

The Bhutan REVIEW

Monthly

News, Views and Reviews

VOL 2

No. 1

January 1994

Rs. 5/-

WFP ASSISTANCE

The World Food Programme (WFP) which has continuously provided food assistance to Bhutanese refugees in Nepal since January 1992, recently announced a further assistance valued at US\$ 11 million. Under this programme, WFP will provide 25,500 metric tonnes of rice, 3,600 tonnes of pulses, 1,600 tonnes of vegetable oil, 1,300 tonnes of iodized salt and 700 tonnes of cereal blend.

The present arrangement covers food assistance to an estimated 110,000 refugees for a period of 18 months starting January 1994. An agreement to this effect was signed in Kathmandu recently by Yadav Kant Silwal, Foreign Secretary, His Majesty's Government of Nepal and Quazi H. Haque, Director of Operations, World Food Programme, Nepal.

The World Food Programme, the food aid organization of the United Nations system which provides food relief to more than 80 percent of refugees worldwide, is the single largest UN donor agency in the Bhutanese refugee relief programme. Till the end of December 1993 WFP has already provided more than 27,000 tonnes of food to Bhutanese refugees since January 1992.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 1993

December 10 which is celebrated as the World Human Rights Day each year rekindles the hope of victims of human rights violence worldwide: In the midst of continued oppression by their own governments, or in the face of other calamities, people suffer but never lose hopes of returning to normalcy and a chance to rebuild their lives. Though the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1948, gross violation of basic rights of people by their own governments continues to take place.

In a message on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, UN Secretary-General Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that human rights belong to each and every person and that they have been affirmed by the world community. He said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is now a guideline for every Government and a practical instrument for action by each individual. The United Nations and its member states bear a special responsibility to secure and advance these rights, he said.

Referring to the Vienna Declaration of the second World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, Mr Boutros-Ghali called upon all states to observe international standards, to ratify international instruments and to strengthen the mechanisms of human rights. "While we have come far in a relatively short time, there is still far to go," the Secretary-General added.



Goldhap: What does 1994 have in store for them?

EVICIONS RECOMMENCE

There are fresh reports of intimidatory activities in the southern districts. Signs of increased intimidation and harassment indicate that preparations are being made to bring back the terror tactics used to evict southern Bhutanese during 1990-1992. Starting in late October 1993 the regime began evicting alleged 'non-nationals' from Chukha district. The census exercise which has been used to devastating effect for reducing the population in the south is being deployed yet again.

There have also been reports that all records normally maintained by *mandals* (village headmen) are being collected by the authorities,

and that all *thram* (land-deed) numbers have been altered. Villagers are now being informed that there is no record of their property under a particular land-deed number, making it impossible for them to prove their bona fides during the census.

In the latest round of intimidation in Sarbhang district, it has been reported that midnight knocks have recommenced since December 3. Immigration officials accompanied by security forces are reportedly conducting house-to-house "verifications" late at night. Anyone found without an identity card is fined Nu. 5,000 (about US\$ 160) on the spot - it is not surprising that 'anti-nation-

als' allegedly targeted these same documents during their 'raids' in the same villages over the past six months. The display of firearms and veiled threats for non-compliance with instructions to immediately deport family members without documents is on the rise.

Meanwhile, announcements have also been made for another round of census in Samchi district - the exercise is undoubtedly for the express purpose of issuing fresh threats and harassing villagers rather than to undertake a genuine enumeration.

UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

In an important milestone in the field of human rights since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations finally created a position exclusively dedicated to the cause of human rights. After decades of lobbying for greater UN vigilance of the human rights situation throughout the world, the 184-nation UN General Assembly during its session on 21 December 1993, established

WORLD HINDU CONFERENCE - KING JIGME TO ATTEND ?

According to the Convenor-Secretary of the World Hindu Federation Ajay Singh, the Fifth World Hindu Conference will be held in Varanasi, India from January 14 to 16, 1994. More than 450 delegates from 45 countries are reportedly expected to attend.

The Kings of Nepal and Bhutan, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Shankaracharyas, Madhavacharyas, Dharam gurus of all sects, political leaders, industrialists and intellectuals are expected to participate, according to organizers.

the position of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Though the human rights movement has acquired growing significance, the world body so far has had a limited role in effectively monitoring human rights situations in different parts of the world. A High Commissioner charged with the responsibility of "preventing the continuation of human rights violations throughout the world" and "promoting and protecting the effective enjoyment by all of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights" is a step forward towards redressing the shortcoming in the area of Universal Human Rights.

Achieved after intense lobbying and lengthy negotiations, creation of the post has resulted in mixed reactions among governments in different parts of the world. While some developing governments in the south still consider the whole issue of human rights and

fundamental freedom a western concept, others frown upon it, labelling it a tool used by western powers to interfere in the "internal affairs" of other countries.

