At the final session of the CNRS-DFG conference on the History and Anthropology of Nepal, held at Arc-et-Senans in June of last year, several participants suggested that European scholars, actively engaged in Himalayan studies, get together to produce a bulletin that would keep us informed of current research and research opportunities in our field.

Given the inter-disciplinary nature of our work, it was decided not to exclude any particular field of study: be it from the humanities, social sciences or natural sciences. It was further agreed, after some discussion, that the regional scope of the bulletin should not be restricted to Nepal, but should include the lands and peoples of the entire Himalayas. By Himalayas is understood: Hindukush, Ladakh, Kashmir, northwestern India, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam, northeastern India and southern Tibet. Finally it was decided that the bulletin ought to be published in English, as this is the most common second language of scholars, not only in Europe but also in the Himalayan region itself.

As for the content of the proposed bulletin, the participants suggested a number of topics they wished to see regularly featured:

1. Reports on ongoing, or recently completed, research projects.
2. Information about archives with literary, ethnographic, historical, archaeological, botanical, etc. materials collected in the Himalayan region.
3. Reviews of books on the Himalayas, including books published in Nepal, India, Pakistan and China which because of poor distribution may be inadequately known in Europe.
4. Current political developments in Nepal, India, Pakistan and China and the implications of these developments for research carried out by European scholars.
5. News about forthcoming conferences, research grants, new funding opportunities in post-1992 Europe, etc.

The representatives of the South Asia Institute, Heidelberg offered to produce such a bulletin over a trial period of two years on the understanding that we would retire with dignity at the end of that period, should the interest and commitment of a sufficient number of scholars prove illusory. Two sorts of commitment are required: first, we need contributions on the above-mentioned topics which merit publication; second, we need the financial support of our readership. Although we will try to make the bulletin a success, it is obvious that the success of this venture will largely be determined by the active support of everyone concerned.

Our plan then is as follows. We shall bring out two issues per year -- one in early spring, the other in early autumn. The present number, our very first, is being sent to all persons known to us who are interested in Himalayan research (and in this we acknowledge the help of Michael Hutt, Gérard Toffin and others who have provided us with mailing lists of scholars from their respective
By accident, rather than design, our first issue has become something of a Nepal issue. We are especially indebted to Michael Hutt, for having provided us with a review of Nepali literature available in London and to Carol Tingey for having brought to light the Bake ethnomusicological archive. The article on the so-called private Nepali newspapers, being collected by the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg, was put together by the editors with the help of information contributed from John Whelpton in Hong Kong and Silke Wolf in Kathmandu. Other reports were collected by Martin Gaenszle in Kathmandu, including an interview with Prof. Basudev Chandra Malla, the new Vice-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University. Future issues will take us west and east of Nepal, and hopefully into Tibet as well.

For the present we urge you to read this issue and to return to us the enclosed questionnaire. Since our mailing lists are anything but complete, we further request that you spread the word about the Bulletin and encourage those who have not received a copy to write to us. Finally please make the next issue a better one. Send us both your news as well as longer pieces that you would like to have considered for publication (see notes to contributors at the end of this issue).

Prof. Richard Burghart
Prof. Dr. András Höfer
Dr. Martin Gaenszle

Nepal has a lively press scene of so-called private newspapers that serve to complement the views of the official, government-owned organs, Gorkhapatra and its English language counterpart The Rising Nepal. To document these various voices, the South Asia Institute began to collect a representative selection of newspapers in August 1989. The holdings were subsequently enriched by a gift of private newspapers that had been collected during the teachers' strike and Congress-led Satyagraha of 1984-1985. As the acquisitions document the abortive 1984-1985 attempt to bring about multi-party democracy and the 1990 successful attempt, the newspapers are not only a useful source of information on contemporary political debate in Nepal but also a valuable archive for students of Nepal's modern political history. The purpose of this report is to put these so-called private newspapers in the context of Nepalese political culture and to inform our readership of the newspapers currently held at the South Asia Institute.

Private newspapers and public life under pānchāyat democracy

The dramatic political changes that took place in Nepal in the Spring of last year, costing some 500 lives, were the culmination of a struggle for power between the monarchy and the political parties that began on the 16th December 1960 when Birendra's father, King Mahendra, used his emergency powers to dismiss the Nepali Congress government which had been elected with a substantial majority only eighteen months earlier. Arguing that parliamentary democracy was alien to Nepalese tradition and unsuitable for the development of the country, Mahendra in 1962 offered to the Nepalese people the 'gift' of a constitution in which sovereignty was retained by the royal dynasty but in which the people, through tiers of indirectly elected pānchāyat councils, could influence political processes. Meanwhile all political parties were banned; and their leaders were either imprisoned or went into voluntary exile. So began a twenty year period in which the political parties, driven underground, sought by means of force, but mostly by means of persuasion, to put an end to pānchāyat democracy.

During the 1960s and 1970s several assassination attempts, an airplane hijacking and covert activities mounted through front organizations, failed to weaken the government's resolve. Throughout this period, however, the political parties began to organize the student population; and after the 1979 public disturbances, in which university students played a prominent role,