

The Bhutan REVIEW Monthly

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SENIOR POLICE OFFICIALS UNDER HOUSE ARREST

The Chief of the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) Col. Tandin Dorji along with three other senior officials are presently under house arrest in Thimphu. For unknown reasons, even the wife of the Police Chief who is an ordinary citizen and not a government servant is also under house arrest. For the Police Chief, his relation to Rongthong Kunley Dorji, Chairman of the Druk National Congress (DNC) who is championing the cause of human rights and democratic reforms in Bhutan has cost him dearly. (He is married to Rongthong Kunley Dorji's sister). Earlier in 1992 also, on various pretexts, Col. Dorji was temporarily suspended from his post and as a punishment he was made to supervise the construction of the prison in Chemgang. This time too the police officials have been reprimanded for some weird reason. Zillion, a son of princess Dechhen Wangmo Wangchuck while a student at the Punakha High School earlier this year had assaulted monks and police officials and later killed the school driver. Being the son of the princess, instead of taking him to the court for trial he was comfortably kept in police custody in Thimphu. During May this year, the boy wanted to go to Punakha to attend the annual school fete day and approached the police chief. Fearing that refusing the boy's request would draw the wrath of the royalty, he complied. Once in Punakha, the boy went wild again and assaulted Thubten Norbu, the Principal of the High School. Despite insulting and assaulting many respected individuals and killing the driver, Zillion remains under "police custody", rather under police protection. Others with similar crimes are not so lucky and are languishing in unknown locations under solitary confinement and in inhuman conditions. And the Chief of Police along with his wife and three of his senior officers have been put under house arrest for allowing the boy to go to Punakha. However, under the present circumstances, there was every possibility that the police officials would have been reprimanded even if they had stopped the boy from attending the school fete. Meanwhile, in a separate development, with increasing dissent all over the country in the aftermath of the recent DNC poster campaign, more and more people are arrested under various pretext. Tashi Norbu, a businessman in Phuntsholing was arrested on June 9 with some anti-government posters and leaflets in his possession. However, to avoid arousing further public dissent, he was released after about ten days in detention. There are reports of arrests in other districts as well but the government is keeping a tight control and not letting out any information about the names and number of people taken into custody.

BHUTANESE COALITION FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORMS (BCDR)

Over the past few years, a number of organizations have been set up by Bhutanese in exile which are all working for the cause of human rights and democratic reforms in the country. While these organizations have made substantial contribution independently, a need was felt for consolidating the efforts of all. However, rather than rushing into formalizing a joint forum, extensive consultations were held among various groups. After over six months of formal and informal discussions, it was finally agreed during the meeting on June 22, 1995 in Kathmandu to create the **Bhutanese Coalition for Democratic Reforms (BCDR)**. The main objective of the BCDR is to plan strategies and to

coordinate activities aimed at bringing about civil and political and other necessary reforms in Bhutan and to enable the safe and honourable return of all Bhutanese in exile. To this end, the Coalition will take up: activities aimed at mobilizing local, regional and international support, peaceful action programmes within Bhutan and activities which are in the general interest of Bhutanese in exile, whenever necessary. Considering the importance of goodwill and support from the government and people of India, it is learnt that the BCDR will be shortly sending a five member delegation to Delhi to lobby on behalf of the refugees. There are

also plans to carry out various activities jointly in the near future. The Coalition has seven founding member organizations at present but is open to any non-controversial Bhutanese organization functioning independently and working in conformity with the Coalition's objectives. At the initial stage, the member organizations have decided to continue with the arrangement of coordinating its meetings in turns thereby avoiding the need of elaborate organizational structure. However, to speak on behalf of the Coalition and also to act as the focal point for coordinating its activities, Om Dhungel has been selected as the Spokesperson.

UN OFFICIALS MEET REFUGEE REPRESENTATIVES

A two member delegation from the Geneva-based United Nations Centre for Human Rights was on a week-long visit to Nepal during the third week of June. Ms. Francesca Marotta, Human Rights Officer from the Centre was accompanied by a consultant Dr. Clarence J. Dias. Dr. Dias is the Director of the International Centre for Law in Development (ICLD) based in New York. Under the Advisory services programme of the Centre, the team was in the country at the invitation of His Majesty's Government.

