

Round 3

At least they are just quarrelling and not killing each other.

RAJENDRA DAHAL
The Maoist politburo is meeting this week near Nashahari in India to decide on the underground party's agenda for the third round of peace talks. In Kathmandu, the Nepali Congress (NC) government is doing the same in party huddles and with the parliamentary opposition.
Although there has been a lot of headline rhetoric, neither side wants to

discontinue the talks which is expected in the next few days. The next round has to go into the core issue of what the Maoists are finally willing to settle for after six years of war and 2,000 Nepalis killed. The top Maoist leadership is now hemmed in by domestic, regional and international factors:
• Public opinion against threats, intimidation and extortion
• This week US Secretary of State Colin Powell labelled all groups using violence against legitimate governments terrorists
• Then Indian foreign minister Jaswant Singh made an unprecedented denouncement of Nepal's Maoists
• The royal palace and army talk tough

The Maoist leadership also faces pressure from local commanders beginning to disobey them. Many local cadre are acting on their own, in some cases giving the revolution a dangerous communal tint. Senior leaders now need an exit strategy which will be acceptable to the government, and also satisfy those lower down the ladder. This is a critical compromise that will be the main challenge for Comrades Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai.

The government can't put the Maoist leadership too much in a spot, otherwise a headline faction will split off and head for the hills again. Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, after bringing the negotiations this far is now also facing open dissatisfaction from within his own party and the palace. Both think he has given in too much to Maoist demands.

King Gyanendra expressed displeasure last week in a conversation with NC leader Ram Chandra Poudel about politicians not standing up against the Maoists' anti-monarchy stance. Then, in an unprecedented move, the Defence Ministry warned Maoists last Friday against inciting the public against the monarchy. Senior ministers in the Deuba cabinet said they were "shocked" by the statement, which should normally have come from the Home Ministry. One minister told us: "The palace has now done a U-turn on the Maoists."

An all-party meeting in Balaquar on Monday evening designed to prepare for the third round ended in disarray. There is increasing dissatisfaction with what is seen as the prime minister's secretive ways in dealing with the Maoists, and his perceived leniency towards them. Not everyone is

convinced the Maoists are negotiating in good faith. One minister admitted: "The prospect of coming out into parliamentary politics does not explain the Maoists' readiness for talks. They are arming and regrouping, and we'd better be prepared."

ETHNIC EDGE
As the political struggle of the Maoist revolution recedes, the government is getting sinister indications from some areas of a new communal edge. After the truce went into effect, there have been incidents where local Maoists cadre have desecrated Hindu temples, slaughtered cows, and in the tarai triggered a dangerous polarisation with the *madhesis*. The bahun-dominated Maoist leadership now faces a stark choice: sell a political solution to its own followers or resume the armed struggle. If the Maoists go for a political solution, disgruntled Maoist militia can easily be assimilated into the police or army.

Prospects of reaching a viable agreement through the present negotiation process looks dim, but neither the government nor the Maoists can afford to disown talks. Even if the present talks fail and there is a return to fighting, both sides will soon have to return to meaningful negotiations. The present process has been stymied by dead-end demands from the Maoists for a republic and scrapping the constitution. Except for these two, most other issues on the Maoist agenda are negotiable and there is multi-partisan consensus on them.

If the Maoists come up with concrete and dramatic concessions during the third round, there is still a chance that the present process can be salvaged. Otherwise, it is back to war. And this time, it will be different: the army will be in the fray, both sides will use heavier automatic weapons.

