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Revolt of the Khampas

THE difficulty of discussing the situation that is said to have arisen in Tibet is that there are far too many gaps in our knowledge of the events there at the present time. There is, of course, a good deal of rumour. Indeed, too much of it. But hard, indisputable facts, on which sound judgment could be based, are few. All that is known is that fighting has been going on between the Chinese and the Tibetans, and that starting from the eastern region it has spread out to Lhasa, *But* what is the scale of the revolt? How long has it been going on? What is its cause? Are the Chinese really to blame? If so, what is the nature? of their offence? Is the Dalai Lama safe? Is he in prison? If he is, why? On none of these crucial points is any dependable information available. And in the absence of this information, comment must very much grope in the dark,

Mr George N Patterson, the British correspondent in Kallmpong who had to be cautioned by the Indian Government against sensationalism, has done little to help matters. The small town of Kallmpong on the Indo-Tibetan border is perhaps the worst place to report Tibet from. It abounds in more or less discredited Tibetan emigres who have a strong vested interest in spreading the wildest possible rumours against Peking, and never fail to do so. They have allies in Khatmandu where many traders have been put out of business the business, that is, of looting the ignorant Tibetan in the name of trade—by some over due steps taken by the Chinese. It is on such sources that Mr Patterson has relied for his information, with the result that he has overstated the situation so grossly that one is tempted to reject it entirely.

He has been rumour-mongering for a long time. In September last year, he solemnly reported that the Chinese had launched upon "the annihilation of the Tibetan people". He said the revolt was already two years old, during which time the Tibetans had killed "over 50,000 Chinese" losing 1500 of their own men—figures which make one wonder as to who has been trying to annihilate whom. But Mr Patterson goes on from exaggeration to exaggeration. "Now the revolt has spread to cover the whole of High Asia," he says, "from the borders of India right up to, and even including, parts of Sinkiang in the north and Tsinghai and Szechuan in West. China. The Tibetans are streaming away in their thousands from cities, towns, villages, and nomad encampments to join in the guerrilla fighting. They have blown up roads, bridges and air-fields so that the Chinese are restricted in their movements in the mountains and desperately short of supplies of all kinds;" Indeed, if Mr Patterson is to be believed, there is nothing much to worry about; for the poor Chinese are in such a sorry plight, that they are bound to collapse completely before very long, leaving the mighty Tibetans wholly in charge of their land. For, note that the guerrilla army is estimated by him to number at least 200,000 men, who "are not only holding their own against the 300,000-strong Chinese Army, but have forced them to ask for a truce on two occasions... . Morale in the Chinese occupation forces in Tibet is *very* low," And ho wonder; they are handicapped by the fact of having a hundred thousand more men in the fleM- than their opponents, and unlike the Tibetans, have only to make do with whatever little support poor Peking can glve them, while the guerrillas have powerful Lhasa wholly at their back!

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No, Mr Patterson can be barely left out of any discussion on Tibet. On the other hand, there is equally no doubt that what Pandit Nehru has said so far in the Lok Sabha, is a serious wider-statement of the facts. We hope this will soon be remedied; for if rumour and conjecture are to be quashed, facts must be put out; and nothing can be more dangerous in the present situation than to allow rumour to run free and wild.

A number of Indian newspapers have already suggested that Peking should enable a team of independent press-men, at least from this country, to enter Tibet and see the situation for themselves. The suggestion is well worth taking. Unfortunately, it must be confessed that Peking is not likely to take it. If Pandit Nehru himself was refused entry into Lhasa, it is not probable that lesser men will succeed in gaining it. And yet, if they don't, China must continue to suffer its case being badly distorted in a dozen ways.

For, as we have said, China does have a case. Its only fault so far appears to be that it has tried to do too much too quickly in Tibet.

No one will suggest that the Chinese have made no mistakes, or that they have not aroused certain suspicions in Tibetan minds regarding their intentions. Peking knows that, slow as the pace of reforms may appear by communist standards, it has been too revolutionary for a country which has for centuries been steeped in tradition and where the theocratic despotism of the ruler's has, paradoxically, a deep root in popular following. There are reports that China has greatly stepped up the settlement of Chinese in Tibet, and that this may have precipitated the present troubles. Whatever it is, Peking should remember that it is committed to maintaining Tibetan autonomy, and that no kind of direct or indirect pressure would be Justifiable in avoiding that commitment. The Khampas are not a people to put up with pressure; and Peking would be wise to avoid exciting their suspicions, and particularly to avoid giving any semblance of wanting to humble the exalted position of the Dalai Lama.

In this country there seems to be a great deal of public concern over

the reported events in Tibet and the Government is under considerable pressure from the Opposition members to intervene. The concern is natural. India and Tibet have ancient and historic links which bind them together. But it is as well to realise straight away that there is very little that India can do without appearing to interfere in the internal affairs of a neighbouring country. India's relations with China are also friendly; and China has previously made it quite plain that it resents the proffering of even friendly counsel from New Delhi, as far as Tibetan affairs are concerned. Perhaps, if things prove to have gone too far, Pandit Nehru may risk another rebuff from Peking by sounding a word of warning in Its own interests. But, beyond that it is difficult to see what India can do, or even ought to do. We in this country can only hope that the gravity of the situation is over-rated, and that Peking will be both willing and able to restore normalcy in Lhasa after mutual consultations with the Dalai Lama.

Why No Paper ?

THE shortage of paper, particularly the shortage of writing and printing paper, with its usual concomitants, blackmarketing, non-availability of stocks and exorbitant prices, has become a scandal of some standing. While inaugurating the first conference of the Federation of Paper Traders' Association in Bombay in the middle of last month, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri had promised to take steps to alleviate the situation. He admitted that there was shortage of paper but he was in no position to promise what the Paper Trader' wanted -freer imports. The long-run solution, of course, is to step up internal production and the Minister told the Federation that a committee had been set up to examine schemes for the manufacture of paper which had been held up on account of foreign exchange difficulties.

But, assuming more production units or substantial expansion in existing units, there would be the usual time lag of two to three years before they can start production. How is paper supply to be main-

tained, with continuously increasing demand, until then? What about immediate relief? On the part of the Government, which is by far the largest consumer of paper in the country, Shri Shastri promised a cut in consumption of 10%. This is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough.

The fact is that though import cuts had made the situation bad, the failure of the paper mills and paper dealers to maintain proper distribution has made it a great deal worse' As there is no statutory control on the price of paper, it would not be strictly correct to talk of paper being sold in the black market. There is, however, a gentleman's agreement that paper mills would supply and distribute to dealers at a fair price and make sure that the dealers do not profiteer. And this system has simply not been operating at all. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, referring to the difficult plight of the paper traders, had said in the course of his address:

"About six months back when there were wide-spread and serious complaints about the shortage of

paper and excessive price charges, we had occasion to meet representatives of the paper industry. It was found that while the paper mills had not materially raised their prices, some sections of the trade, taking advantage of the increased demand had been charging prices higher than legitimately allowed to them. It was, therefore, decided that the paper mills would publicise the fair reselling rates of various categories of paper and would enjoin upon their distributors and dealers to maintain supplies to bona fide customers at the level of supply in 1957."

Mark the word 'enjoin' Exhortation, and particularly persuasion, the Minister did believe, would secure equitable distribution of paper at a fair price and this has since been followed up by a Commerce Ministry press note which repeats almost verbatim what the Minister had said earlier. "After detailed discussions with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry/" says the Press note, "representatives of the paper Industry have agreed to supply to all consumers paper of different varieties at the same level as in 1957. They