implicit message that the meeting conveyed is evidently clear; if Bhutan is to remain in the comity of nations as a respected member that upholds basic human values then the regime must immediately discontinue its repressive measures targeted against a section of its people and take the steps necessary to enable the people in exile to return to their homes.

This issue covers the Conference in detail

THE OTHER HALF OF THE TRUTH

According to Kuensel in its March 6, 1993 issue, five 'Ngolop terrorists' allegedly despatched by the Camp Secretary and his assistant at Timai were apprehended by villagers in Leopani and saved from the wrath of the villagers by the convenient and 'timely' arrival of the Police. For the record, these common criminals were actually nabbed by the so-called "anti-nationals" at the Kokrajhar railway station and handed over to the Headman of Ultapani, Assam to be turned over to Bhutan. The Indian criminal who provided arms to the criminals, the Indian nationals who assisted the "anti-nationals" in the capture of these criminals at Kokrajhar, and the village headman of Ultapani, India, will no doubt provide corroborating evidence when required.

BHUTAN ELECTED VICE CHAIRPERSON OF THE ASIA REGIONAL MEETING ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Despite its own dismal human rights record, the Royal Government of Bhutan has been elected Vice Chairperson of the Asia Regional Meeting on Human Rights being held in Bangkok from March 29 to April 2, 1993. As a member nation, the Royal Government is expected to abide by the basic obligations required of its members as enshrined in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. If, in spite of realities, the world body which purports to uphold human values permits an autocratic regime that has absolute disregard for human values to lead discussions on human rights issues, what justice can the victims expect?

EDITORIAL

THE LONDON VERDICT

Regardless of its immediate fallout and the time taken for the eventual resolution of the current crisis in the kingdom, there is no doubt that in the days ahead the recently concluded Bhutan Conference: A Traditional Order and the Forces of Change, organized under the auspices of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, will be looked back upon as the first healthy step in the process of finding a lasting solution. True, that owing to 'diplomatic sensitivities' people in exile could not be represented at the conference, and that the panel of speakers was tilted heavily in favour of the government. However, according to neutral observers, this did not result in a one-sided presentation of rhetoric, and the meeting, in fact, generated substantial and substantive debates and discussions about real issues.

While the conference covered a range of topics that included the environment, architecture and textiles, admittedly the "southern problem" was the focus of discussion. And, for the first time, before a collective panel of experts the details of the "problem" was exposed, at least from the point of view of the government. A number of 'experts' foolishly opted to go overboard in defense of the regime, adopting shoddy arguments supported by unnecessary innuendo. It was not surprising, therefore, that casualties were high and, in view of the participation level that included almost every entry in the Who's Who of Bhutan experts and a host of other very well-informed people, for a few individuals embarrassment, humiliation and wounded pride may be the least of their problems.

If, in the absence of dissident representation, the royal government believed that it could impress its views upon the community of Bhutanese experts and the international community at large, it did not quite succeed. In the words of a neutral observer, while a number of speakers generally tried to either project or protect Thimphu's position, skepticism ran high on the floor and the tone of the conference was noticeably in favour of those in exile. While this was only to be expected in view of the regime's actions to date against a section of its people and the level of international awareness about the blatant violation of human rights in the country, the fiasco was also due in part to the overzealous attempt by some regime loyalists to present the government case with uninformed and nonsensical arguments.

Now that the issues in question have been aired by the government at a forum beyond which there is none other, in terms of influencing decision-makers in governments and international agencies, and the regime has decidedly lost, it is imperative that Thimphu pragmatically decide its future course of action. It is evident that the policies followed to date were based on the belief that the regime would weather the storm of international opinion, and that it would, with dogged perseverance, be able to justify its repressive measures on the grounds of protecting the nation from a horde of "power hungry, illegal immigrants". The jury at the conference, even as it began numerically in favour of the regime, has clearly ruled that this ploy will not wash with the world, and Thimphu must, therefore, make a conscious effort to deal with reality. As a first consequence the regime's position brought to the conference through the Home Secretary Jigmi Thinlay's paper must obviously undergo major transformation.

It is fitting that the conference which exposed the weaknesses of the government's arguments and provided a pointer to the futility of the regime's determination to persevere with its current policies, also delivered to the gathering, notably the representatives from Thimphu, wise counsel towards resolution of the problem in the form of a paper by Dr. Michael Aris. A person who is widely acknowledged for his scholarly work on Bhutan, Dr. Aris has for long been deeply associated with the country. It is not surprising, therefore, that he chose to address the "southern problem" from the point of view finding a solution. Dr. Aris argued for availing of traditional methods of conciliation to bring about an honourable settlement instead of opting for alternative methods applying coercive force since the latter only brought about interim solutions and provoked a cycle of further conflict.