But the creation of this post has brought hope for oppressed people across the globe who are still denied their basic rights and fundamental freedoms by their autocratic regimes. The High Commissioner for Human Rights will be authorized to hold dialogues with Governments concerned to seek implementation of his "mandates" on human rights thereby securing the respect for human rights.

Along with the oppressed, developing countries who steered the proposal through the UN are elated. "This decision brings hope to individuals oppressed wherever they are. The High Commissioner will be a beacon of freedom and justice," US delegate Victor Marrero told the Assembly after the historic decision.

NEPALI CONGRESS LEADER RECEIVES UN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

The 1993 Human Rights Day was especially significant for the government and people of Nepal. Mr Ganesh Man Singh, supreme leader of the ruling Nepali Congress, was honoured with the prestigious United Nations 1993 Human Rights Award. The international award was instituted in 1966 and is presented every five years for individual contribution towards the establishment and protection of human rights.

At a special function in New York on December 10 to mark Human Rights Day, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali conferred the award on Mr Singh. Eight other personalities received the award this year.

It was a fitting recognition for a man who has struggled all his life for the cause of democracy and human rights in Nepal. Mr Singh spent many years behind bars. In recognizing the long struggle for the cause of humanity by a leader from the third world, the United Nations has inspired millions of others across the globe who continue to strive for their basic rights against severe odds.

Eight other recipients of the award include, James Grant, Executive Director, UNICEF, Adama Dieng, International Committee of Jurists, Dr Fariouk Konjhedzie, Central Hospital, Sarajevo, Dr Erica Irene Daos, Greece, Dr Sonia Picado Sotela, Costa Rica, Ms Fatima Ibrahim, Sudan, Father Julio Tumiri Javier, Bolivia, and Hassib Ammar, Tunisia.

HUROB ANNUAL REPORT 1993

On the occasion of Human Rights Day on December 10, the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) released its annual report for 1993. The 32-page report covering the period from December 1992 to November 1993 incorporates events and issues of significance related to the problem in southern Bhutan, sums up the human rights situation in Bhutan during the year, and provides other information and refugee statistics. Review outlets and HUROB offices in Birtamod and Kathmandu may be contacted for copies.

The Bhutan REVIEW

93 - 94

Until only a few years ago, back in Bhutan, the average Bhutanese refugee who is now forced to live in the camps in eastern Nepal, added an extra year each time the main harvest season came by. In between paddy harvests he tended his orange orchard and cardamom garden, and ploughed, sowed and harvested other secondary crops. The changing seasons and his natural instinct to take up the appropriate activity served as his yardstick to measure time.

Suddenly he has been transported out of this environment - to tell time, he now depends on the cycle of ration distribution and the slow rounds of negotiations between governments. As the refugees, predominantly from a farming background, begin to grasp and understand this system of milestones etched in paper calendars and allow specific dates to take on greater meaning, they are being slowly forced to divorce themselves from their own counting system - the natural cycle of rural life and the standard village calendar.

Living in completely alien surroundings, it is not surprising that the life's rhythm begins to falter. Forced to accept handouts in refugee camps, the farmer no longer bothers about monitoring the climate and checking for vital changes in the weather: there is nothing to sow and nothing to reap. The subtle climatic changes are now inconsequential. He may recognize the signs but, without the routine, they begin to lose their meaning. Instead, like a prisoner he must now tick off each passing day.

With this newfound "knowledge" about marking time, the start of a new year has taken on added meaning even for the simple Bhutanese refugee. And because the exact moment when December yields to January has become the default international calendar standard, despite being caught in the dual flux of Baisakh (Nepali New Year) and Losar (Bhutanese New Year), 1 January 1994 ushered in yet another year for Bhutanese refugees, too.

For the world at large, midnight of New Year's Eve means looking back in nostalgia to the year past and looking ahead to the promises of the year ahead. Looking over the shoulder, one leaves behind a sense of fulfillment and achievement while ahead there are resolutions and targets. But what about refugees huddling, literally, in a stateless limbo. What do we look back upon? What can we look forward to?

If there are some who believe that the average Bhutanese refugee in his seemingly hopeless predicament fails to share a sense of achievement or pins little hopes on the future, and that, instead, he will be found wallowing in self-pity, then the resilience of the human person is being sorely undermined. For the Bhutanese refugee, immediate individual aspirations may rightly be missing, but it has been replaced by a stronger feeling and commitment towards the community. And in that sense, while 1993 may have been unkind to the individual refugee, for the community as a whole, 1993 has provided enough reasons for us to justifiably feel a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment.

