

The Bhutan REVIEW

Monthly

News, Views and Reviews

VOL 3

No. 5

May 1995

Rs. 5/-

Soldier declared non-Bhutanese after 17 years of service

After serving in the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) for the past 17 years, 39-year old Jai Bahadur Rai was declared a non-national and discharged from the army. Rai who had reached the rank of Pelzab (corporal) in RBA is from Singhi village in Bhalujhora gewog in Phuntsholing *dungkhag* under Chukha *dzongkhag* with House No. SG/6 and *Thram* No. 213. His parents, 70 and 60 years old, both born in Bhutan, were declared "illegals" and evicted in 1994 after failing to produce their land tax receipt for 1958.

Pelzab Rai was twice sent for special training in India. In 1986 he undertook the 3-month training course on Mountain Warfare in Jammu & Kashmir. He also underwent the 81 Mortar Training Course for 2-1/2 months in Mao, Madhya Pradesh, during 1991.

He was last serving in Saba, Paro. On February 20, 1995, Wing Commander Lt. Col. Karma Tshering informed Rai that he was discharged. He received no retirement benefits because the amount due to him was allegedly adjusted against expenditure incurred for his two training stints in India. After 17 years of service, Pelzab Rai was made to leave the army penniless.

When he arrived in his village, Rai found that his house had been completely destroyed. His land, about 11 acres, had reverted to jungle. Even here he was hounded by the *gup* (village headman) Dorji Gyaltsen and the *karbari* (headman's assistant) Keshar Singh Tamang who ordered him to leave the country. He arrived at the Screening Post in Kakarvitta on March 7 this year. Rai with his wife and two daughters is currently in Khudunabari (South) refugee camp.

Dasho T.J. Rixin promoted to Deputy Minister

Dasho T.J. Rixin, the long serving Foreign Secretary who was transferred last year to the Ministry of Health and Education was promoted by His Majesty the King to the rank of Deputy Minister on April 19. This promotion brings the total number of Ministers/Deputy Ministers to fifteen and now provides representation from central Bhutan. The west with a population of under 15% now has 12 (80%) ministers and, with one each from the South, Central and the East, the rest of the country with a combined population of 85% is represented by 3 (20%) ministers.

The Bhutanese side showed no real interest - Minister Oli

The latest round of talks between Bhutan and Nepal held in Thimphu from 17-20 April has ended in a stalemate. While the last three round of talks had reportedly concentrated on "harmonising" the positions of the two governments on the four "agreed" categories of refugees in the camps in eastern Nepal, the two sides were clearly deadlocked at the end of the sixth round.

Speaking to reporters on his return to Kathmandu, a visibly disappointed Nepalese Home Minister said that "the Bhutanese side showed no real interest towards solving the problem." He said that although during his audience with the Bhutanese monarch His Majesty evinced an interest to see the problem speedily resolved, this same resolve was not reflected by the Bhutanese delegation during the talks.

According to the joint press release issued on April 20, "the leaders of the two delegations made statements at the opening session of the Sixth Ministerial Joint Committee meeting" and the delegations "immediately resumed deliberations to harmonize the

positions of the two governments on each of the four categories." Agreement, however, could not be reached.

Speaking to the Bhutanese media prior to the departure of the Nepalese delegation from Thimphu, Bhutanese Home Minister Dago Tshering, leader of the Bhutanese side to the talks, said that the Nepalese delegation "introduced new issues to the talks." Tshering also accused Nepal of trying to send all the people in the camps to Bhutan, "including those who are not Bhutanese nationals." K.P. Sharma Oli, the Nepalese Home Minister who led his delegation to the talks, had earlier reaffirmed Nepal's position that Bhutan should "repatriate all those people who are in the camps from Bhutan" and also clarified that if there are people in the camps from elsewhere, "Bhutan need not bring them back".

The Bhutanese Home Minister also claimed that with the previous government in Nepal, the Ministerial Joint Committee had already harmonized positions on three of the four categories of

people and had "come very close to harmonizing" their positions even with the present government during the fifth meeting. Blaming the Nepalese side for the failure of the talks, Tshering further stated that his delegation was surprised and disappointed that "the Nepalese delegation changed their position during this meeting."

Though no specific mandate has been determined for the proposed Team, the two sides "exchanged names of the five members of Joint Verification Team from each side." The Verification Team can commence work only after the two governments harmonize their positions on different categories of people in the camps. As an indication of the current differences between the two governments, the joint press release states that the Committee agreed "to meet on a mutually convenient date and venue to be communicated through the diplomatic channel." For the already frustrated refugees, this state of uncertainty is all the more worrying.

Senior US officials in Bhutan

Timothy Wirth, the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs and Frank Wisner, the U.S. ambassador to India accompanied by other officials visited Bhutan recently. During their five-day stay in the kingdom, the delegation is reported to have discussed bilateral and global issues with His Majesty the King and senior officials.

It is believed that the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal figured prominently in the discussions and the U.S. officials were able to hear "Bhutan's point of view" on the problem of the refugees in Nepal. Ambassador Wisner is reported to have conveyed the wish of the U.S. government for a settlement of the refugee problem "taking into account human rights issues and the critically important issue of Bhutan's sovereignty and cultural identity."