It is certain that had the meeting backed Thimphu's position the government would have considered the advice of Dr. Aris superfluous. However, in the light of the outcome which has clearly set the trend against the regime in terms of international opinion and sympathy, Dr. Aris's suggestion to the government to recognize the value and advantages of mediation as a means of political conciliation, clearly merits serious consideration by Thimphu. Unfortunately the presentation by Dr. Aris preceded the general consensus opinion formed against the regime, and therefore, may not have elicited the appropriate discussions.

The willingness to consider the soft option will necessarily require a dramatic reversal in the current government position. Given the rhetoric of the past, this may at first appear to be impossible. However, in view of the truth and the surprisingly large degree of real awareness among the public, it would be surprising if the very same northern public that the regime fears would ridicule it for 'loss of face' did not actually applaud it for being brave enough to face up to realities. The value of propaganda is short-lived and people eventually find out the truth; the average Bhutanese has had enough and will welcome any steps that will end the crisis. Moreover, acknowledgement of realities will also help the bureaucracy to regain some of its credibility which has been sorely tested as government spokespersons are called upon to plead a case they do not truly believe in. The process of conciliation naturally requires sacrifice and a willingness to compromise. Those within who object to change and those outside that demand reforms must be equally prepared to take into consideration the sensitivities and concerns of the other side. In the true interest of the Bhutanese nation and the Bhutanese people, are individuals prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice?

"PALACE POLITICS NEEDS REVISION AND RECONSIDERATION" - Leo Rose

Although Rose is known to personally hold the monarch and his late father in high esteem, it is not a failing since most Bhutanese in exile would have been found guilty on the same account. This has not, however, impaired his judgment or prevented him from undertaking an objective analysis of the monarchy since its establishment to the present in his paper, "The Role of Monarchy in the Current Crisis in Bhutan." Rose highlights the attempts by the first king to acquire religious authority and explains the convenient power-sharing arrangement arrived at between the monarchs and their small coterie of officials and the local elite families during the 1907-52 period. He emphasizes that this same political system also held true in southern Bhutan where the Lhotshampas were administered by the Dorji family and local elites.

"The highly decentralized but reasonably efficient system of governance began to change with the ascent of the third Druk Gyalpo to the throne in 1952." With developments in Tibet and India during the 1940s Bhutan had to shed "the good old days" mentality and take to the path of modernization. Rose observes, correctly, that with the introduction of modern education mostly the non-elites began availing these facilities since the local elite families saw no need for an education as they had in any case, without education, dominated the local areas for several generations. [It is also true that those families which had clout refused, or avoided, parting with their children, either on grounds of shortage of field hands or for sentimental reasons, when the visionary Prime Minister, Jigmi Palden Dorji, personally 'drafted' and admitted young boys in schools in India in 1958].

The process of modernization also increased centralization. By the seventies the Thimphu "boys", mostly from non-elite families were running the show, paying scant attention to local leaders and Assembly representatives, and district level officers replaced local elite families, all this achieved without major confrontation. Rose believes that the monastic establishment, which would have been expected to confront such systemic changes, did not do so partly because the most powerful centres, Thimphu and Punakha, were themselves busy establishing more effective controls over other institutions. He further believes that though neither king nor Je Khenpo were satisfied over the division of authority and responsibility they chose to avoid a confrontation.

Rose discusses the concerns of the present monarch in the 1980s over the excessive concentration of powers at the centre and acknowledges the introduction, without openly confronting the elite group and monastic system, of innovative measures despite the lack of enthusiasm by different interest groups. He does not, however, believe "much was accomplished in real terms" in the decentralization process and, in any case, this objective was superseded "in fact if not in form" by "a broad new range of policies which had as their objective the preservation of

Bhutan's national identity" based on Tsa-Wa-Sum, Driglam Namza and "One Nation, One People" theory. Rose covers all the now well known elements that went in towards the implementing the new philosophy and concludes that the more extremist views "insists upon the necessity to exclude these outsiders and to severely limit the involvement of legitimate Nepali Bhutanese in the country's politics, economy and social structure."