1993 was a year during which much took place. Some events caused us concern and yet others brought hope. While specific events have converted themselves into important milestones, the most significant development during the course of the year is the proper understanding by the international community of the broader issue of the southern Bhutanese problem and real recognition of the Bhutanese refugee. True, during the previous year there was a very high level of concern for the Bhutanese refugee in the international community. This concern, however, was generated solely by the sheer suffering and plight of thousands of human beings. Today, it is the appreciation of the actual political problem in Bhutan, rather than the misery of refugees in camps, which is responsible for the heightened awareness, concern and sympathy. No more is it a case of meeting the needs of suffering humanity out of pity; today the support is generated by the understanding of the issues which have led to the creation of Bhutanese refugees and acknowledgement of their struggle to secure basic rights. This must count as the most important development during 1993.

The milestone of the year - the agreement between Nepal and Bhutan - was made bitter by Thimphu's insistence on categorization, a clear indication that it has not yet geared itself to facing the inevitable. Nonetheless, it is a beginning.

There were other developments during the year which have served to keep up the spirits of Bhutanese in exile. Through a slow but steady process, the falsehood maintained by the propaganda machinery of the regime has been gradually exposed. A regime which attempted to extricate itself through blatant lies regarding the nationality of those it had mercilessly evicted, has been forced to make major confessions. Despite this acknowledgement, however, attempts at deception continue. But in time, such deceptions, too, will be uncovered, no doubt.

And what about 1994? We will no doubt continue to see further developments that will help take the southern Bhutanese issue to its logical conclusion. But, just as it would be absurd for the regime to wish away the problem in southern Bhutan and hope that some 100,000 refugees disappear overnight, for refugees too, it would be irrational to hope for instant solutions. 1994 may not see us home, but it will certainly point the way.

THE STORY OF REFUGEES

If at one time the Bhutanese regime attempted to profess complete innocence by alleging that those in the camps were not Bhutanese at all but Indian Nepalis evicted from the north-eastern states of India and poor Nepalis from the vicinity of the camps, it is now attempting to absolve itself by claiming that refugees who can prove that they are Bhutanese have, in fact, already forfeited their citizenship by 'voluntarily' emigrating from Bhutan. The changing stand of the Royal Government of Bhutan with regard to the status of the people in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal should suffice to indicate the less than honest intentions of the regime. However, since a picture reportedly paints a thousand words, we seek to counter government untruths through the Box Item taken from the 1993 Annual Report of the HUROB which employs a single group photograph.

The photograph shows all eighteen representatives of the people of Chirang district during the year 1982. At that time, because of its primarily *lhotshampa* population, the sub-division of Dagapela formed a part of Chirang despite its geographical location within Dagana district. Thus, the *chimi* (National Assembly Member) representing Dagapela and the *gups* of the three *gewogs* (a 'Block' consisting of a group of villages) of Dagapela are also in the picture. Dagapela was merged with Dagana district in 1985.

The *gup* is the main link between the administration and the people. Assisted by one or more assistants (*chipons* in the north, *karbaris* in the south), depending on the number of households, the *gup* is responsible for all records and data pertaining to land, taxes, population etc. He facilitates and records land transactions, collects revenue, records marriages and births, settles minor disputes etc. He is also responsible for organizing and arranging labour contributions and for ensuring that government notifications are transmitted and disseminated.

The *chimi* is supposed to be the spokesperson of the people at the National Assembly. Conditions, however, are not conducive to frank exchanges. In any case, the low representation of *lhotshampas* in the Assembly, 14 out of 150, (containing a sixth of the country's population, Chirang including Dagapela has only 3 members) renders any attempts to draw attention to southern Bhutanese concerns futile. Nonetheless, during the currency of their terms, *chimis* who are 'elected' by the people receive due respect.

The plight of the majority from this 1982 group of prominent citizens from Chirang is a pointer to the plight of the southern Bhutanese population in general. Of the eighteen representatives of the public who served as the bridge between the Royal Government of Bhutan

and the people of Chirang district in 1982, two are understandably in Bhutan because of their *ngalong* (northwestern Bhutanese) descent. From among the sixteen *lhotshampas*, one has died, one is still in his village, two are in prison and the remaining twelve are all refugees in Nepal.

When the government was successful in finding the means to evict even such people who are generally known and respected in the villages, the average illiterate farmer had little chance. Belonging to well-established families and generally among the more well-to-do in their respective villages, these individuals had even stronger motives to stay. As representatives accustomed to the government machinery, in the desperate attempts to prove their nationality these individuals were also better informed and more capable. Yet, as their current plight shows, they were not successful.