It may not be entirely coincidental that former U.S. Senator Wirth, "the highest U.S. government official to visit Bhutan", was also the leader of the U.S. delegation to the World Conference on Human Rights in Geneva in June 1993. While Kuensel reported that the Under Secretary "commended Bhutan's efforts to preserve the environment", the paper failed to mention that the Under Secretary also expressed U.S. government concerns regarding the human rights situation in Bhutan and the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

Seminar on Bhutanese refugee problem

Manav Adhikar Suraksha Manch (Human Rights Protection Forum), Kalimpong, and the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR), Siliguri, organized a one-day seminar on the problem of Bhutanese refugees. Over 110 people, including representatives from the Bhutan Solidarity Group, New Delhi, representatives of Bhutanese refugee organizations and other prominent human rights activists participated in the seminar in Siliguri, West Bengal, India, which was chaired by Advocate Bijan Chakraborty, President of APDR. The meeting adopted the following resolutions:

1. That Bhutan Support Groups and human rights organizations throughout India would be contacted as a follow-up action and similar seminars would be organized in capital cities of every state in India to create mass opinion and to put pressure on the Government of India so that it finally participates in the on-going talks to resolve the issue.
2. All the refugee organizations stressed the need to come under one banner and work towards the common goal. Steps would be taken by various refugee organizations towards this end.

17 COWHERDS MISSING

Bhutanese villagers in the vicinity of Gayleghpug have traditionally kept large herds of cattle on the Indian side of the border. This has been necessitated, or facilitated, by the fact that while the Bhutanese part in this area mainly comprises cultivated land, immediately across the international border is a wide tract of government forest land. This traditional practice (of Bhutanese rearing cattle on Indian soil) is peculiar to this area and is not common in other parts along the southern border. In recent years, Bodo presence has increased in these government reserved areas as these tribals have begun occupying forest land.

The practice of tending cattle in India continued even after the problems started in southern Bhutan. In fact, in the early stages of repression in the country the *goths* (cattle camps) served as sanctuary and shelter for many southern Bhutanese fleeing harassment and arbitrary arrests. However, even though they were in Indian territory they were not safe; Bhutanese authorities and security forces crossed over with impunity to abduct Bhutanese citizens from these *goths*. Later, as the wave of indiscriminate arrests and unrestrained atrocities on the part of security forces subsided, some members of the cattle owning families continued to tend the herd while the rest of

their kin either managed to remain in Bhutan or were forced to seek shelter in the refugee camps in Nepal.

On the morning of March 18, the *Dungpa* (Sub-Divisional Officer) of Gayleghpug, Topgay Tshering, accompanied by Royal Bhutan Police and Royal Bhutan Army personnel reportedly raided six *goths* in Indian territory in Bagmara, Assam. The Bhutanese raiding party was assisted by local Bodos who were allegedly paid for their services. 17 cowherds were abducted by the Bhutanese and a total of 477 cattle (407 cows, 50 buffaloes, 10 Jersey cows, and 10 mithuns) were captured and driven into Bhutan.

According to the report, all 17 cowherds are Bhutanese citizens. They are illiterate and the group includes a dumb person. Since their abduction on March 18, the 17 persons have disappeared. There are credible reports that on March 19 they were transported out of Gayleghpug in vehicles belonging to the Royal Bhutan Army. People from Dadghari, India, who witnessed the transfer were told that these persons were being deported and that they were being taken to the Assam-West Bengal border at Srirampur. However, since that day the 17 have not been seen. The individuals have neither arrived in Nepal nor have they returned to

Bagmara. The following are the names and details of the missing persons:

| NAME | Age | H/T/M | Buff/Cows/Jer/Mit |
|--------------------------|-----|--------|-------------------|
| 1. Abi Nath Nepal | 56 | 33/252 | 40 10 1 3 |
| 2. Nanda Lal Nepal | 46 | -/625 | 6 30 0 1 |
| 3. Shiva Lal Nepal | 40 | 34/273 | 2 0 4 2 |
| 4. Som Nath Nepal | 29 | 39/548 | 2 25 0 1 |
| 5. Chura Mani Bhattarai | 28 | 36/291 | 0 22 0 0 |
| 6. Hem Lal Pokhrel | 19 | 35/290 | 0 70 3 3 |
| 7. Dilli Ram Pokhrel | 28 | 38/- | |
| 8. Hari Prasad Neopane | 65 | 12/133 | 0 60 0 0 |
| 9. Gopi Lal Neopane | 129 | */ | |
| 10. Nara Pati Neopane | 124 | */ | |
| 11. Bala Ram Adhikari | 117 | -/- | |
| 12. Chhatra Bdr Khatri | 25 | 06/161 | 0 29 2 0 |
| 13. Radha K. Adhikari | 60 | 33/094 | 0 105 0 0 |
| 14. Tika Ram Adhikari | 137 | */ | |
| 15. Prem Bdr Gurung | 52 | 08/044 | 0 14 0 0 |
| 16. Krishna Adhikari | ? | */*/*/ | 0 18 0 0 |
| 17. Kashi Nath Bhattarai | 37 | */*/*/ | 0 24 0 0 |
| TOTAL | | | 50 407 10 10 |

SI No. 1-10 and 17 are from Danabari, SI No. 11 from Bhur and SI No. 12-16 from Taklai Gewogs under Sarbhang district.

On March 21, the *goth* belonging to Devi Charan Koirala of Bhur, Gayleghpug, was raided by a gang of Bodos. At 7 A.M. the group arrived at the cattle camp in Malivitta, Assam, India, and forcibly drove Koirala's herd of 55 cows into Bhutan. They also severely beat him and dragged him back to Bhutan because, the Bodos said, the *dungpa* had offered Nu.3000 (US \$100) as reward for every cowherd handed over to him. He escaped after they left him for dead inside Bhutanese territory.

The Bhutan REVIEW

WHAT NEXT?