While in Kathmandu, besides meeting Nepalese government and non-government officials, the UN team also met with representatives of Bhutanese dissident groups. Explaining the purpose of the mission to Nepal, the UN officials informed that they were concerned about the conditions of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The refugee representatives briefly highlighted on the background of the current crisis in Bhutan and the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Ms. Marotta accompanied by another consultant Ms. Mona Rishmawi, who is a Director at the Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva left Kathmandu for Bhutan on June 26. Under the Advisory Services programme, it is learnt that the Royal Government of Bhutan has also requested for assistance especially in preparing periodic reports with regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the only international human rights Conventions Bhutan is party to. Another area of assistance requested by the royal government is in the training of judges. Rather than encouraging the establishment of democratic institutions, independent judiciary and non-governmental organizations, the government intends to cover up the human rights abuses in the country using these advisory services at superficial level. However, with about one-sixths of its citizens living in exile and the growing dissent within the country, it may not be easy for the government to fool all the people all the time. Prior to their departure for Bhutan, the two-member mission to Bhutan once again met with Bhutanese dissidents and briefed them on the purpose of the visit and also discussed about possible areas of concern and cooperation. The dissidents stressed on the need for an integrated approach to the overall human rights issue in the country rather than cosmetic changes which the governments intends to undertake.

81.42% PASS SLC



Bishnu Dhungyel

Schools in the Bhutanese refugee camps in eastern Nepal provide education upto the tenth standard. For the last two years, students are sitting for the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examinations conducted by His Majesty's Government of Nepal. In the results declared on June 12, of the 113 students who appeared for this year's SLC examinations, 92 came out successful. 25 students were placed in the first division, 59 in the second division and 8 in the third division. Bishnu Bhakta

Dhungyel with a score of 76.3% stood first among the refugee students. As against the national pass percentage of 43% and also a marked improvement from the last year, 81.42% passed from the refugee camp school in Beldangi II, the only secondary school in the camps. However, due to the growing number of students, each camp has now upgraded the schools to the secondary level. At present, there are 31,286 students in the seven schools in the Bhutanese refugee camps. The Bhutanese Refugee Education Project in the camps is managed by CARITAS/Nepal. Higher studies is provided for by UNHCR and other scholarship programme like DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative). Since only a limited number of scholarships are available, many students who have passed standard X in the previous years are still awaiting for support to continue their studies.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO BHUTANESE REFUGEES FROM THE US

On the occasion of the independence day of the United States of America, Ambassador Sandy Vogelgesang, handed over 37 tons of medical equipment to His Majesty's Government of Nepal on July 4. "The United States is donating the equipment to support efforts of His Majesty's Government in the Bhutanese refugee camps in south-eastern Nepal," the U.S. Embassy is quoted to have said. The health programme in the Bhutanese refugee camps in eastern Nepal will receive part

of the equipment which is provided under the Humanitarian Assistance Programme of the United States Department of Defense. On the significance of this direct American assistance to the Bhutanese refugees, a senior United Nations official is quoted to have said that the "assistance demonstrates the concern of the United States and its readiness to help in resolving the refugee issue. It does not reflect direct support for Nepal in its row with Bhutan."

BHIM SUBBA SCHEDULED TO VISIT AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND

At the invitation of Salzburg Seminar and funded by the United States Information Agency (USIA), Bhim Subba, Executive Member of the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan

(HUROB) will be shortly leaving Kathmandu for Salzburg, Austria. He has been awarded a Fellow to Session 327, "Involuntary Migration" to be convened at Schloss Leopoldskron from 8 - 15 July 1995.

Considering that the issue of involuntary migration is emerging as one of the greatest challenges faced by humankind, the seminar is to seek a better understanding of the issue by examining the salient factors and processes involved. Discussions will also be devoted to humanitarian intervention, international institutions and processes, and overall policy requirements. Highly placed academics in the relevant areas, representatives of various UN agencies and other special invitees are expected to take part in the seminar.

It is increasingly felt that Bhutan's major bilateral donors like Japan, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland besides India should be involved in resolving the present crisis. Switzerland, which is highly regarded in Bhutan is one of the earliest bilateral donors in the country. (It would be celebrating 20 years of cooperation in Bhutan later this month). So, on the way back to Nepal, Mr. Subba will be spending some time in Switzerland to discuss the current crisis in Bhutan and the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal with government officials and non-governmental organizations.

The Bhutan Review family extends hearty congratulations to all the successful SLC candidates

A NATION IN TRANSITION

Book Review

MISSION TO BHUTAN : A Nation in Transition - B.S.Das, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995 (128pp)

As the first resident representative of India in Bhutan, Das was witness to many events which are significant in terms of modern Bhutanese history. Over the course of his four-years stay in the Kingdom (January 1968 - March 1972), the author himself contributed much to the process of Bhutanese efforts to deal with the changing situation as the country strove to project itself as a modern nation. The main part of the book deals with this transitional period, and the author candidly discusses personalities, events and developments of the time in a very personalized, readable fashion. But it is the terse second half of the book, Part II - Post 1971 Bhutan (pages 109-128), which is the subject of review. The author himself is unlikely to criticize this decision since it is here that he has chosen to locate the moral of his story.