While Rose suggests that the increasing voice of the Central Monk Body in decision-making could be one of the factors for the adoption of the Driglam Namza policy in the late 1980s, he prefers to believe that the detection of "(infusion of a large number of Nepali migrants) was more important to the government on this issue." However, in the context of centralization Rose also has this to say, "this led to the decision to establish modern military and police forces that were very different from the local militias and police that had defended the country from outside powers and effectively controlled the movement of migrants (i.e. Nepalis) into the southern districts." The glaring contradiction is accentuated when we note that before centralization, according to Rose, the local elites, i.e., southern Bhutanese themselves under the Dorji family, were in administrative control of the area. Does this anomaly imply that a modern administrative machinery, painfully more conscious of the need to control immigration, was less competent in its task?

In his discussion of policy "debates" (all quotes around single words in this article belong entirely to Rose) in the National Assembly on issues currently vexing the nation that Rose has clearly displayed his abilities of good judgment, astuteness and impartiality. He notes that "official" views presented by Cabinet ministers "are usually considered to reflect the palace's perceptions and preferences", but that of late the Assembly which "respectfully accepts" government "advice" has begun expressing reservations.

On the question of the national dress code Rose recalls being confused in 1988 over what constituted the "national dress." While he believes that the king's decree allowed for flexibility on this matter, the Special Committee set up to formulate the rules "stated that all Bhutanese must wear the gho and kira in virtually any appearance in public." The Assembly advocated a stricter policy, but eventually dropped the legislation after ministers expressed the view that the proposal went beyond the less rigorous specifications of the king. But, in yet another anomaly for a monarchy, Rose notes that "local officials generally try to interpret the Kasho (decree) in the strictest form possible."

On the "policy toward Lhotshampa emigres and 'Ngolops'", Rose paraphrases, without comment, the view of critics who believe that the "royal government has been much too tolerant of the 'anti-nationals', termed Ngolops, in the process failing to defend and preserve the integrity of the Bhutanese polity." Policies re-

ceiving the attention of these critics include; royal exemption extended to Lhotshampas on payment of rural taxes and on goongda woola (involuntary labour) for 1992; amnesty for "about 1500 Lhotshampas under detention in an effort to get them (unsuccessfully) to remain in Bhutan rather than expelling them from the country"; failure of courts to impose capital punishment "to 'ngolops' under trial for 'anti-national' activities"; retention and recruitment of officials from this suspect community; king's visit to southern Bhutan to attempt to persuade Lhotshampas to stay in Bhutan, instead "the entire Lhotshampa community should be forced out of the country"; "payment" of kidu grants to Lhotshampas emigrating from the country; and non-distribution of land abandoned by Lhotshampas to Drukpas.

Expectedly only Rose and Aris noted the implications over the call for a fresh contract to reinforce monarchy, Rose picking up the debate over the legislation "calling for all Bhutanese to make Genjas (legally binding agreement), that is pledges of loyalty to the King and the dynastic system, similar to the Genjas made in 1907 when monarchy was established." Rose covers the debate between the king and Assembly members in the 1991 and 1992 sessions and states that the members went along when the king expressed his view that no Genjas were necessary. Rose analyses that there is more in the debate than merely a consideration of a new Genja, "for the implicit theme in all this dialogue is whether a Genja from a Lhotshampa is acceptable", and hence the debate is "an integral part of the ongoing discussion of the Tsa-Wa-Tsum policy and the manner in which the "one nation, one people" principle should be applied."

In summarizing, Rose believes that "there is a measure of truth in both these assessments of politics in contemporary Bhutan"; Bhutanese who interpret "extremist" views as not really indicating their more moderate position, and Nepali Bhutanese groups in exile who insist that the king assumes a liberal position to "fool" foreign governments and press about the repressive character of government policies. He believes that the king is not just saying nice things to outsiders, but at the same time he is issuing orders and insisting upon their implementation. He is of the view that "criticisms directed at royal policies have some substance both in pragmatic and theoretical terms and will not go away even if the ngolop problem is contained or even resolved", that at last there is "a real dialogue on substantive issues that is still polite and restrained but that it is also too important to be ignored" and that "the way in which the palace does politics will have to be revised and reconsidered over the next few years."

...POST SCRIPT...

[While the above review faithfully represents the views of Leo Rose as circulated in print, we are informed that he digressed substantially, and was overly defensive of the monarch, royal family and regime.]

THE BHUTAN CONFERENCE A TRADITIONAL ORDER AND THE FORCES OF CHANGE

Papers on a diverse range of topics and issues ranging from textiles, environment, history, religion, diplomacy, and the "southern problem" were presented at the Bhutan Conference in London. A brief review of other papers related to the "southern problem" is provided below.