The ploy of the Royal Government of Bhutan to endlessly prolong a meaningless dialogue in a calculated manner in the hope of wearing out the "opposition" appears to be coming to a close. At the end of the sixth round, for the first time since the bilateral talks began nearly two years ago, Thimphu sounded desperate. Bhutan was forced to admit that the meeting had produced no "positive results".

Having achieved its aim of depopulating southern Bhutan through a variety of means and having saddled Nepal and the international community with the problem of looking after a large number of refugees, Thimphu embarked on its strategy of prevarication and procrastination. For two long years after the influx of refugees into Nepal began, the regime in Bhutan skillfully managed to take evasive action. After its stock of misleading information and false propaganda finally ran out, the Government was reluctantly forced to concede that the refugee problem in Nepal did indeed involve Bhutan. The bilateral efforts to resolve the problem then began.

With Bhutan coming to the negotiating table, albeit reluctantly, Nepal and the international community believed that half the problem was resolved. They were soon to find out the hard way that they were very wrong. If the Royal Government had earned grudging kudos for the crafty handling of the situation until then, it became evident that the negotiating table provided Bhutanese officials with further opportunities to display their cunning.

Thimphu's objective was obvious -- to prolong negotiations until 'donor fatigue' sets in or refugee patience wears out. So far it has succeeded; from the farce of categorization to the exclusion of third-party inputs, the Bhutanese delegation adroitly injected elements of delay and diversion at every turn. The two governments have met six times over two long years with no visible signs of progress. Indeed, craftily protracted, the bilateral process has served as an excellent foil for the growing criticism in the international community over the lingering unresolved problem of Bhutanese refugees and the Kingdom's poor human rights situation, and has helped Bhutan weather the storm over the past two years. It isn't surprising, therefore, that Thimphu would desperately like to see the continuation of the farce of negotiations within the same framework.

In this bid to keep this favourable situation going and to keep the talks alive, Thimphu has made every effort to project optimism. Despite the absolute lack of progress in the talks as evidenced by doubts of its usefulness in local as well as international media, the venting of frustrations by Nepalese government officials, and frequent concerns expressed by the international community, Bhutan has consistently sought to portray the bilateral process a success. Indeed, at the end of every round, Bhutan's *Kuensel's* projection of confidence in the process has contrasted sharply with the sea of hopelessness all around.

With the decision of the frustrated Nepalese side at the end of the talks in Thimphu to declare that the talks were leading nowhere and that the entire process was a failure, the Bhutanese side was forced to concede there were problems. Diplomatic niceties, the basis for Bhutanese media in the past to invent optimistic scenarios and eulogies for the bilateral process, apparently could not prevent the truth from finally emerging.

That the Ministerial Joint Committee has run into rough weather and floundered -- mainly because the Nepalese side may finally have seen through the Bhutanese strategy -- is evident not only from the reaction of the leaders of the two delegations at the end of the talks, but more pointedly from the unwillingness of the meeting to decide on the date and venue for the next round of talks. When the two sides will next meet, where, and under what circumstances, thus remains unclear.

For the Nepalese side which is left holding the baby, so to speak, it would do well to take serious stock of the situation and review the experience His Majesty's Government has had in dealing with Bhutan over the past few years before jumping into a fresh compromise. The exceptionally rigid insistence on pure bilateralism within the current framework is Bhutan's way of impeding resolution of the problem. As a first step towards resolution of the problem of refugees in Nepal, therefore, this barrier must first go. And Nepal must be firm enough to demand it.

Whether Nepal succeeds in ensuring a more conducive environment where there is a purposeful and genuine interest in finding a solution before the two delegations next meet will have to be seen. The discussions between His Majesty the King of Bhutan and the Prime Minister of Nepal during the May 2-4 SAARC Summit in New Delhi will likely have a crucial bearing on the future of the talks between the two countries. Bhutan will undoubtedly make a strong pitch to retain her advantage by seeking a continuation of the current bilateral process: Nepal has one more opportunity to be proactive in the effort to resolve the problem of refugees on her soil.

FOOD FIRST -- OR PRIORITY FOR POLITICS?

"The UN and most of the established NGOs (non-governmental organisations) have recreated a set of donor-recipient relationships familiar to those who have witnessed their operations in Africa. Rather than seeing the Bosnian people as the essential resource to be mobilised in pursuit of solutions to political and humanitarian problems, the international organisations have presented themselves as controlling authorities, for whom the Bosnians are either passive recipients of largesse, or troublesome obstacles to the smooth operations of the international effort."

"The skilled human resources in Bosnia have been neglected. As with Africans over many years, the Bosnians have found this surprising and humiliating."

"The civilian population is regarded solely as the recipient of aid... Preoccupation with logistics eclipses concern for human beings, as if soap or milk powder could prevent bombs from falling on hospitals, or generosity could offer protection against murder and expulsion."

It is good that some people may be fed as a result of relief organisations' emphasis on charitable works, de Waal argues, "but this is at the cost of addressing more fundamental political and human rights concerns. In the long run, more people will remain alive under more tolerable conditions if humanitarian relief is provided in a way that is consistent with basic human rights."

"There are major dilemmas that need to be addressed if relief operations in political emergencies are to become part of the solution, not continue to be a part of the problem."

They [humanitarian relief agencies] have become very powerful -- pushed to the fore by Western governments trying to avoid their own direct involvement. As a result, the relief agencies now also make political judgements and act as news agencies and diplomats, influencing policy and the international agenda and controlling huge amounts of money. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies alone spend \$18 billion a year.