"Part II of this book is a reflection of my views on the current scenario highlighting Bhutan's problems in the coming years. I am not a futurologist and, therefore, may be wrong in my assessment. I very much hope so for Bhutan's sake." This ominous conclusion by Das in his preface sums up the concerns of an author whose love for the country and deep respect for the late King is mirrored throughout the book.

The single biggest threat to internal stability in Bhutan, Das believes, has emerged as a consequence of the transformation of the sociopolitical institutions in the country over the past two decades. In this short span of time, new power equations have developed while established institutions have lost their authority to provide direction and exercise control. A new class of people and a new breed of policy makers have emerged. The "arrogant, westernized, and inexperienced" bureaucracy which wrested power, although trying to accommodate traditional systems, failed in its attempts to evolve "a new concept of Bhutanese nationalism." The National Assembly and the Royal Advisory Council were made impotent and "have not emerged as part of a modern political system or institutions representing the will of the people except as a sounding board" while "the monastic order exists only in name." According to Das, "today, Bhutan has unquestioned leadership in the person of the King but nothing beyond except plenty of money through aid."

The large volume of aid that has been poured into the Kingdom "Rs 40,000 million [Seventh Five Year Plan] for a population officially listed as 600,000" - ("No wonder, Bhutan claims to have the highest per capita income in South Asia," Das writes) has brought about consequent changes in the social structure with the wide gap between 'haves' and 'have nots' creating points of conflict. "In the absence of any political parties or non-governmental institutions," the enormous wealth of the recently created middle class is resulting in "centres of power (are) emerging within the bureaucracy that wield clout detrimental to the country's

interests." Except for the personal direction of the King who alone can intervene, "there are no checks and balances" or "in-built safety valves in the institutional system." As Bhutan struggles to adjust and fit into the new world order of the 21st century, the advantage of "controllability" afforded "by a one-man institutional set up" will become "flashpoints in the coming years," Das writes. In fact, Das believes that the current crisis in the Kingdom is only a manifestation of this larger problem afflicting the nation.

Devoting a separate chapter to this "ethnic dilemma", Das points out in the very beginning that "the ethnic issues are far deeper in their origins" than mere semantics about dates of migrant settlements or in terms of indigenous people and migrants. "The problem is not difficult to solve," he writes, provided one sees "the entire ethnic problem of Bhutan in a correct perspective."

Bhutan, according to Das, failed to appreciate or understand its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious personality. While conscious of the demographic threat, Bhutanese rulers ignored the complexities of a mixed population in the south and believed that "placing restrictions on citizenship rights and movement of Nepalese settlers" limited the problem. Rumbblings regarding discrimination had started in the late King's time as "representation in the National Assembly and services was limited" for southern Bhutanese whose movement was "confined upto a line which clearly demarcated the ethnic zones."

The merger of Sikkim with India in 1975 and the agitation in the Darjeeling hills are seen as developments which heightened the insecurity of the regime, leading to the "misjudgment of the Bhutan Government" beginning with a census to identify migrants and the over enthusiastic implementation of "their ideas on the new concept of Bhutanese nationalism." The bureaucracy and police resorted to "strong-arm methods" and "excesses were committed" while implementing the new directives. These led to a situation where "even the bonafide Nepalese-Bhutanese settled for over a century felt threatened," and in the end, "a political and economic problem mishandled became a major ethnic issue leading to bitter accusations."

The author believes that "basic issues were lost sight of" because the ethnic problem really has its roots in perceived inequities. He blames the leadership among southern Bhutanese for failing to remedy the problems through direct dialogue with the King, and apports equal blame to the monarch, "a liberal in his own way, yet highly susceptible to a misplaced concept of Bhutanese nationalism, (who) was misguided by his immediate advisors who did not comprehend the situation correctly." Consequently, Das says, "the leadership of Nepalese-Bhutanese was taken over by outsiders who very cleverly manipulated the solvable issues to intractable demands," while the King "was left in an unhappy situation where he had nobody who could retrieve the situation tactfully."

Both dissidents as well as the

government will question some of the author's observations, but they will find little fault with his basic prescription for a solution. "The solution to the ethnic problem lies not in contesting numbers," he writes, "but taking concrete steps in identifying genuine subjects, giving an equitable share and opportunity in all spheres of the country's governance. Most of all, Bhutan should not even remotely force an integrated culture in such a multi-ethnic society as it has. At the same time it should never permit any section to question or destroy the Drukpa entity of the country."