THE VIEW FROM THIMPHU :

Two papers directly dealing with the current crisis in Bhutan were presented. Of the two, the one by Jigme Thinley, Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, was clearly designed to reflect the position and views of the Royal Government. The extremist position of the regime, with little space for dialogue, is clearly manifest in Thinley's presentation. The government has used the occasion to convey its belief that it is justified in doing what has for been done against a section of its people. Of course, the argument hinges to a great extent on government assertion that, in any case, those that she has ousted are not genuine citizens.

As an argument in favour of the government's supposed good intentions, the paper labours on a programme of integration that began and ended in the nineteen eighties. The paper fails to accept, as evidenced by its early demise, that the programme of integration (North and South) was conceptually wrong. Integration of people of different cultures is an evolutionary process taking generations and which cannot be hastened with such superfluous catalysts as money for marriage. By first ensuring that there could be no assimilation through rigid strictures that prevented people from the south even travelling in the north, and then complaining within ten years of lifting such sanctions that integration failed, is absurd. In any case, the two cultures were peacefully coexisting side by side until the overnight government intervention of 1989 which attempted forced amalgamation of the southern culture with that of the North. Even today the problem is not between two cultures - the problem is one of dissent in one part of the country against a government that is blatantly discriminatory.

The paper states various methods by which the people of Nepali origin allegedly entered Bhutan and claimed Bhutanese nationality. In the traditional fashion the government chooses to present twisted facts and half truths of exceptional and rare examples to make sweeping generalizations about the entire Lhotsampa community. The paper similarly establishes voluntary "reasons for return migration". Will any sane person opt for spending life in a crowded refugee camp leaving home, career, landed property and everything else behind? The ridiculous assumption by the Bhutanese government that others will actually buy such stories stifles the imagination.

On the Human Rights front the government's hardline attitude and disrespectful approach can best be summed up from the text of Jigme Thinley's presentation, "To this end, health care, education, transportation and above all, hope for a better

and more secure future are more important than anything else. Individual freedom and liberty on which western concept of Human Rights is founded has little relevance to these basic aspirations." It is not surprising that Bhutan, in true autocratic regime fashion so dear to leaders in the Third World, chooses to decry western concepts of human rights even as in all other aspects it is striving to attain western standards, at least for the privileged class that is close to the regime.

In summary, it is a sad commentary on the state of the minds of those close to the palace that what had hitherto remained a problem between dissidents and the regime, has turned clearly racist despite the presence of a large Lhotsampa population that the king still deigns to call his subjects. In the search for arguments from a bare cupboard, Thinley and his co-writers have chosen to be openly derogatory about the Nepali race and opted to openly display the government's abhorrence of every aspect of Nepali culture and lifestyle. Given that the problem will eventually be resolved regardless of Thimphu's own perceptions and aspirations, it is unfortunate and regrettable that racist overtones have been introduced in an otherwise excellent paper that cleverly moulded 'facts' to serve the government purpose.

Kinley Dorji provides a journalistic approach to "Bhutan's Current Crisis - A View from Thimphu." Unlike many a times in the past, this time he has cautiously and cleverly approached the "crisis" without appearing to sacrifice his journalistic ethics. Firstly, he has given a run down of the chronological events regarding the southern problem. Of course, in the manner the Bhutanese government would appreciate.

Avoiding personal commitment Kinley comments about "dissident groups, who are seen by the government as "anti-nationals"" but who claim "that they are victims of cultural and ethnic discrimination by the Bhutanese government." He is careful enough to liberally employ phrases and expressions such as, "...according to the government of Bhutan, ...the Bhutanese government dismisses the report as, ...In its documentation of terrorist activities by the dissidents, the Bhutanese government, and so on that help him along with his conscience. However, the paper, as expected, faithfully presents the views of the government without the pure hatred and animosity exhibited in the Home Secretary's presentation. So much for autonomy of the press in Bhutan.

OTHER PRESENTATIONS

Two papers presented by non-Bhutanese have been reviewed in detail elsewhere. From among the rest, Professor A.C.Sinha of the North Eastern Hills University in Shillong, India, provided a comprehensive rundown on the political and cultural developments in Bhutan from the reign of the first Shabdrung to the present in his paper "Political, Cultural and National Dilemma." He particularly establishes the Bhutanese links and impact with British India and maintains that "the

internal requirements and the geopolitical compulsions conspired to the emergence of Wangchuck dynastic rulers in 1907 almost as a creation of the British Indian frontier policy. The monarchy was created on expediency without appropriate legitimacy and institutional proppings." He gives further insight about the Wangchuck-British equation, including their connivance in the murder of the Shabdrung in 1931. Sinha cites various estimates by British missions of the Nepalese population in Bhutan at different periods in time. He mentions the "imaginary" census figures which results in current estimates of the Lhotsampa population varying wildly from "15% to 65%." He recognizes the fact that "over the past 125 years the Nepalis turned 'negative land' in the south into "a productive bread basket" and provided the work force for recent development programmes. He disagrees with the prevailing aggressive ethnic policy which is enacted with a sense of exaggerated powers.