Suddenly the accountability of these agencies is being questioned. Are they really as helpful as their often

simplistically emotive advertisements suggest?

No, argues Alex de Waal of the London-based organisation, African Rights, who says that "something has gone wrong in the whole relief business" and that "humanitarianism may turn out to be a political fashion whose days is past."

Humanitarianism, he argues, cannot fill a political void. In Rwanda, he says, relief organisations fudged the issue of genocide in order to concentrate on relief -- as a result of which "the genocidal army of the former government, now in exile, is fed by international food aid."

Earlier in the catastrophe, he argues, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front was advancing on Kigali, outsiders -- ignoring the political dimension -- called for a ceasefire: this would have left the guilty government in power, free to carry on with its policies. The calls overlooked the point that a Rwandan solution to the disaster was at hand -- the military victory of the rebels.

Similarly, he says, the best result of the war in Ethiopia was not a ceasefire to take humanitarian relief across the battle-lines, but the defeat of the Mengistu Mariam government: "As the war came to an end, it became clear that the rebels' own humanitarian efforts -- based on military advance and community mobilisation -- were more effective than the standard international model of relief delivery."

It was lack of a political strategy that turned Operation Restore Hope in Somalia into a debacle, he says, and in Operation Lifeline Sudan ("a model for what the international community aspired to achieve in political emergencies"); relief is "prolonging the war, by constraining the military strategies of each side, and contributing to a stalemate."

Relief failures in Bosnia, he says, shows that the problem is worldwide rather than African:

"The UN and most of the established NGOs (non-governmental organisations) have recreated a set of donor-recipient relationships familiar to those who have witnessed their operations in Africa. Rather than seeing the Bosnian people as the essential resource to be mobilised in pursuit of solutions to political and humanitarian problems, the international organisations have presented themselves as controlling authorities, for whom the Bosnians are either passive recipients of largesse, or troublesome obstacles to the smooth operations of the international effort."

"The skilled human resources in Bosnia have been neglected. As with Africans over many years, the Bosnians have found this surprising and humiliating."

The sentiments echo those of Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier of *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (Doctors Without Frontiers), who has pointed out that UN resolutions on Iraq, Yugoslavia and Somalia referred to the protection of aid convoys but not the protection of the victims: "The civilian population is regarded solely as the recipient of aid... Preoccupation with logistics eclipses concern for human beings, as if soap or milk powder could prevent bombs from falling on hospitals, or generosity could offer protection against murder and expulsion."

To the argument that in situations like Rwanda the best option might be to stand back and let one side win, Walker [Director, Disaster and Refugee Policy, ICRC] says "We can't do that." Apart from many other considerations, it is impossible to tell what will transpire: the situation might get worse. "The only working principle is to deliver life-giving assistance to those who need it most where they need it most."

It is good that some people may be fed as a result of relief organisations' emphasis on charitable works, de Waal argues, "but this is at the cost of addressing more fundamental political and human rights concerns. In the long run, more people will remain alive under more tolerable conditions if humanitarian relief is provided in a way that is consistent with basic human rights."

The Red Cross has a clear position because it has a carefully worked out set of operating principles and a strict mandate, and therefore avoids the core of de Waal's argument, which is that most relief agencies claim both to deliver "neutral" relief and to support justice and participation -- aims which de Waal says are probably incompatible.

De Waal says he welcomes counter-argument but that most agencies are refusing to confront the issues he has raised. He attacks the "aura of sanctity" which has made it almost taboo to criticize NGO activities.

The debate must be opened up, he says: "There are major dilemmas that need to be addressed if relief operations in political emergencies are to become part of the solution, not continue to be a part of the problem."

Daniel Nelson, Gemini

THE NEPALI ETHNIC COMMUNITY IN THE NORTHEAST OF THE SUB-CONTINENT

Leo Rose, University of California, Berkeley

"For most of the modern period, ethnicism was a significant but, in fact, rather mundane factor in socio-political relations in most areas of the world, including South Asia."

If for some people attending the seminar on the Bhutanese problem in New York's Columbia University on February 18, 1995, these words from renowned South Asian expert Prof Leo E. Rose seemed to ring a bell, their memory served them right -- this was also the opening sentence of the Professor's contribution to the proceedings in the August 20-22, 1993, conference "Democratization, Ethnicity and Development in South and Southeast Asia" in Colombo, sponsored by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Kandy, Sri Lanka. The paper subsequently appeared in the centre's *Ethnic Studies Report* (Volume XII, Number 1, January 1994, pp 103-120).

Belying the promise in its title -- made worse by subsequent page headings that read "Nepali Minority in Northeast India" -- the paper focusses exclusively on the ethnic Nepalese community in Bhutan and the current problems in the Kingdom. One observation that may spring to the minds of those familiar with the region is this: Considering the usual connotation that "northeast" has in the sub-continent, should this deliberate homing in on Bhutan be seen as some sort of omen? Or was it simply an attempt by the author to address the issue close to his heart regardless of the topic chosen

for him by his Sri Lankan hosts? Nonetheless, the fact that he already had a paper made-to-order made Rose's task that much simpler in New York.

It is significant that Rose opted to repeat his presentation well over a year later despite the fact that many variables had undergone transformation during the intervening period. More significantly, in between, he had the pleasure of revisiting Bhutan and the "chore" of making a trip to the refugee camps for the first time, providing possible scope for interaction and further insight. But Rose who formed these opinions before having met a single refugee obviously saw little merit in rewriting his views -- indeed, the trips only helped reinforce his theory, his interjections during delivery seemed to suggest.