Prescriptions may be simple, but for medication to take effect it must first be consumed or applied. When the patient is unwilling, this is difficult. Toeing the Indian government line, the author does not propose intervention by the doctor. While maintaining that "any instability in Bhutan affects India directly" and cautioning that "a lingering sore like this can become cancerous," he weakly argues that "India cannot be a referee" because "India does not wish to destabilize either Bhutan or Nepal." The implicit threat that immediately follows makes an even greater mockery of this Indian restraint: "This does not make India a distant observer. Its interests at a given time will decide the degree and time of an intervention. Sikkim is an example."

Das, the Chief Executive in Sikkim during the crucial period when the former Himalayan Kingdom merged with India, says "it was the discrimination and economic disparity created by a feudal system for self-preservation that led to the agitation," and drives home the significant point that "it was not the 75 per cent Nepalese population of Sikkim that led to the merger or a change in the ruling pattern." He is sympathetic to Bhutanese fears of demographic changes but advises Bhutan to take lessons from Sikkim's history where also the Chogyal attempted to enforce "a misconceived concept of Sikkimese nationalism" but could not change the deep cultural roots of his multi-ethnic groups into a blend of "loose knit pseudo-nationalism."

The central theme running through the author's discussion of the current situation in Bhutan is that the regime has ironically weakened its position in the efforts to strengthen itself to protect its vested interests. Traditional institutions have been sidelined by an efficient bureaucracy, but "the King and the elite bureaucracy cannot constitute a system." Having devalued the traditional systems which integrated the country, Bhutan, now "neither a Shangrila as commonly known to the outside world, nor a modern society as understood in terms of values and systems, (it) seems to be struggling to discover in itself the new concept of nationalism with one leader, one language, one nation." The Kingdom faces "a confused future," the author states, as the present cannot even be termed a transitional phase "because there are no clearly defined lasting objectives towards which the system is moving."

Unless the "many gaps in its political, economic, and social content" are filled up, they could

pose a serious threat to the nation's integrity and stability in the coming decade, according to Das. The "ethnic" crisis and the consequent problem of refugees is only one visible manifestation of trouble brewing in the Himalayan Kingdom. Is the leadership capable of handling the "possible dangers within?" According to Das, "he (the King) has to give a clear direction to his people." He adds, "the Chogyal of Sikkim relied too much on the advice of people who did not understand the basics of geopolitics. His own support party of Bhutias ultimately caused his downfall as he ultimately realized and shared this feeling with me. The foreigners on whom he depended never came to his rescue. None of his Nepalese subjects contributed to any of this. In fact, I can say it with confidence that Sikkim's Nepalese subjects regretted the Chogyal's departure the most." The book is an invaluable addition to the limited literature available on Bhutan.

Competing with the new satellite culture of modern times, a new class out of the recently emerged middle class has acquired enormous wealth. Unfortunately, foreign aid has been one source of corrupting this class. In the absence of any political parties or non governmental institutions, centres of power are emerging within bureaucracy that wield clout detrimental to the country's interests. There are no checks and balances except for a personal direction of the King who alone can intervene. There are no in-built safety valves in the institutional system, a cause for serious worry."

B.S.Das in the Mission to Bhutan: A Nation in Transition

MEDIA SCAN

On the makeshift altar and among the statues and paintings of Buddha is the photograph of the King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan.

These are 87,000 Bhutanese refugees who all want to go back home. Chandra Maya Ghalley is one of them. She told me that she was forced to leave Bhutan. She was upset about having to leave her country leaving all her possessions behind. But given the chance she would go back immediately. She is a recognized refugee and has a small hut in Goldhap camp. Others who have been evicted are not so fortunate. All refugees seeking asylum go through a rigorous screening process, first by UNHCR officials then by the officials of the Nepalese government. A growing number of them do not make it through the process. Indira Dulal, a Bhutanese refugee works with Women's Focal Point, a body that cares for the welfare of the camp inhabitants. Many of them do not make through because they make different statements. During the interview, the members of the family are asked similar questions separately. Even if one person answers differently then he/she is disqualified. It is very unfair because the question asked are like: What colour is the cow? or How big is their house? The UNHCR defends its screening policy but admits in some cases it has caused dilemma.

Mr. Arun, the UNHCR representative in Jhapa: Through the procedure of our interview you know those people who have come here are rejected primarily, those who did not meet our criteria and therefore they are not refugees and they could not make through our screening centre set up at Kakarvita. So we told them, we informed them that sorry you are not refugees. You may be someone who is not from Bhutan or somebody who have lived for the past few years in India and you come here. And therefore you do not meet this criteria and we do not have any assistance for you and therefore we can not help you.