Mathou in "The Growth of Diplomacy in Bhutan" highlights the positive aspects of Bhutanese foreign policy not missing any opportunity to take jibes at "the so-called democratic movement" which resorts to "extensive disinformation campaigns." He notes that the "flood of Nepalese workers began to enter the Kingdom in the 1960s", not willing to admit that the people he is referring to were imported by government agencies with government sanction, issued identity cards and strictly regulated, preventing them from assimilating with the local population. This group was unceremoniously driven out of the country prior to 1988. Further, he fails to note the migration of Lhotsampas to north-Eastern states of India during the 1960s due to land pressure in Bhutan.

George Van Driem in his "Language Policy In Bhutan" takes great pains, using some very strange and bizarre logic that would astound any Tibetologist, to defend the selection of Dzongkha as the national language even though no one, not even Lhotsampas, has ever begged to disagree. Unfortunately in the process of doing that which was unnecessary, Van Driem manages to expose shortcomings in his field of expertise; very little knowledge of other ethnic groups and their languages; closeness to the regime; and allergy to southern Bhutanese.

"Conflict and Conciliation in Traditional Bhutan" by Dr. Michael Aris suggests that Bhutan take a leaf out of the past and consider the employment of its traditional skills in mediating a solution to the current crisis. Aris, through examples, shows how the resolving of disputes and problems, whether political or societal, have been achieved satisfactorily in the past without the use of "coercive force" which, he believes, could at best provide only temporary solutions.

Kanak Mani Dixit believes that Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering and Subhas Ghising, Chairman of Darjeeling Hill Council, apparently independently of each other have contended that there is such a living creature that goes by the nomenclature of "Greater Nepal. How-

ever, he puts to rest this concept after considering the position and opinions of various interest groups which might have anything to do with this issue. He dismisses any reason that Bhutanese in exile, one possible candidate among three, would support the call for a "Greater Nepal."

SILLOVER FROM LAST ISSUE

Briefs from HUOB Annual General Body Meeting held at Birtamod, Jhapa on February 26, 1993, which could not be carried in the last issue due to space constraints.

Executive Committee reconstituted and expanded to nine members. Om Dhungel elected as General Secretary (Press and Publicity).

P.R.Dahal redesignated as Secretary (Coordination).

MEDIA SCAN

The refugees began to reach Nepal during mid 1991 and their population now exceeds 76,000, with registration of new arrivals in early 1993 peaking at around 150 each day. An estimated 20,000 are also living in India and a further 20,000 with relatives in Nepal....Looking to 1993, NRC (Nepal Red Cross) and the Federation (International Federation of Red Cross) have planned an ambitious programme, targeted at maintaining the levels of basic items supplied by the Red Cross to new arrivals, which are expected to boost the camp population from today's 76,000 to 120,000". —NEPAL, February 1993, a publication of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva, Switzerland.

A two-day "Bhutan Conference" was organized at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The Conference was attended by professors, journalists, and many Bhutan-friendly westerners. Jigme Thinley, Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs of the Royal Government of Bhutan was also a participant. However, there were no representatives from among the 80,000 refugees who are presently living in the districts of Jhapa and Morang in Nepal. Because of this, there were worries that the southern Bhutanese problem that has escalated over the past two years would not be given proper attention. However, this was not the case. Regardless of the topics presented at the Conference, the focus of discussions ultimately centred around the southern Bhutanese problem. The Conference clearly exposed the lack of intellectual depth of some of the speakers who claimed to be specialists on Bhutan. Whether it was the fear of not being issued visas, or to safeguard the unique Shangri-La, these persons resorted to even greater bias than the Royal Government representatives.

Working papers on Bhutanese foreign policy, politics, environment, culture and development programmes were presented by American, European and Japanese specialists in plenty. But, because of the presence of people in the audience who knew Bhutan even better and understood the refugee problems, deficiencies in the working papers were critically examined. Especially, the report of a British woman, who had just returned after a stint in the refugee camps, put many of them in difficult situations. On the other hand, participants had the opportunity to clearly hear and understand the policies of Thimphu with regard to the southern problem from the Home Secretary Jigme Thinley. He expressed the concern of the government that since the Nepalese immigrants had established their roots in Darjeeling, Sikkim and Duars, if the Royal Government did not take necessary measures then Bhutan's Drukpa culture would be lost. In a mild tone he questioned, if the Nepali-speaking people swarm all over, then where would we Drukpas go? The Conference did not arrive at any conclusion but, for the first time, a process of debate and discussion on the Bhutanese crisis has begun. And what was observed was that, first, concrete steps must be taken to repatriate Bhutanese refugees, and thereafter, within Bhutan itself there must be national reconciliation through which Bhutanese of Nepalese-origin enjoy their basic rights while not endangering the Drukpa culture and identity. Even with the passage of so much time, even today no steps have been taken from any quarter to resolve the Bhutanese problem.