Briefly tracing the history of Nepali migration to Darjeeling, Sikkim, Bhutan and northeastern India, Rose writes that "by 1900, Nepalis had become the majority community in both Darjeeling and Sikkim," and "by the 1920s, this area [southern Bhutan] had become a Nepali-speaking Hindu adjunct to the dominant Dzongkha-speaking Buddhist polity in Bhutan." (The non-Dzongkha-speaking majority might rightly take offence at the last bit, but Rose obviously did not mean to raise a storm.) At the same time Nepalis also occupied the hills to the south of the Brahmaputra valley, and by the time India gained her independence in 1947, "Nepalis were the quietly dominant element in the lower hill areas around Assam except for NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) and Tripura."

There was healthy coexistence between the Nepali migrants and the indigenous hill people, with the former "generally

left alone to run things as they saw fit" as they were "important to the well-being of the economy in these areas." Mercifully, Rose pooh-poohs the idea of "Greater Nepal" not only because "this is a totally unreal possibility under the current geo-political system in South Asia," but also, he says, because "the Nepalis in Southern Bhutan and the Northeast may consider Nepal as their country of origin, but few, if any, seriously contemplated the extension of the Nepali polity to their area of residence." On the other hand, he notes that both in Bhutan and the Northeast, some have used this perceived threat to their traditional system "to justify their demands for strongly exclusivist policies directed at their Nepali minorities."

The problem in Bhutan began, says Rose, with the "sons of the soil" movement in India's northeast in the 1970s and the subsequent expulsion of Nepalis from Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland in the mid-1980s. These developments "impacted negatively" on the Nepalese community in Bhutan, "leading in 1990 to a major internal crisis within the country as well as in Bhutan-Nepal relations." Since it made little sense for "these outcasts" from the northeast to return to Nepal, he asserts, this "wave of illegal migrants" poured into southern Bhutan where "it was hard to arrange legal admissions into Bhutan under Thimphu's restrictive policies, but as the local Nepali elite in Southern Bhutan still ran this area pretty much on their own terms (in the

1980s?), it was not much of a problem to 'legalize' or at least hide these recent Nepali migrants."

According to Rose, Bhutan carried out its first really thorough census in 1988 and discovered the extent to which the Lhotshampa community had expanded, leading the Drukpa elite to conclude by 1988 that if measures were not taken "Bhutan could go the way of Sikkim." Consequently, in the 1988-90 period, *Driglam Namshag* was enforced, illegal Nepali residents expelled ("virtually all illegals left Bhutan on schedule, peacefully if not happily"), and the use of Nepali in schools restricted. "It was in these circumstances", he says, "that a substantial number of legal Lhotshampas decided to leave Bhutan and also supported, in principle at least, the violent resistance movement based across the border."

Considering the subtle adjustment of dates and events, it is but inevitable that Rose's arguments -- or the arguments of the regime as presented by Rose -- while appearing sound, will be found rife with discrepancies on closer scrutiny. It is now generally agreed that the travails of the southern Bhutanese began with the manipulative census of early 1988. If indeed then, "by 1988, therefore, the Drukpa elite had concluded that Bhutan could go the way of Sikkim.", it only confirms dissident claims that the enumeration exercise was initiated to reduce the southern Bhutanese population by fraudulent means. And if "virtually all of the illegals" were already expelled by 1990, surely it must then be agreed that refugees who arrived in the camps from Bhutan after that date are Bhutanese [refugee camp population: 1990-nil, 1991-6000, 1992-72000, 1993-85000, 1994-

87000]. Unless, of course, Rose would have the world believe that the "illegals" ousted earlier waited patiently -- and managed to survive -- all these years for the camps to be established without creating a stir or news! For the record, the actual drive for expulsion of non-nationals (mostly manual workers engaged by government agencies and domestics in urban areas) took place in 1986-87, and the numbers involved were probably no more than a few thousand, including a large number of Indian origin. Rose clearly has a hard time trying to remain both credible and loyal. Unfortunately for him, at least in this particular situation, the two demands are not complementary.

There is one bit of revealing information which Rose, in future, after tiring of being a loyal friend, may choose to study further. This relates to his assertion that "it should not be a major problem to ascertain which of the 'refugees' in the Jhapa camps actually qualify as citizens of Bhutan by using the very detailed pre-1988 village records in Southern Bhutan." Precisely. This has been the position of the refugees all along. While Prof Rose cannot be thanked enough for putting on record that which refugees have consistently voiced, the Professor would have contributed even more by way of unravelling the truth if he had stopped to ponder: Since detailed records were already available, why did the 1988 census cause so much trouble?

The convoluted argument -- of expulsion of Nepalis from northeast India, sudden overnight

discovery in Bhutan of abnormal growth of the southern Bhutanese population etc. -- has the hallmark of a genius. Fortunately for Rose, he will not, at least through this particular theory, be declared a genius. For although he makes no special effort to credit the Royal Government for this concept, Rose is lucky that few would believe him capable of fathering such a preposterous idea, and that credit should indeed go to the Bhutanese Foreign Minister. But Rose's deliberate failure to question or explain why southern Bhutanese would have allowed the influx or connived with these illegal migrants, is still ingenious.

The problem with Rose is his deliberate unwillingness to follow up any thread of argument likely to turn unpleasant for the government. He is willing to conjecture that "the King has insisted on a comparatively liberal approach" but is facing opposition from members of the elite "determined to remove Lhotshampas completely from Bhutan, and see the present crisis as providing them with the opportunity to achieve this objective." He will not, however, conjecture further on the possibility that the opportunity was, in fact, jointly created in the first place.