That dilemma is very real for Menuka Regmi who came to Nepal to seek asylum. Only her mother-in-law was accepted as a refugee. Herself, her husband and her three children are all now squatting with her mother-in-law in the hut given to her by the UNHCR. But conditions are cramped and Menuka does not know how long she can stay there. She is also worried about the condition of her mother-in-law and her children.

Menuka: We do not know why we were rejected. We all came together from the same home in Bhutan. So it does not make sense, we were not accepted. If I am not allowed to stay, there will be no one to look after my mother-in-law and although my children are being looked today, what will happen tomorrow? But people like Menuka are not completely forgotten. Bhutanese human rights organizations in Jhapa and elsewhere are trying to relieve their hardships. Aid from other UN agencies has been promised to help people like Menuka set up in business. If this is successful, those who have been refused refugee status will at least have some financial security for themselves and their family.

Mani Rana recently in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal, BBC, South Asia Reports aired on May 31, 1995.

The Bhutan REVIEW

TIME STANDS STILLAGAIN

External players, for their own interest, have been known to evince more than a passing interest in the political stability of immediate neighbours, and even in that of distant lands occupied by friends and foes. Governments hoping for either peace or instability in their backyard, often can and do exert their influence. But Bhutanese refugees, not the least bit in a position to influence any situation, can only hope. And seldom, if ever, can there have been as much hope pinned by people for the political stability in a foreign country. Unfortunately, refugees' prayers, it seems, are also seldom answered: The Nepalese go to the polls on November 23.

For the Bhutanese refugee, time stands still yet again. The clock stopped ticking on June 9 when Nepalese Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxists-Leninists), facing the threat of a no-confidence motion from the opposition Nepali Congress-Rashtriya Prajatantra Party combine, opted for mid-term polls by recommending the dissolution of the House of Representatives.

For the Nepalese, the exercise of their right to vote twice in one year and three times in four years is an expensive way to chose a government. While the direct cost of elections to the national exchequer is in itself not a small matter that can be overlooked, it is the continued political instability which is alarming. One can only hope that this November the Nepalese give themselves a government which will last its full term.

Last July, the Nepalese delegation to the Ministerial Joint Committee returned from the Bhutanese capital after an unsuccessful fourth round of bilateral talks. According to Nepalese sources, there were no substantive discussions and a deadlock seemed imminent. Thimphu, of course, maintained that "progress" had been made. In fact, subsequent to the change in government in Nepal and consequent difficulties in the negotiations, contrary to views expressed by Nepal, Bhutan has been contending that the two sides had effectively "harmonized" their positions in July last year and that a solution had, more or less, been hammered out during negotiations with the Nepali Congress government.

Around this time last year, Bhutan was groping for the right answers to explain away the sudden absence of "progress" when the collapse of the government in Nepal made immediate explanations unnecessary. The talks were indefinitely postponed and Bhutan, interested only in thwarting solutions but desperate to keep the talks going, benefited from a half year of inactivity.

With the resumption of talks in February this year, Thimphu's difficulties were back. A better prepared Nepalese side did not make matters easier and, for the first time, Bhutanese complacency came in for a shock. Handling negotiations for the first time, the new government in Nepal was understandably and expectedly cautious during the fifth round in Kathmandu. Thus, as in the past four meetings, nothing emerged from the talks. The result suited Bhutan well. Through its official media, Thimphu once again congratulated itself for the steady "progress".

Matters finally seem to have come to a head during the sixth round in April. For the first time since the bilateral talks began, the Royal Government of Bhutan announced the talks a failure. Accusing the Nepalese side of "introducing" new elements into the negotiations and blaming Nepal for the stalemate, the Bhutanese claimed that they had earlier already "come very close to harmonizing" their positions with the previous Nepali government. The Nepalese side insists it is only making its stand clear and reiterating its earlier position. The two governments did not set a date or venue for the next round, and a subsequent meeting of the Bhutanese monarch and Nepalese Prime Minister did not result in any further concrete decisions.

Seen in the light of this background, there is a sense of *deja vu*. For Bhutan, Nepalese politics is once again the source of relief and respite. Ironically, elections, a process unknown to the average Bhutanese, has come to Bhutan's rescue.

If one is to go by past form, the two governments are unlikely to meet until early next year, providing the Bhutanese regime with a long breather. It must be remembered, however, that the bilateral process was already on the rocks before the political upheaval in Nepal. Thus, with no dates and venue decided, unlike last year, the two sides are not waiting to resume talks. To determine when and if the Ministerial Joint Committee next meets, and under what circumstances, both governments are undoubtedly exploring alternatives.

Political instability in Nepal has certainly helped lift some pressure off Bhutan, but it can only be a short respite. Indeed, developments within Bhutan over the rest of the year, and careful use of this time for serious groundwork by Kathmandu coupled with healthy election results can make Bhutan's task of fending off a lasting solution to the problem in southern Bhutan much more difficult.