Will anyone believe that people living in relative comfort will willingly leave behind home, land and property and opt to "voluntarily emigrate" to a refugee camp? Is it conceivable that an entire lot of representatives could all be of questionable pedigree and, therefore, not deserving of Bhutanese nationality and citizenship? Or, will the Royal Government of Bhutan argue that the individuals in this picture are not who they claim to be?

REFUGEES FROM CHIRANG



Chirang district's prominent citizens welcome a new *Dzongdag* (district administrator) in 1982. All National Assembly Members and *Gups* (head of a group of villages) of Chirang district are captured in this group photograph. The current status reveals the story of Bhutanese refugees.

NAME	DESIGNATION	CURRENT STATUS
1. Big Bahadur Gurung	<i>Gup</i> , Emiray	Refugee
2. Churamani Chamlagai	<i>Gup</i> , Kikorthang	Refugee
3. Damber Singh Gurung	<i>Gup</i> , Dunglagang	Expired
4. Kharka Bahadur Kharga	<i>Gup</i> , Tshokana	Refugee
5. Bal Bahadur Burathoki	<i>Gup</i> , Shemjong	Refugee
6. Lok Nath Basnet	National Assembly Member (NAM)	Refugee
7. Tek Nath Rizal	NAM (Councillor in '84)	In Prison
8. K.B. Chuwan	NAM	Refugee
9. Phub Tenzin	<i>Gup</i> , Chirangdara	In Bhutan
10. Dhanapati Adhikari	<i>Gup</i> , Phuntenchu	Refugee
11. Phogay Dukpa	<i>Gup</i> , Pattalay	In Bhutan
12. Hem Lal Chamlagai	<i>Gup</i> , Goseling	Refugee
13. Kul Chandra Timsina	<i>Gup</i> , Gairigaon	Refugee
14. Dhanapati Ghimire	<i>Gup</i> , Lamidara	Refugee
15. Dilli Ram Dahal	<i>Gup</i> , Chanautay	Refugee
(Sitting, From Left to Right)		
1. K.B. Subba	<i>Gup</i> , Dorona	In Bhutan
2. Rudra Prasad Khatiwara	<i>Gup</i> , Suntalay	Refugee
3. Damchu Lhendup	<i>Dzongrab</i>	In Service
4. Chagay	<i>Thrimpon</i>	In Service
5. H.K. Humagai	<i>Dzongdag</i> , Outgoing	With UNDP
6. Oko Tshering	<i>Dzongdag</i> , Incoming	Dismissed
7. Akal Bahadur Rai	Acting <i>Gup</i> , Beteni	In Prison

DRUKGI SELWAI MELONG

During the 72nd session of the National Assembly last July, the official folder provided to each member also contained an unofficial addition - a 17-page booklet in Dzongkha written under the nom-de-plume of Tshering Tenzin. The volatile document is explicitly seditious, expressing suppressed Sharchop sentiments and voicing the well-known fears and resentment of the eastern Bhutanese community which constitutes 37% of the total population.

In a brief preface the authors claim to have brought out the booklet for the benefit of ordinary Bhutanese after due consultations, to highlight the absence of human rights and individual freedom for simple Bhutanese people. Only aspersions directed against specific individuals have been omitted in the free-form translation which attempts to retain the flavour of the original Dzongkha version.

Bhutan is a small underdeveloped country, but it has always retained its sovereignty. Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel entered Bhutan in 1616 A.D. and subdued many feudal lords to form a unified state of Bhutan. The fact that we are living today in an independent Bhutan is because it did not suffer any famine, epidemic or external aggression because of the reign of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel.

On 17 December 1907, Tongsa Penlop Ugen Wangchuck rendered Deb Raja Trulku Tsholey Ngidup powerless and wrested control. Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel did not approve of this action and went to seek help from Tibet. The Government in Tibet refused to intervene and Shabdrung remained in Tibet until he died in 1930. Tongsa Penlop Ugen Wangchuck established hereditary monarchy and became the first King of Bhutan.

The first and second hereditary Kings of Bhutan occupying the Golden Throne at Paro Rinpung Dzong did nothing to develop the country but extracted, in the form of taxes, most of the produce earned by the ordinary people through their blood and sweat. The third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, started

various development programmes for the benefit of Bhutan and its people. Also, Bhutan became a member of the U.N. during his reign. Among all the hereditary kings, he alone deserves to be called a good king....

But it was during the reign of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck that the two incarnations of Shabdrung who had given Bhutan and its people a national identity, were assassinated at Talo and Tashigang. Why were the Shabdrung reincarnates assassinated? It was because they could stake a claim to the Golden Throne. The present Shabdrung Rimpoche who lives at Manali in India was also born in Menla village under Zangphug gewog of Tashigang district in eastern Bhutan. The parents of the present Shabdrung are the same as that of the former Shabdrung who was assassinated in Tashigang Dzong by Babu Karchung....