While one would desperately like to believe that a scholar from a faraway land would view the crisis dispassionately, Rose gives himself away often enough to ensure that he deserves neither the refugees' admiration nor respect. It certainly is his prerogative if Rose chooses to tarnish his own image by making unsubstantiated charges about refugee organizations demanding "that virtually all restrictions on the migration of Nepalis into Bhutan be terminated," a cause no southern Bhutanese has ever espoused. And

if Rose opts to put his reputation on the line by claiming that "Nepali Bhutanese political parties (that) are carrying on a violent campaign in Southern Bhutan" despite the fact that virtually no one else finds this to be true, not even his country's State Department, that too is his choice. However, when Rose takes it upon himself to needlessly insult refugees (a word which is always within quotes in his article, reflecting the measure of his bias) he is demanding a rejoinder: Prof Rose sees fit to portray people forced by circumstances to accept charity as "freeloaders" -- that offensive word, we believe, would more appropriately and aptly describe someone who scrounges invitations and routinely accepts the hospitality, as house-guest, of the Bhutanese Ambassador while in New York, the Bhutanese Foreign Minister's daughter while in Washington D.C., the Bhutanese Foreign Minister's son while in New Delhi, and the entire Royal Government and royalty while in Bhutan!

MEDIA SCAN

BHUTAN'S DISPOSSESSED by Tom Pilston

Bhutanese refugees began to arrive in Nepal in 1991; they now number an estimated 100,000, of whom 86,000 are living in eight refugee camps in south-eastern Nepal. The refugees are all from southern Bhutan. They are of Nepali origin, although most of their families have been living in Bhutan for six or seven generations and the majority of them have Bhutanese citizenship. They speak Nepali and are mainly Hindu, which makes them quite distinct from the northern Bhutanese Drukpas, the dominant ethnic group, who are of Tibetan origin, speak the national language, Dzongkha and are Buddhist.

The southern Bhutanese have fled because of repression on ethnic grounds, torture and rape. In 1989, the Bhutanese government banned the teaching of Nepali in schools in southern Bhutan and the wearing of Nepali ethnic dress in public places. Refugees tell stories of beatings and humiliations, of needles being placed under their fingernails, the demolition of their homes and the withdrawal of health services. Once in the camps they live in squalor, as many as eight people crowded into one hut, enduring malnutrition and outbreaks of cholera, measles and beriberi.

After four years their frustration is palpable. Talks between the governments of Bhutan Nepal about the refugees' future began in November 1992, but their plight is unresolved. Many, including Mangala Sharma, a representative of the refugees who has been in London to raise awareness of their situation, believe that more international pressure must be brought to bear on the Bhutanese government if the people of southern Bhutan are ever to return to their homes.

The Independent, London, 14 April 1995.

Bhutanese refugees continue to take shelter in Nepal - Dhruva Adhikari

...Despite five rounds of government-level talks, held alternatively in Kathmandu and Thimphu, no breakthrough has yet been achieved. Initially, Thimphu rejected the very idea of joining the talks, arguing that Bhutanese in Nepal were not refugees but "Nepali-speaking Indians, terrorists wanted at home, or those who left their homes (in Bhutan) for a better life at the refugee camps where they get plenty to eat and spend." ...It was only when Kathmandu loudly mooted the idea of internationalising the issue that the Thimphu regime agreed to discuss it but only to drag its foot all along. It rejected the idea of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) being a party to efforts at resolving the problem. "the only agency" as Kanak Mani Dixit, the editor of the widely respected *Himal* magazine, says "with expertise and the international mandate to get involved in the process of verification and repatriation."

...Political observers in Nepal strongly feel that India holds the key to resolving the issue, i.e. if it wants to. Anand Shrestha, an academic, suspects a sinister move against Nepal. "The refugee crisis could be a master move on the Himalayan chessboard by New Delhi as a means of checkmating both Kathmandu and Thimphu to further its goals and ensure their cooperation by making them politically and economically dependent on India," he said.

So far the Indian government has maintained that the stalemate over the refugee problem is strictly a bilateral affair between the two neighbouring kingdoms. During the official visit to New Delhi next month, Nepal's Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari is likely to ask his Indian counterpart P.V. Narasimha Rao to use his good offices to persuade King Jigme for creating a congenial atmosphere to allow the refugees to return home safely. Mr Rao's response will be a subject of intense speculation in Kathmandu.

Khaleej Times, United Arab Emirates, March 19, 1995.

"IN QUOTES"

"Bhutan should repatriate all those people in the camp if they are from Bhutan. If there are people from elsewhere, Bhutan need not bring them back."

Nepalese Home Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, talking to the Bhutan Broadcasting Service on April 20, 1995, after the sixth round of Bhutan-Nepal talks in Thimphu.

"The Nepalese delegation introduced new conditions and want to send back all the people in the camps, including those who are not Bhutanese."
Bhutanese Home Minister Dago Tshering, briefing the same media immediately after Minister Oli.

**DRUK GYE BAANG NGAI DHIR DA
(THE CALL OF THE DRUMS OF DRUK YUL)**

The Druk National Congress recently circulated an open letter to the people of Bhutan in the form of a small booklet, Druk Gye Baang Ngai Dhir Da, in Dzongkha, Nepali and English. We reproduce in full the English version of the DNC appeal.