50th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Date of Birth : 26 June 1945.

Place of Birth : San Francisco, United States of America.

Mother : Planet Earth.

Father : The Victorious World War II Powers.

Weight at Birth : 51 Member States.

Fifty years older and 134 member states plumper, the United Nations is returning to its birthplace for some commemorative razzmatazz. Threatening to spoil the show are the rising doubts about the organization.

The accepted wisdom is that because the UN was frozen in the ideological ice of the Cold War for much of its early life, it should be modernized.

Across the globe, politicians, academics and pressure groups are huddled in conferences and seminars, trying to fashion a world body which more accurately mirrors the changes geopolitical landscape.

A host of proposals for renewing the UN has emerged, but on one issue a consensus is growing - that the all-powerful Security Council should be more representative of the modern world: the current permanent membership should be redistributed more equitably among the world's regions, and the power of veto should go.

The organization's post-anniversary credibility rests on how quickly it can break free from the grip of the post-World War II "Great Powers" which continue to dominate the Security Council - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

A more contentious issue is the democratization of the world body. Specifically, does the UN need a new people-centred structure in addition to its main inter-governmental organs, the General Assembly, where the governments of all member states get together, and the Security Council?

Opinion polls show consistent support for the UN in most countries, but individual citizens have no direct route for voicing their demands to the UN. They have to go via their national governments, which rarely gets results.

Hence the official theme for the 50th anniversary celebrations: "We the peoples of the United Nations..", echoing the visionary words of the 1945 UN Charter.

The problem is to find ways of bringing in the people. The movement received a boost at the 1992 "Earth Summit" in Brazil, when non-government organizations (NGOs) succeeded in putting the previously closed world of UN conferencing into the international media spotlight. But although NGOs have dug themselves into the parts of the UN system, the international diplomats and

civil servants are constantly trying to win back lost ground. The off-hand treatment of NGOs by China and the UN Secretariat in the forthcoming World Women's Conference in Beijing is a case in point. The NGOs are being treated

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as an aggravating adjunct rather than as an essential component.

Jeffrey Segall, leader of the London-based Campaign for a More Democratic United Nations (CAMDUN) argues for a "UN People's Assembly" composed of five delegates from each country. Each of the five would represent a different sector of Society.

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev advocated a similar idea in a 1988 General Assembly speech.

But that does not in itself make the UN more democratic. Only elections can do that.

The idea goes back to the very founding of the UN. In a parliamentary debate on the UN Charter in 1945, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin called for "a world assembly elected directly from the people for the world as a whole, to whom the governments who form the United Nations are responsible."

Governments resist such a suggestion for fear that it would be the beginning of world government, which the UN certainly is not. Governments want to hold on to their national sovereignty. But even UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said: "The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty has passed." He has requested a thorough and independent study of the UN's future mission.

Erskine Childers, a former senior adviser in the UN, says that "there was a time when the battle of ideas in the UN was about sovereignty in the political and foreign policy

dimension. Now the battle is about the refusal of a handful of elites in a handful of countries in the North to accept the democratic management of the commanding heights of the world economy."

In reality, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund - dominated by the major industrialized countries - are closer to being a world government, albeit a dictatorial one, than is the UN.

Childers opposes the drift towards "realism" in the current discussions on the UN's future: "There are those who say we have to accommodate the negative attitude and behaviour of the major powers and bend the UN around them. I totally reject this."

Childers has been working for years on the idea of a UN Parliamentary Assembly, which he and the former UN Under Secretary Sir Brian Urquhart outlined in a recent book, *Reviewing the United Nations*.

The Assembly, they argue, should be based on universal adult franchise, using a system of proportional representation to elect UN parliamentarians from each member state. It would complement rather than replace the existing UN structure.

Childers is confident that his ideas are reaching a more

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mainstream audience, but is not starry-eyed. "There would be huge problems. But is it wildly impossible?" he asks, recalling the cries of "impossible" which greeted the suggestion for a European Parliament.

He believes a global assembly would develop over a time, just as the European Parliament has evolved. Last year the European Parliament endorsed a proposal for a UN parliamentary assembly.

He recognizes the obstacles posed by countries with no democratic experience, but responds with a knowing smile: "You would have to introduce that experience, wouldn't you?"

"It simply takes political will and, above all, political courage. We should remember that what we call 'foreign affairs' are in fact the domestic affairs of planet earth."