Though Bhutan is a small country in the world, there are different ethnic groups living together, viz. Ngalongs, Sharchops, Khengpas, Bumthaps, Mangdeps, Brokpas, Doyas, Nepalis, Adivasis and Tibetans. Among these, who are the original Bhutanese people, you may ask. They are the Sharchops, Brokpas and Doyas only. The Ngalongs of today are the people in western Bhutan who had come from Tibet many years back. The people of Punakha and Wangdiphodrang are people of Indian descent. The Nepali people who inhabit southern Bhutan today are descendants of the people who came from Nepal from three hundred years ago. Whether original inhabitants of Bhutan or people who came from Tibet or Nepal, after having settled and lived

in Bhutan for a long time, they are all Bhutanese....

Even after thirty years of planned development, the country has not made any progress. The little development that has taken place has been confined to only the six western districts, and the rest of the twelve districts have been neglected as if they were not a part of the country. What are the areas of development in the six western districts, we may ask. First, Thimphu is the capital of Bhutan and the centre of activities, because of which the Veterinary Training Centre, Agricultural Machinery Centre and Forestry Training Institute are located in and around Thimphu. If they were located in southern and eastern Bhutan, it would have been far better. But the inappropriate choice of location can best be summed up thus, "Rain where there is water; light where there is sunlight". The Teachers' Training College, two Junior Colleges, Workshops, and all other factories are located in these six western districts. There is nothing in the other districts. After thirty years of planned development, even the plan for the establishment of the Kurichu Hydroelectric Project under Mongar district, planned since 1970, has not

been undertaken so far. The Agriculture Farm situated in Khangma under Tashigang district and Animal Husbandry Farm situated in Bartsam Hongchelo have been shifted to Bonday in Paro and Wangchutaba in Thimphu respectively.

Sharchops and Lhotshampas worked hard to construct the Phuntsholing-Thimphu motorable road. Thimphu's Tashichhodzong was also built by Sharchops and Lhotshampas. If people must contribute for the development of Bhutan, why did the Ngalongs not help when the roads connecting the eastern districts were being built? Are the Sharchops and Lhotshampas not under the Bhutanese state? Even to this day, for the developmental activities and repairs of dzongs in the six western districts, Sharchops and Lhotshampas are still continuing to contribute labour. Are the Sharchops and Lhotshampas slaves and tax-payers for Ngalongs? If the Sharchops are considered to be Bhutanese citizens, then why are the eastern districts undeveloped. We must realize that we Sharchops are doing most of the hard, difficult and menial jobs.

From 2-15 December in 1990, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck visited eastern Bhutan along with Lyonpo Dago Tshering and other senior officers to seek help from the Sharchop people. The Sharchops were informed that the budget earmarked for southern Bhutan during the Seventh Five Year Plan [1992-1997] would be diverted for the benefit of the Sharchop people. But let alone providing additional budget from southern Bhutan, even the budget allocated for the

development of eastern Bhutan was used to provide military training to all males in eastern Bhutan, to construct military centres in the south and to purchase arms and ammunition for the army....

At this rate, if most of the ministers are appointed from among the coterie of the Druk Gyalpo, a time will come when all the Directors, Dzongdags, Thrimpons, Government Secretaries and senior civil servants will be appointed from among Royal Family members and the coterie. Ordinary citizens will be denied such appointments. Today, the government does not look into the welfare of the people. Instead, all the large factories are owned by the King's coterie - in future they will take control of all important commercial ventures and occupy good agricultural lands in the villages by force. When that time comes, will the people of Bhutan live like slaves as in the days of the first and second Kings?....

In the government services all the lower ranks are filled by the Sharchops and the Lhotshampas. Even in the military, Sharchops and Lhotshampas swell the lower ranks and rarely find a place among the officers. To our knowledge, out of just over six lakh Bhutanese people, over 80% of the population consists Sharchops and Lhotshampas among whom there are many who are well educated and capable....

As we Sharchops are the original inhabitants of Bhutan, our language should have been adopted as the national language. But today, a language which originated in Tibet has been made the national language. Why is that so? From 1981, in order to develop Dzongkha, a Commission has been formed. Nothing has been done to develop our Sharchopkha language....