Bhutan specialist Dr. Michael Aris, husband of Burmese opposition leader Aang Sang Sui Kyi, presenting examples from Bhutan's history in his working paper, expressed the view that there must be dialogue and compromise to resolve the current problem. In the end, what transpired from the London Conference is that if Bhutan is to protect itself, it must immediately begin dialogue.

Translated from BBC Nepali Service, March 29, 1993.

"IN QUOTES"

"The position of the monarchy is in no way threatened by these new developments but the way in which the palace does politics will have to be revised and reconsidered over the next few years." — Prof Leo Rose at the Bhutan Conference, London.

"Democratization and economic development must proceed in tandem." — Japanese Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe addressing a forum of the Partnership for Democracy and Development in Tokyo, March 15, 1993.

"In the two and half years since the army moved into the closed school, we spent Nu. 350,000 for the construction of latrines and the general renovation of the buildings." — Col Hodo Tshering, Royal Bhutan Army, while handing over the Chengmari Primary School in Samchi district to the Director General of Education.

GOODBYE DR. SHAW

We offer our sincere apologies to readers who may have had their fill of our rotund journalist hero Brian Shaw, Honorary Research Fellow with the Centre of Asian Studies at the University of Hong Kong, for his third appearance in our pages. But, since our hero responded with alacrity to the royal summons and faithfully presented himself and the views of his paymasters at the Bhutan Conference in London, it is only fair that through our pages Thimphu gets to know that its money was 'well-spent' as our hero obeyed the Royal Command and hauled his portly self across the continent in the service of the regime. We are aware that, foremost, we are accountable to you, our dear readers, but we do feel obliged to be of help to our 'own government' from time to time. Also, since our hero's pretensions as an academic have been fully exposed, in the days ahead he is not likely to be seen around. Therefore, we beg your indulgence this one last time.

For every individual life entails one long sequence of decisions, many trivial and some significant. No doubt our hero must have been faced with one of life's such problems; a grave decision-making dilemma, when an offer was made for his soul by the royal government through the good offices of the Foreign Minister in 1990. In this continuing saga, readers will recall that our hero had till then been scorned and spurned, and, by his own admission, even been denied a visa for his annual pilgrimage in 1989. Indeed, Shaw must have wracked his brains and struggled with his conscience for a "long" time before coming "immediately" to the conclusion that the offer of hob-nobbing with "the King, Lyonpos, Dzongdas.." (original title of his paper for the conference) and material benefits far outweighed the loss of his non-existent credibility, morals, ethics and conscience. Thus was born a sycophant par excellence, one who surely must make even those that unleashed him on an unwary world squirm with discomfort with his every utterance.

In this farewell piece on our hero, we were faced with a similar decision-making problem; should the reactions to Shaw's statements include anger, ire and wrath, or should one treat the matter with the frivolity deserving of the rantings of a fool? While the fire and brimstone approach would certainly have provided some pleasure, the inference that in doing so his ideas had merited serious consideration on our part gave way to reason. Thus, unlike Shaw's decision where he chose immediate gains over a lifetime of clear conscience, we have chosen to forgo a moment of pleasure by lambasting a fool and opted, instead, to treat Shaw's version of the gospel with the frivolity, contempt and derision that it merits.

Briefly, according to Shaw in his paper, "Aspects of The Southern Problem and Nation-Building in Bhutan", people of Nepalese ethnicity are now in Bhutan because these "economic migrants" who entered Bhutan after the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty in the form of indentured labourers bought their way into census registers through ROLEX watches; a constitution exists in Bhutan and the monarch is

the last succour, for felt injustice; prisoners are better off than the rank-and-file of the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) and Royal Body Guards (RBG); the land vacated by southern Bhutanese should be taken over quickly by the Drukpas in a 'secure' way; "Nepal" should stem the influx of refugees; almost no one from among the 80,000 plus refugees is entitled to return home.

