

# History And Assam-Centre

## Relations *Assam Trib*

By Dr. Nirode K. Barooah

In my earlier article on hand and earthquake and flood (December 22) the subject I have, I hope, conclusively proved that the older generation of Assam leaders at the time of the country's independence was not sleeping about the most acute problem of this frontier State; the influx of the Bengali refugees across the border threatening its old identity. The charge often heard these days that Assam's own leaders are primarily responsible for bringing the foreign national problem to such a pass could, therefore, be laid only on the doors of the later-day politicians of questionable moral fibre in the heyday of defectionist politics.

From the same Vallabhbai Patel Papers which I quoted in my last article I would like to give two more examples today to show how Assam's problems were treated in a cold, matter-of-fact manner by the Central leaders at the time of rebuilding of the country in the wake of Independence. In these examples, presenting particularly the attitude of Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru, one would also notice how these two great national leaders saw the events affecting the destiny of this State through their personal idiosyncrasies.

**EXAMPLE ONE:** On 13 September, 1950 a round-the-clock physical check was made by the Central Intelligence Bureau of the influx of Muslims from East Pakistan at the main entry points into Assam. It was noticed that the total number of incoming Muslims was 1,428 of which 1,093 were returning refugees and 335 were new entrants. Taking these figures as a guide, P V Bhaskaran, the Deputy Director of the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau, Shillong observed that the daily percentage of new entrants among the incoming Muslims was between 15 and 20.

When the report reached the Home Ministry at New Delhi, Sardar Patel this time was disturbed. He wrote to Nehru on 29 September that the report was "rather disquieting. As it is, Assam's hands are full with refugees on the one

hand and earthquake and flood victims on the other."

On 1 October Nehru replied to the Sardar "There is no permit system" he said, "and people can travel freely either way. The Assam Government has no responsibility for them of any type and there are not many ways that they can adopt to discourage them." Nehru then minimised the significance of the event by saying: "The number involved thus far does not appear to be very big, and according to the papers you sent me, the actual figure was 120 on a certain day."

Needless to say that such attitude of the Central leaders alone is the cause of the present Assam crisis.

**EXAMPLE TWO:** In my last article it was shown how in 1950 the Central leaders exerted their will on Assam on the question of refugee rehabilitation claiming the situation to be an extra-ordinary one. The same year Assam itself faced an extra-ordinary natural catastrophe: the earthquake havoc.

In this connection various all-India leaders and particularly Acharya J B Kripalani wanted that some money from the Gandhi National Memorial Fund should be donated for Assam relief. Since earlier a similar demand at the time of the Andhra cyclone was turned down, Patel was against spending GNMF money on Assam relief.

Patel however took personal interest in collecting fund for Assam by other means. But Nehru's attitude was very cool and matter-of-fact. He wrote to the Sardar about the subject: "I entirely agree with you that we should not contribute from the Gandhi National Memorial Fund for earthquake relief in Assam."

Then with an attitude similar to the one he showed at the time of Cabinet Mission and with wordings akin to his "my heart goes out for the people of Assam" speech at the Chinese near-occupation of Tezpur in 1962, Nehru continued: "Much as we may desire to help Assam, it would be a misappropriation of the funds of the Memorial."

## Withdrawal Of Martial Law From Poland Demanded

**GUWAHATI, Dec 26**—The 'Assam Patriotic Forum' has demanded immediate withdrawal of Martial Law from Poland and release of all political prisoners in that country.

The Forum, at a meeting held here yesterday also extended its support to the Solidarity and condemned the Soviet Union's role in the Polish developments.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by Sri Golap Borbora, former Assam Chief Minister.—PTI.

## Security Measures Inadequate

**GUWAHATI, Dec. 26**—In a statement issued from its Central office, Sri L N Pangging, General Secretary of the All Assam Tribal Youth League, has alleged that the security measures taken by the Government for protecting life and property of the tribal people living in Assam-Nagaland border line in Sibsagar district against the Naga insurgents are poor and insufficient.

The Youth League has taken stock of the situation over there and met the local people who have expressed a feeling of insecurity and apprehension of large-scale armed attack by the insurgent Nagas on non-Naga inhabitants of Assam repeating the incident of January 3, 1979 where a large number of tribal people were killed by insurgent Nagas.

Sri Pangging has alleged that the present "buorocrafti" Government in the State is completely unconcerned of the grave situation in the Assam-Nagaland border line. He has also alleged that the Assam Rifles security men on duty are playing liberal role with the hostile Nagas for some unknown reasons while the Assam Police Battalion posts are afraid of facing any fight against the armed Naga insurgents.

The Assam Tribunal, 27/Dec/1981

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