Courtesy: Tony Samphier, Gemini

FROM CANADA, WITHOUT LOVE

Over the past two years, a number of our readers have written to us. But even as we appreciate and welcome feedback, as a matter of policy we do not normally provide space for letters. We are, however, making an exception this once. Writing from British Columbia in Canada, Howard Solverson has taken strong exception to our article on Father Mackey [William Mackey - Father of Contradictions?, Vol.2, No.11, November 1994]. Author of a forthcoming book from Robert Davies Publishing, Montreal, *The Jesuit and the Dragon: The life of Father William Mackey in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan*, Solverson believes we have "maliciously infer(ed) a situation clearly opposite to the facts." Clearly, if we did not bend the rules and allow Solverson to have his say, clearly we would be committing a further crime. We will, of course, use our editorial prerogative to include our comments in defense of our views.

Dear Sir or Madam,
It has taken sometime for your article on Father William Mackey to be brought to my attention and for me to get around to writing in response. And as I do, I have mixed feelings.

In the article published November 1994, I find a number of issues that could be taken up in both substance and implication. It is tempting to take up every one of the numerous misrepresentations you have made. Better judgment would probably dictate that I leave the matter entirely, given the way you manage to distort the material you choose to use. I will steer a middle course and make a simple statement of fact which I think should be made known. Your article stated, "Although he [Father Mackey] never did take kindly to southern Bhutanese of Nepalese origin, reportedly resulting from his unhappy experience in Darjeeling, India, from where he was allegedly compelled to make an unceremonious exit..."

To my knowledge, it has never been suggested elsewhere that Father Mackey "never did take

kindly to southern Bhutanese of Nepalese origin" and in my own intensive experience with Father Mackey there has never been a hint of such an attitude on his part.

But on historical record, you totally misrepresent the circumstances regarding Father Mackey's departure (which I would not call an "unceremonious exit") from Darjeeling. The government position that led to his being compelled (not "allegedly" but actually) to leave Darjeeling grew essentially out of allegations that he was pro-Nepali and anti-Bengali. The expulsion was an unhappy event for Father Mackey because his experience in Darjeeling had been very happy. For seventeen years he lived and worked in this region, where he was close to the people, the majority of whom were Nepalese. There was mutual respect and love between these people and Father Mackey.

While Father Mackey was not anti-Bengali, as alleged at the time, it is probably fair to say that he was pro-Nepali. This is quite understandable given the situation, and really presented no threat to anyone. However his expulsion might be judged, Father Mackey holds no grudges against anyone.

On the other hand, it is ludicrous (but sadly, not very funny) that you have chosen to infer a situation clearly opposite to the facts. The same can be said of the inference that Father Mackey is "blinded by hate." In describing Father Mackey, you show a complete lack of knowledge of Father Mackey's character, and it is one is moved to suggest that you look closer to home for someone "blinded by hate."
Yours sincerely,
Howard Solverson, Delta, B.C., Canada

Solverson finds our views conflicting with his own, and is naturally upset. We can only recommend that he re-read the article which has perturbed him so much. Perhaps he may then realize that it is quite possible that just as his reading of the article in question may have been only superficial, his research for his book might

have suffered from the same lack of depth.

In his response, Solverson conveniently sidesteps the main thrust of the article in question and, like the Father himself, manages to miss the wood for the trees. Because Solverson chose not to be tempted into taking up all the "numerous misrepresentations" we seem to have made, we may never find out the myriad other issues which may have provoked him. However, on the few points he felt strongly enough to wish to correct us, he clearly needs further education.

Foremost, the basis of Solverson's argument - and indignation seems to lie in the fact that Father Mackey was "pro-Nepali" and, *ipso facto*, deserving of our praise and not our criticism. Perhaps Solverson would use this same theory to suggest that being "pro-English" would automatically imply being "pro-American", "pro-Australian", "pro-Canadian" etc. simply on account of common origins. If Solverson carefully weighed the significance of our choice of words he might find the experience educative - being "pro-Nepali" is not equivalent to being "pro-southern Bhutanese" and vice versa.

On the question of Father Mackey's relationship with southern Bhutanese, we respect Solverson's "knowledge" but challenge his capacity to judge the level of fairplay on the part of the Father. Solverson's "intensive experience" limited to the period when he spent a few years in Bhutan under the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) programme can hardly compare with the actual experience of thousands of southern Bhutanese who knew him over a 30 year period and can recall this relationship. "It has never been suggested elsewhere" (are there voluminous tomes on the subject?) and "never a hint of such an attitude on his part" do not constitute evidence for the defense.