The little upright half-circles, eyebrow-like, above the numerals 9 and 0 on typewriters and computer keyboards, commonly known as parenthesis, appear to be the forte of Shaw. Making liberal use of these little creatures he has taken the opportunity to emphasize his loyalty, his connections, his sources, his own self-importance, and his acidity; to be fair to him, he has also used them sometimes to actually declare abbreviations and provide relevant additional information. Through these brief intrusions in his original stream of thought we get an idea of Shaw's own convoluted perceptions and unabashed display of allegiance. We are also able to fathom why, in order to meet the specific requirements of Thimphu, he needed to change the theme of his paper. Our hero has cleverly opted for a double-header title whose two parts do not connect, yet provide him with the opportunity to flay the opponents of his masters on the basis of the first part, and fawn over his benefactors on the basis of the second. Truly ingenious!

By the time the second set of little creatures hanging over the 9 and 0 arrive our hero has already managed to establish his credentials of a real insider by bringing poor Karma Ura, fellow participant from Bhutan, into the picture. Perhaps it was his desire to flaunt his qualities of a team player before his bosses that made it necessary for Shaw to expose his very clear, precise and intimate knowledge of Karma's paper, or maybe it was an attempt to make the learned audience believe that he had a hand in that paper, too. His contribution to Karma's paper appears highly unlikely given the qualitative difference in substance and distinct lack of rancour. The undue admission does, however, indicate that fax lines between Hong Kong and Thimphu were kept busy prior to the conference, diminishing whatever little chances Shaw might have had for keeping up a pretense of objective assessment; a faux pas that could result in more than a simple royal rebuke.

The frequent visits to Bhutan and subsequent recruitment into the royal media team have apparently had their impact on Shaw. Starting in a typically Bhutanese manner, "a great tribute to India's continuing support and sustenance", Shaw, trying to emulate everything all at once, stumbles onto dangerous territory when he tries to do a Jigme right on the very first page. Playing follow-the-leader our hero commits a grave foul. Perhaps emboldened by the royal outbursts that reverberated around the skies of New Delhi this January, in like fashion he decides to take a pot-shot at Nepal. With a doctorate in whatever, Shaw must realize that royal outbursts throughout history have been considered just that, a rush of "royal" blood

through "royal" veins, an incident that causes brief reverberations and is then conveniently forgotten. The rules are quite different for common folk, especially claimants to the title of 'academic' or 'journalist', who are expected to handle words with the utmost care. The unconnected innuendo about AP and Reuters reports filed from Kathmandu in 1991 and 1992 regarding "relative poverty" in Nepal and "relatively well off" Bhutan, therefore, merits a Red Card. Unless, of course, Shaw intended to imply that these relative comparisons is the cause of migration. If that be so, the flow of people in the wrong direction during this period does not speak much for our hero's logic.

As one progresses along, Shaw unfolds the tale of our forefathers' long journey out of the hills of Nepal to the foothills of Bhutan, and one can almost picture our hero himself riding shotgun with the pioneers in the march that allegedly began in the post 1950 period subsequent to the Indo-Nepal treaty when, according to our expert in Asian studies, the floodgates were opened for the Nepalese to move out, implying perhaps that prior to the 1950 treaty the British had securely fenced the Nepalese in. Perhaps the people that British missions came across in southern Bhutan before this period, whom they mistakenly identified as Nepalese, were in fact Australian aborigines; perhaps Prof Leo Rose who believed he was covering Bhutan in 1977 was actually writing about Mongolia; or perhaps Shaw believed that the Bhutan Conference was to be held somewhere in Africa among experts in Latin American studies, and hence this audacious attempt to rewrite history. Not content with changing the period of arrival of our forefathers in Bhutan our hero, clearly stumbling by now, further reveals how only in the 1950s the earliest arrivals worked as "indentured labourers or managers for the Haa-based owners of land in Samchi.." and how "they bought their way onto the census registers through Rolex watches and cash.." Our readers would have realized that by this time our hero has lost any semblance of an 'academic' or 'journalist' or anything else for that matter; other academics and media personnel are reeling from the shock of our hero's astounding theories while lay persons, shocked to discover this hitherto unknown breed of super-rich farm labourers, are busy trying to determine the average wealth of third-world labourers, cost of Rolex watches in the 1950s, Rolex worldwide sales records, per-capita distribution of these watches in Bhutan etc. etc. And, in a 12 page exclusive, we are only at the top of page 2!