In actual fact, we the Sharchop people had made the original plan to revolt against the government, but when the government came up with the plan to create a one-kilometre wide "green belt" in southern Bhutan in addition to unreasonable citizenship rules imposed upon them, the southern Bhutanese rose up in revolt. In southern Bhutan a large number of people are killed in the name of anti-nationals by the Bhutanese military and civil authorities. If that has to be proved, living proof exists among the Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal. In southern Bhutan, where once large villages existed, houses have been destroyed and orange trees cut down by the government. Today we Sharchops can watch the merciless oppression of our Lhotshampas before our eyes; a time will come when similar treatment will be meted to us, Sharchops. The time has come not only for Sharchops, but for oppressed people of all ethnic groups, to reflect deeply....

If King Jigme Singye Wangchuck considers himself a true monarch of Bhutan, it is high time

for him to consider the aspirations and welfare of his people. If Bhutan is to retain its sovereignty, prosperity and peace, the power of governance must be passed onto the people. Only the Bhutanese people can protect the sovereignty of the country, a fact which should be realized both by Bhutanese citizens as well as the Bhutanese bureaucracy. If the power to govern Bhutan remains in the hands of a few, there will come a time when the sovereignty of the country may be sold by them.

Kindly explain to ordinary citizens after reading the contents.
TASHI DELEK

MEDIA SCAN

STILL ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE

[We apologize to our readers for going back on our word to keep our bumbling hero, Dr Shaw, away from these pages - with 'friends' like Shaw, the regime hardly needs enemies.]

"Ethnic accumulation" always evokes sympathy while the underlying politics are overlooked. Certainly, specific cases, such as those of Bhawani Shankar Dhungana and Thakur Prasad Luitel cited in the article, need clarification. Were they landholders? Born in Bhutan? Were they citizens under Bhutan's laws, or squatters?

As in the case elsewhere, illegal or illicit former squatters in Bhutan can have no claim on Bhutan. According to the current (pre-1988) Citizenship Laws, those confirmed citizens who felt it needful to depart Bhutan may retain a right to return, but if they return must undergo a two-year probationary period before citizenship may be granted. One-time citizens who voluntarily rescinded their status to go to the camps have no such entitlement.

There is no "major inconsistency" in the Bhutan Government's position. The substantial efforts by the government in 1991, 1992 and 1993 to dissuade legitimate residents from leaving for the camps, though in many cases unsuccessful, have to be measured against the courage and determination of those southerners who remain loyally in their villages and are regularly terrorised, beaten, and killed by activists sent from the camps for that purpose.

Brian C. Shaw, Thimphu, responding to Rooftop Refugees (FEER, Nov 11 - The Bhutan Review Nov/Dec 1993) in Letters, Far Eastern Economic Review, Hong Kong, 9 December 1993.

"GREATER CHIRANG" NEXT?

It was not merely out of ethnic affinity that the political parties and people of Nepal were supporting the anti-nationals of southern Bhutan, but more out of their deep-seated desire to promote the concept of a Greater Nepal. This concept envisaged Nepalese domination over the entire Himalayas by bringing Bhutan, parts of Duars in West Bengal and Assam and the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland under Nepalese control just as in the case of Sikkim and Darjeeling.

Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering addressing the 70th Session of the National Assembly in October 1991 - reported by the government weekly newspaper, *Kuensel*.

Sikkim's new status, as a linguistic state of Nepalis, gives a new edge to the hitherto nebulous demand for a "Greater Sikkim" encompassing the adjacent Nepali-speaking tracts of the former kingdom which became a part of India under controversial circumstances.

Eyebrows were raised at the Foreign Correspondents Club of South Asia in New Delhi late in May when Bhutan's Foreign Minister, Lynpo Dawa Tshering (sic), said in answer to a question that the "Greater Nepal" demand of a Nepal extending to the Nepali-speaking tracts in India (Sikkim, Dooras, Kalimpong and Darjeeling), was a myth with no basis in history. But he hastened to concede that a demand for "Greater Sikkim" would be a greater threat to Bhutan than the "Greater Nepal" idea.

Lynpo Tshering (sic), during his talks with the Indian Government last May, passed on a four-page pamphlet, "The Voice of the Oppressed People of Bhutan", which amounts to an open call for a Greater Sikkim.

HIMAL (Nov/Dec 1993), Kathmandu - Extract from an article by Ram Mohan in the Pioneer, New Delhi.

"IN QUOTES"

"This is a historic occasion. The United Nations has struck an important blow for freedom."

Victor Marrero, United States delegate to the United Nations after the General Assembly established the post of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights without a vote.

"We must not only recognize that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interlocking and reinforcing; we must act on that belief."

U.N. Secretary General Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali addressing the U.N. General Assembly on the occasion of Human Rights Day on December 10.

Bhutan is reputedly one of the most spectacularly beautiful countries in the world. Wedged between India and China, its landscapes range from rolling green foothills in the south to snow-capped Himalayan peaks in the north. But not many people get to witness this rugged beauty as it's one of the world's last absolute monarchies and the king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, has decided that 3,000 tourists a year are enough. And the ones that come have to pay big dollars.