In any case, the purpose of our article in November was not to focus on Father Mackey's less than kind treatment of

southern Bhutanese, but to express consternation that he could put politics before human compassion, a point that Solverson conveniently makes no attempt to address. The fact that he could overlook the humanitarian work of his own order to respond with a politically-charged rejoinder points to Father Mackey's dangerous habit of dabbling with matters outside his purview. On the question of this habitual aberrant behaviour on the part of our subject, Solverson would be advised to re-read our article to appreciate the fact that we are not quite lacking in knowledge regarding the business of "historical record". While Solverson's desire to set us straight is appreciated, he will note that nowhere in the article is there even a hint that Father Mackey never got along with the Nepali community in Darjeeling. Solverson is quite correct in stating that there was mutual respect and love between Darjeeling's Nepali community and the Father who was enthusiastically supportive of the community's aspirations, one consequence being his hounded by the government. However, his departure from Darjeeling, following an expulsion order with a time limit, must be termed, sadly but correctly, "unceremonious".

Solverson takes great pains to convey the "fact" that Father Mackey was "pro-Nepali". While we might agree with this observation, probably over the Father's objections since being "pro" somebody automatically implies being "anti" someone else, this is of little relevance to us. But if we agree that despite his better judgment the Father did discriminate among God's children and was manifestly "pro-Nepali" in Darjeeling, and thereby accept this human flaw in the Father's character, one fails to fathom why he could not be "anti-southern Bhutanese" in Bhutan; or, if alluding to the fact that the Father could be "anti" anything is objectionable to Solverson, why "it is probably fair to say" that he was and is "pro-regime". Semantics aside, as far as southern Bhutanese are

concerned, over the last decade, "pro-regime" also equals "anti-southern Bhutanese". In the case of Father Mackey, it is patently obvious, especially in the light of his rejoinder which fueled the last article, that in the Father's eyes we have become the "enemy".

As regards our use of the phrase "blinded by hate", sadly only such an emotion can explain the action of the Father and the acerbity in his words. In the first instance, one can question, as we did, the necessity on his part to respond to the harmless news item, but if the Father felt such an uncontrollable urge to respond, he might at least have hidden his animosity. Solverson's arguments are simply not enough to erase the bitter words penned by the Father. We have been asked to look inwards to find someone "blinded by hate". We look, but find none among us blinded by hate. Yes, we do seethe with rage. And we are not ashamed to admit such a human weakness.

Solverson writes in defense of one individual; we write for a hundred thousand. Solverson writes to protect the image of an individual; we write to protect the interests of a hundred thousand. Writing from the safety and security of his home in a country he can call his own, Solverson may have difficulty understanding the hurt and pain of people forced to live in shacks as refugees. When insults are needlessly added to this indignity, especially by someone like the Father who must know better, we have the right to respond. And as we do, if there are individuals who are offended by our words, or individuals whose reputations are tarnished in the process, we cannot afford to be apologetic. It was Hemingway, perhaps, who equated the lives of a million human beings with that of a single mountain lion - but as refugees desperately fighting for the right to be recognized as human beings entitled to a country and a home, we can neither be quite so generous nor forgiving. We make no apologies in this regard.

NEWSLETTER IN IRELAND ON BHUTANESE REFUGEES

The Bhutanese Refugee Support Group in Ireland which was formed some time ago has made tremendous contribution in raising awareness about the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The Group with a modest beginning has already established its presence through different activities known in various sections of society including the parliament not only in Ireland but in other European countries as well. While some of the members of the Group were instrumental in organizing the visit of the two refugee teachers to Ireland and the United Kingdom recently, the Group has now come up with a Newsletter. Working in distant Ireland, the issues covered in the Newsletter confirms that the people involved are very much in touch with the refugees in Jhapa and other related developments.

The June 1995 issue of the Newsletter covers the visit of the two teachers, Tek Bir Chettri and Hari Sharma to Ireland during April-May and that of Mangala Sharma's visit to the United Kingdom a little earlier. The status of the bilateral talks, case of new arrivals in the refugee camp, seminar on Bhutanese refugees at the Colombia University in New York and the report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the UN Commission on Human Rights are other issues covered in the Newsletter.

Anyone interested can contact the Secretary of the support group in Ireland at the following address: Ms. Brigid Mayes, Downs, Monilea, Mullinger, Co. Westmeath. Phone: 044 72241.

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION

Location	District	Refugees	Students
Timai	Jhapa	8,296	2,968
Goldhap	Jhapa	8,002	3,023
Beldangi I	Jhapa	15,036	5,114
Beldangi II	Jhapa	18,897	7,092
Beldangi II Ext.	Jhapa	9,437	3,327
Sanischare (Pathri)	Morang	17,124	5,858
Khudunabari (N)	Jhapa	7,241	3,904
Khudunabari (S)	Jhapa	3,863	
Total		87,896	31,286
Cumulative births:		6,238	
Cumulative deaths:		2,770	

The above figures are as of June 30, 1995.