My fellow Bhutanese, I know most of you are already aware of the miserable time all of us are going through. The situation in Bhutan has deteriorated to such an extent that almost all of us are forced to live under very oppressive conditions and have been suffering under the heavy yoke of the present system. The people are scared to raise their voices against suppression and discriminatory policies lest it invite arrest, torture, and even death, the fear of which has kept them from openly raising any protest. To exercise absolute control the Government till now distorted facts for its own vested interests and kept the people of Bhutan completely ignorant of their rights, responsibilities and obligations.

I thank those of you who have already decided to come together to help ensure the prosperity, peace and freedom that all of us deserve. I am sure the generations of the future will never forget this most precious gift that you will have given them.

You are all aware how our people have been misled by the information fed to them by the Government. Yet you watch in silence your sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers writhing in agony at the suppression and terror being unleashed on them. Some of you have been manipulated into an illusionary cocoon where you believe all is well and some have been instilled with such fear that it has paralysed your body and soul. So you quietly watch, the silent suffering, while the guardians and protectors of Bhutan and our people are forced against their will, or are brainwashed by the chosen 'guardians and protectors' of Bhutan and its people into carrying out this heinous deed.

Their cries, which are a reflection of the tyrannical force bent on cutting them down no matter what the consequences to the country, are already echoing all over the mountains from its four directions. **And all that they are begging for is the right to equal opportunity and to live in modest human dignity.** Today you watch in silence the agony of your brother's children and tomorrow you will be watching the same happen to your children.

We have pledged ourselves in the service of and to protect the Three Elements, the Tsa Wa Sum, the King, Country and People. But unfortunately, knowingly or unknowingly we have been given this terrible choice of choosing between the first element on the one side and the Country and People on the other. Why? Didn't we always believe that all the three elements were integral to the well being of our country? Then why has one become so much more important that it has to destroy the second by suppressing the third for its own benefit, bringing untold misery to everyone? The blood that our forefathers spilt in the battlefield to fiercely preserve our independence from all colonial

forces is going to waste. We are selling our souls and the very principles and values that we believed in and fought for.

Most of us are aware of the details of past episodes of excesses and how so many people have been victimised, tortured, assassinated or murdered for no fault of theirs, including members of the security forces who have always been loyal to the Government. We also know the consequent fate of those who were involved in formulating and executing of these plans -- mostly innocent followers of orders. It is a terrible thing to bear the fruits of your negative karma -- to suffer or to die of madness and agonising diseases.

We know who all were involved in the assassination of the two previous Shabdrungs. They were not only the incarnates of the founder of Bhutan, but more important, of a Spiritual Being, the protector of our country. His Guardians, of the *Ma Gyen Cham Dyel*, helped him in protecting Bhutan and its people. We know the fate of those who were instrumental in the assassinations, and how the fruits of their karma even trickled down to their descendants, just as one inherits one's ancestor's properties. What we probably don't know is how both of our kings suffered of terrible diseases and lunacy before they died. Everyone sat back as silent spectators and glorified the wrongdoers. But the accumulated merit of good karma of the people of Bhutan must have been just enough because even though the ones involved were made to pay and are still paying for their deeds, the people and country pulled through.

No, at that time, the One who brought the Drukpa Kajyukpa tradition recognition in Bhutan and the Kajyukpa tradition itself was not wanted. They were a danger to our monarchy and thus to our country. So after the assassinations many Kajyukpa centres were closed down. The number of monks in the *Dratsangs* were reduced and some made to join the army and what not. Later H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche became the king's *tsawae lama* through the Queen Mother, Ashi Kesang. H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was revered by the people of Bhutan and his prayers helped us forget our past misdeeds.

Further H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche was invited to take the Yongla Gompa under his care. H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche, whose Guardian is the fierce Rahula, is the incarnate of Kunkhen Jigme Lingpa and Terton Sangye Lingpa. Terton Sangye Lingpa was also the first Shabdrung's *tsawae lama*. Kunkhen Jigme Lingpa discovered the *Rangjung Lhyundup Phurpae Kilkhor* (The Phurpa Mountain) in Yongla, while Wang Jigme Kundel, his disciple established the Yongla Gompa. The blessings of this Phurpa Mountain and the prayers conducted in Yongla Gompa was instrumental in saving Bhutan from being overrun when Jigme Namgyel successfully fought the British in Deothang within a month of his defeat there. After his victory, Jigme Namgyel offered cymbals (*Jigme Tsangyang*) there and declared that Bhutan will always be indebted to

Yongla Gompa and its founders.

And now, all of a sudden, the Nyingmapa tradition is not wanted. H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche is accused of being anti-Bhutan apart from all other falsities and is banned from coming into the country. Nyingmapa monasteries are being converted to Kajyukpa by incentives or force and Nyingmapa practitioners are being victimised.

We seem to be highly confused in our beliefs. Earlier, the Kajyukpa was not wanted and now the Nyingmapa is not wanted. We proudly glorify the regime who murdered the previous Kajyukpa incarnates, and does not recognise any other Kajyukpa Trulkus, nor the present living mind and soul of the founder and protector of our country. After defiling the Kajyukpa tradition and insulting its Guardians the regime now tries to playact as the protectors of that very Kajyukpa tradition, and prays to those very Guardians. At the same time the Guardians who protected and saved Bhutan from nonexistence are shunned and the declaration of indebtedness to Yongla Gompa and its Masters and Guardians dishonoured.

The Shabdrung Rinpoche and the Dodrupchen Rinpoche are among the highest Lamas in their respective traditions and are "one" in mind as they are incarnates of the Guru and Disciple. Additionally, the Guardians of both the Kajyukpa and the Nyingmapa have together protected and sustained Bhutan's sovereignty and prosperity. Practically every household in Bhutan practices both the traditions when performing any prayer ritual, and no ritual is complete without prayers to Guardians of both. This tradition of *Ka Nying Shung Drel* which means "Kajyukpa and Nyingmapa as One" is as old as the soil of Bhutan.