The king wants his beautiful country to remain unspoiled, which earns him big ticks from conservationists, and he doesn't want his people to be tainted with liberal democratic modernity, which like many other autocrats around the globe, he has decided would not be good for them - or him.

There is one State-run newspaper and all television antennas were forcibly dismantled some time ago.

The king and his administration are presently engaged in one of the world's nastier exercises in ethnic cleansing. Using terror, rape, brutality and fear, they have already caused one-fifth of the population, more than 100,000 Bhutanese to flee Bhutan in a little over a year, and there are indications many more are on the way.

The most surprising thing about this exodus, which ranks as the world's greatest per capita ethnic outrage, is that as a result of sophisticated media management, geopolitical realities and the credulity of certain sections of the environmental movement, the king and his cohorts have almost totally got away with it.

The ethnic group that has had to flee to refugee camps in Nepal are the Nepali-speaking farmers of the Bhutanese lowlands who have been there for upto 200 years and have always regarded themselves as Bhutanese. The previous king granted them citizenship in 1958, but the present king and his advisers decided in 1988 to change the rules.

What caused this withdrawal of legal citizenship? The king and his thousand or so elite are "Drukpas", the descendants of Tibetans who, after the Chinese annexation of Tibet, comprise the last remaining enclave of Tibetan Buddhists. By contrast, the Nepali-speakers in Bhutan's south are mainly Hindus - and a 1979 census revealed that they'd almost become a majority.

A second source of worry to the Bhutanese elite was that the Nepalese in Nepal had started to agitate for democracy. Nepal has no common border with Bhutan and the king should have been reassured by the fact that the southern Bhutanese, who had lived in harmony with the Drukpas for generations, showed no sign that they had been infected by the democratic virus.

But the very word "democracy" seems to have had the same effect on the king and his advisers as

the word "communism" did on Senator Joe McCarthy. In 1988, they decided a large proportion of the Nepali speakers were "illegal immigrants", and started a draconian census to establish that fact.

If a Nepali-speaking Bhutanese could not produce a tax receipt for the year 1958, which few could (How many of you still have your 1958 tax receipt?), they were declared illegal immigrants and got the clear message that they were on borrowed time.

In case they still had any doubts that this was the beginning of a systematic persecution, the southern Bhutanese were told that the teaching of Nepalese language in schools must stop, and that they must wear the Bhutanese national dress at all times.

The Bhutanese national garb might be fine for the Drukpas, who live in the chilly uplands, but for the southern Bhutanese in the hot, steamy foothills, the requirement was ridiculous.

The census and the enforcement of the Drukpa culture began to worry the normally docile inhabitants of the south, and in 1990 they staged demonstrations and rallies.

This gave the king and his cohorts the excuse they needed to move in hard. Schools and hospitals were shut down. The schools became detention and torture centres as beatings, imprisonment and rapes committed by the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) forced whole villages to flee for the Indian border, and from there to Nepal.

Those few southern Bhutanese who had been able to find their 1958 tax receipt fared no better. If the RBA had decided that a certain village had to go, then it was easy to find a relative who had participated in a rally.

By early 1992, all pretence of legality had vanished. Village after village was razed to the ground and the trickle of refugees into Nepal became a flood. Prosperous and hard-working farming families who had owned the land for generations suddenly had nothing except what they could carry with them.

Imagine that the Keating Government suddenly revoked the citizenship of everyone who was naturalised after 1958, and terrorised this newly disenfranchised group, along with any pre-1958 citizens who supported their complaints, until they fled.

This, roughly, is what's happening in Bhutan.

So why haven't you heard of this atrocity and why have I sud-

denly got interested in the southern Bhutanese plight? I was one of a group of Australian screen and stage writers sent to the refugee camps in Nepal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to see at first hand what has happened to these people.

The other members of this delegation were Sue Smith, Debra Oswald, Ian David, Mac Gudgeon and our UNHCR guide, Dr Robyn Groves.....

repatriation of the refugee population.

But when we spoke to UN and Nepalese Government officials, however, we got the clear impression that the refugees' hopes were premature. The Bhutanese were said to be just playing at negotiating and to have no intention of taking the refugees back, particularly now that south Bhutan had been discovered to be resource-rich and a great future source of wealth.

Why then hadn't the interna-

(even Dr Groves felt the need for a dash in her mineral water by this stage) and reflected on all we had seen and heard. It led inexorably to a discussion on the innate nature of woman/man. Good or evil?

Debra Oswald and I were of the minority team arguing that people draw no innate pleasure from inflicting pain and suffering on others. Ian David thought that man's willing bastardry to fellow man had been demonstrated beyond doubt on this trip.