Running out of time and valuable space, we must perforce move along quickly with our hero past his justifications for the 1988 census, causes for delayed implementation ("audit of major projects" - and we thought Rizal, and not the eventual census posse, was doing that), his broadside against Rizal via the devastating raised 'eyebrows', the "militant" demonstrations, the government's magnanimous treatment of southern Bhutanese and the continuing development activities in the south during 1991 and 1992,

and finally, his anguish over Kathmandu based dissidents' "fairly successful campaign of persuading the media to accept its views concerning the 'refugee' issue and charges of 'ethnic cleansing'." What precisely our hero intended to cover under "Nation Building", before he received the royal instructions that necessitated a change in course and caused him to veer suddenly from his original line of thought, remains a mystery. However, under the changed circumstances, in his own bumbling fashion, our hero begins a plaintive tune of rationalization and defense that provide eulogies for the constitution, monarchy, legal system, National Assembly, civil service, and media in Bhutan. It is by no coincidence that each of these topics emanate from the need of the regime to tackle "dissident propaganda". He is obviously impressed by the "disciplined but alert and outspoken" chimis and the "skill and eloquence" of government representatives in the Assembly; but it is obvious that thus far our hero has imbibed only the foolish spirit of "outspokenness". In a subsection entitled "Security for the Future" our hero considers the Home Ministry claim of only 40,000 southerners that have left the country to be academic; instead, he boldly recommends that Drukpas be resettled on vacated land immediately and in a 'secure' way. Considering that he has chosen a phrase that has a familiar ring, "the task must be done quickly and well", it should not be long before he finds himself constantly wringing his hands in an effort to wash away his guilt.

It is on the question of refugees that our hero, suffering from an overdose of Kung Fu films during his long stay in Hong Kong perhaps, provides a blistering attack. In the pattern of many heroes in martial arts thrillers, our own hero also falls flat on his face each time, but gets up time and again determinedly in a splendid display of perseverance born out of a twisted sense of loyalty and utter ignorance.

For someone who 'believes' that Nepalese settled in Bhutan for the first time in the 1950s, our hero's questioning of the "Nepali Congress government" decision not to "stem the influx of returning Nepalese" and lack of efforts to "discourage their placement in the camps rather than to their home or ancestral village" should rightly be ignored along with his profound observation, made between his realigned eyebrows, that the Nepalese Prime Minister's view, that the problem would be solved if Bhutan took back the refugees, was "ingenuous and

unhelpful."

For the record, dear readers, we must at this point remind you that our hero was unable to make the long and arduous journey to Jhapa. Out of sheer embarrassment over having to carry a dim-witted master, his noble steed reportedly escaped in the Thamel area of Kathmandu and was last seen trying to get a free ticket on Drukair to return to the royal stables. Undaunted, our resourceful hero still manages to painstakingly categorize the lowly objects of his scorn he has not interviewed or even met into six distinct categories. Since this stupendous feat ranks second after his herding of indentured Nepalese labourers, fully laden with Rolex watches, to Bhutan in the 1950s, we faithfully reproduce below his determination of categories in the camps;

- i) Nepalese expelled from Assam and other places in north east India.
- ii) Nepalese formerly living illegally or illicitly in Bhutan.
- iii) Former Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin previously living legally in Bhutan, who have left through proper channels and who have thereby (and voluntarily) surrendered their Bhutan citizenship.
- iv) Former Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin previously living legally in Bhutan, who have left without going through the required procedures and who therefore have forfeited Bhutanese citizenship according to Bhutanese law.
- v) Nepalese formerly living elsewhere in south-eastern Nepal.
- vi) Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese descent previously living in Bhutan who left Bhutan involuntarily.

Since our hero has already established himself as an ardent proponent of the Bhutanese legal system, we cannot fault him for solely taking on the responsibilities of judge, jury, prosecutor and investigator, all at once. While the gaping holes, moral and legal, in His Honour's verdicts under iii) and iv) are best left undiscussed, we trust that documentation experts at UNHCR will treat his shortcomings as an investigator for items i), ii) and v) as frivolously as we have. And do we hear murmurs of excitement at the magnanimity of Shaw because of vi)? We apologise for being spoil-sports, but we do believe that in all fairness our hero should have the last word, eyebrows and all, and provide us with the last laugh;

"In a strict sense, and leaving aside the question of numbers, it is only those persons (if any) who might fall under category vi) who would have RESIDUAL claims to resettlement in Bhutan."

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION			
Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	7,975	1,645
Goldhap	Jhapa	7,796	2,400
Beldangi I	Jhapa	14,622	3,062
Beldangi II	Jhapa	24,968	5,471
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,527	3,600
Patthri	Morang	16,602	4,700
Khujunabari	Jhapa	227	-
Total		81,717	20,878
Cumulative births:		1,761	
Cumulative deaths:		1,920	

The above figures are as of March 5, 1993.