After thus insulting the Guardians of both traditions and other traditions as well, we pray to them and expect them to protect us. By our silence to this insult that they and their masters have been subject to, we make ourselves 'accomplices'. Not only will they not heed our prayers but will also make us bear the consequences of that insult. Without anyone to protect us now, do we, the people of Bhutan have enough merit to withstand the wrath of the *Ma Gyen Cham Dyel* and the *Ma Za Dham Sum* including Talo Gyalpo, Rahula and the Guardians of all the traditions combined? The way things are going, looks highly unlikely. The wrongdoers are probably condemned, but for us, the 'accomplices', there is a chance if we repent and ask for forgiveness.

Religious beliefs and the governing of the country are two absolutely different fields and it is imperative that they be kept separate. One is very personal while the other concerns the people of the whole country. By mixing the two in a villainish and scheming manner to suit ones selfish interest, by interfering and hurting the religious sentiments of all the different religious traditions in Bhutan we are having to watch the Bhutan of our dreams disintegrating before our very eyes. The worst of everything is about to begin to happen to us.

While the wrongdoers are going mad, the effect on our country and our innocent people, from the largest towns to the remotest villages, who became 'accomplices' through fear and ignorance, are disastrous. Injustice and inequality in business, jobs, services, facilities etc., and as a result in living conditions. Forced labour. Suppression and fear. Torture and death. Suffering and misery. The list is endless. Our people cannot even live in basic modest human dignity and have become self appointed slaves of the regime we chose to run this country for us.

We have to try and understand what is the cause, who are actually responsible and how we got ourselves into this terrible mess that we are sinking deeper into. But most important, how are we going to get out of it. We must think deeply about how we are going to undo the damage that has been done, at the same time protect Bhutan and our people from the evils of such a process and the negative aspects of its final results, and how we are going to make sure that such mistakes will never be repeated.

We need to break this silence that has exposed our innocent people to the manipulation of vested interests intent on keeping them ignorant and suppressed. We need to eliminate this ignorance and vanquish the fear that has been instilled in them. We need to remind each and every one of them about their rights and responsibilities as patriotic sons and daughters of Bhutan. We need to educate them about the need for and the functions of the individuals they appointed and the various organisations of the Government they set up to manage and run this country that they have established with their sweat and blood. We need to teach them about how a country plans its programmes for development and implements them. How it manages its finances, where the money comes from, for what and how it needs to be spent. We need to tell them how every one of them have a right to make, and are responsible for, each and every decision that is taken and how it is linked with and how it effects their lives. **We need to remind them that they are the masters of Bhutan, their own country, a heritage handed down to them by their ancestors and it is they who will decide how they wish to run it, choose the ones they wish should run it for them and determine what each of the 'Three Elements' shall denote.**

They have to be completely aware of the relationship between their individual self, their society

and their country to be able to truly understand their responsibilities. Only then will they have the knowledge and strength to ensure that Bhutan is managed in such a manner that everyone will be able to live in peace and prosperity and our society and country remain so strong that no vested interest will ever dream of even attempting to harming it again.

Everybody in Bhutan does deserve to live in peace, prosperity, freedom and human dignity, and that everyone includes you, your children, your family and their descendants. Think deeply about the future of our country and its people. If we go on doing what we are doing we will not only be traitors to our nation and our people but also to ourselves.

I especially appeal to those members of the army, police and the security forces who have not yet come to realise the source of this grave problem that has enveloped us. Contemplate before you raise your hand against another human being -- your fellow countryman. You are under oath to fulfil the responsibility of protecting him, our people and our country. But even then, if you cannot sympathise with them, at least have pity on yourself and refrain from deeds that will bring you negative karma. Stop being incompassionate and merciless for a cause which is completely contrary to all that you swore to protect and uphold and is probably against what you believe deep inside you.

After crores [10 millions] of rebirths of accumulated merit and good karma we have had the fortune of being born as human beings in a country where religion is held in the highest regard above everything else. Now if we do not know our *ley jyunde* then all the merits and this human birth that we have earned will surely be wasted.

I am sure you have already read the booklet titled **The Silent Suffering in Bhutan** and other Druk National Congress publications. If you haven't, please do, it talks of issues surrounding our lives and gives food for serious thought. Then decide what your responsibility and duty is and what we, as educated Bhutanese, everyone from the Government Officers to Village Heads, from the Businessman to the Students, owe to our country and our people.

May the Guardians of *Ka Nying* and all other religious traditions give us strength to choose the right path.

Rongthong Kunley Dorji
Chairman
for the **Druk National Congress**

REFUGEE CAMP INFORMATION

| Location | District | Refugees | Students |
|--|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Timai | Jhapa | 8,336 | 2,969 |
| Goldhap | Jhapa | 7,978 | 3,032 |
| Beldangi I | Jhapa | 15,127 | 5,059 |
| Beldangi II | Jhapa | 18,755 | 7,138 |
| Beldangi II Ext. | Jhapa | 9,378 | 3,327 |
| Sanischare (Pathri) | Morang | 17,083 | 5,862 |
| Khudunabari (N) | Jhapa | 7,151 | 3,902 |
| Khudunabari (S) | Jhapa | 3,791 | |
| Total | | 87,599 | 31,289 |
| Cumulative births: | | 5,620 | |
| Cumulative deaths: | | 2,705 | |
| The above figures are as of March 31, 1995. | | | |