My, only argument for man/woman's distaste of cruelty was that I had once been deeply upset at having to drown a very sick kitten. Mac Gudgeon thought that this was because I was a wimp. Ian, Mac and Sue did concede, as a countervailing force to their pessimism, that the courage and resolve of the refugees did speak of a deep human courage that had impressed us all.

We finally came to a consensus that tribalism, that seemingly inborn tendency to divide the world into "them" and "us", aroused emotions which could override innate decency and that the only hope for the world's future was to nip tribalism in the bud before the hatred became irreversible.

Then, just before the Snowlands ran out, it dawned on us all what the objective of our trip was. The UNHCR and the international community would be footing a massive refugee bill in Nepal for the indefinite future unless Bhutan began to negotiate seriously. Australia, despite being bad-mouthed in South-East Asia for its obsession with human rights, was actually listened to on these issues. The UNHCR was hoping we would go home and put the boot into the Bhutanese.

They were hoping we would try, in our own small way, to alert the world to a large-scale and continuing crime against humanity that the world had not even yet noticed. They were hoping we'd go back and ask the Australian, Danish, Swiss, German, Dutch and Finns, who at least pay lip-service to human rights, what the hell they are doing pouring aid into the "Magic Kingdom", when the only bit of magic Bhutan is doing right now is making up to half its legitimate citizens disappear.

"I don't care how charming King Jigme is," said the redoubtable Ian David. "Someone's got to blow the whistle on Bhutan and soon!" He's right.

(NO) MONEY & (NO) FRIENDS

David Williamson -

Sydney Morning Herald, November 27, 1993.

The first questions we asked her (Dr Groves) in the lobby of our Kathmandu hotel, before our flight to the refugee camps, was: "Why are we here?" "What good does the UNHCR really think we can do?" On day one of the mission she wasn't yet sure herself, but believed that there was a humanitarian agenda - and we would unearth it.

The refugee camps proved to be uplifting rather than depressing. The spirits of the refugees was stirringly defiant. As we walked with them down the feet-hardened mud walkways of their new refugee villages, they told us harrowing stories of the beatings, rape, indignities and torture they had undergone without a trace of maudlin self-pity.

They just wanted us to hear the facts. To hear the truth. They wanted us to experience the pride they felt that they could endure such sudden savagery and not be broken. They wanted us to bear witness to their deep feeling that justice must eventually prevail. They wanted us to see that they were not a beaten people but were organizing themselves within the camps in preparation for the day when they would return, triumphantly, to their homelands.

Their pride was justified. Although the Nepalese Government had provided space for the camps - and the UNHCR, OXFAM, Save the Children Fund, Caritas and other organisations had provided the huts, food, education and health care - the refugees themselves had taken control of the day-to-day organisation of the camps, the distribution of food, the counselling and occupational therapy to the victims of torture and rape and the political and skills education of the adults.

"Wedidn't know what democracy meant when we were still in Bhutan," said one. "When we go back we will." Their optimism that they would return was based on the fact that the Bhutanese had finally begun negotiations with the Nepalese Government aimed at the eventual

tional press castigated Bhutan, we asked? Brilliant press management was the immediate answer. King Jigme is a charming and charismatic man who selects the journalists and ecologists he lets in very carefully, impressing them with his perfect English, the unostentatious simplicity of his lifestyle and his open and welcoming friendliness.

He suggests that one day Bhutan will be ready for democracy but not yet, and that the beautiful Bhutanese forests must be preserved from the rationalist exploitation democracy would bring.

The Bhutanese elite murmur in foreign journalists' ears that their culture must be preserved and that "terrorist" activities in the south forced them to act. Little if any evidence of southern Bhutanese "terrorism" has ever been produced, whereas overwhelming evidence of terrorism of the army has been well documented, but most foreign journalists have parroted the king's line.

An Australian in Nepal said to us: "If you saw how beautiful Bhutan was, you'd realise why it has to be protected." He was one of the lucky and wealthy 3,000 who got to see Bhutan last year.

Late at night, in remote Jhapa province, in accommodation so rudimentary it would have made my wife proud that I was experiencing "real" life at last, we drank "Snowlands" 76 per cent-proof gin

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION

Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	8,176
Goldhap	Jhapa	7,906
Beldangi I	Jhapa	14,672
Beldangi II	Jhapa	18,696
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,608
Patthri	Morang	16,621
Khudunabari(N)	Jhapa	7,146
Khudunabari(S)	Jhapa	2,330
Total		85,155
Cumulative births:		3,221	
Cumulative deaths:		2,379	
The above figures are as of December 31, 1993.			