The Maoists need a soft landing, a cushion which they don't at present have. It is up to the parliamentary parties to provide them that. Theirs is a political cause, not an ethnic or separatist war. The way out is public debate and negotiation. □



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Missing in action

BINOD BHATTARAI IN GENEVA
Two names top the list of those missing since the start of the Maoist 'people's war'. Dev Raj Joshi, former Nepali Congress MP from Bajura may have already been killed after being abducted by Maoists in early July. Danda Pani Neupane is the most prominent missing Maoist. He disappeared in May 1999, and the government says Neupane is not on its list of people detained or killed. As the third round of talks get underway, both sides are demanding the release of prisoners and information on the missing. The government wants the Maoists to release 189 people, including 69 policemen. The Maoists want to know where their own 69 missing comrades are as a precondition to further dialogue. The human rights organisation INSEC says Maoists have abducted 547 people so far of which 107 are still missing and government has taken 227. The whereabouts of 130 are still unknown. There's someone else who is keeping count: the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva. Spokesman Darcy Christen told us his numbers are similar, adding: "It is a complicated issue and has to be addressed immediately if you are to be in a position to have credible talks."

So, either the possible killings have to be admitted (and regretted) by both sides, or the whereabouts of those still missing made public. "There are people we have not seen on our subsequent visits," Christen added. "It will be a political decision for Kathmandu to say what happened to them." Maoists have a greater responsibility since they have said they respect the Geneva Conventions.

ICRC delegations have been visiting Nepal prisons since late 1998. Although they have no access to Maoist detention camps, the rebels have not disrupted their work. ICRC says its priority is to visit those under Maoist detention.

The ICRC has been trying to set up an office in Nepal since 1998 but does not have a "headquarters agreement" with government yet. Sources in the foreign ministry admit there have been delays and say that's because of "administrative problems." Unofficially, one reason for the delay was letting ICRC in would mean recognising the Maoist internal conflict. The official line until some months ago was that this was a "law and order problem."

"We have expertise in tracing people but are not into mediation," says Jean Jacques Bovay, head delegate of ICRC in Nepal. The ICRC also offered to play the role of a neutral intermediary, but the government opted for Nepali human rights "facilitators." ICRC's role in Nepal will become more important in the coming days, especially if the talks break down and the conflict escalates. It would then be providing medical help to the injured on both sides. And that can only happen if its official status is clarified, which could happen as early as next week, a foreign ministry source told us. □

Editorial p. 2
Peace by Desai

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Drugs abuse



HEMLATA RAI

Two things are likely to happen to consumers of pharmaceutical drugs in Nepal: over-prescription and under-consumption. How and when this happens usually depends on more than the just the health of your body and wallet. The availability and marketability of drugs have a greater role to play in our lives than we could have imagined.

Hard statistics are difficult to come by when looking into the unwarranted prescription of pharmaceutical drugs, but public health workers say the practice has reached almost epidemic proportions in Nepal. The main actors in the wellness game—doctors, manufacturer and traders, and drug administrators—all are equally to blame for over-medicating unsuspecting consumers. But because of

inadequate laws, poor monitoring mechanisms and unconcern on the part of the Department of Drug Administration, no part of the drug-triangle is forced to watch where it's going. "It is this lopsided power relation that puts consumers at disadvantage position while giving immense power to prescribers," said Sharad Onta, a public health expert with the Public Health Concern Trust (PHCT).

Nepali consumer rights protection laws are feeble and consumer rights campaigning is still in its infancy. Only a few cases are filed against medical practitioners for negligence. And even this only happens when the mistake is of a very large magnitude and attracts the attention and support of activists. More often than not, such lawsuits are most strongly opposed by the very agencies that are meant

to ensure medical practitioners follow their code of ethics.

TOO LITTLE

The problem begins with public sector health care institutions, which are basically victims of government inattention. Here people suffer as a result of inadequate supplies, poor infrastructure and health workers who only half the law. Village-based health workers are a neglected lot—they are denied opportunities to upgrade their skills and initiatives to improve their service, which they have little incentive to put even the skills they have to the best possible use. But the ultimate sufferer in these places is the person who is unwell—their ailments are not properly diagnosed, and they are often provided medication that is past its expiry date, was of poor

In Nepal, you either get too much medication or not enough. Prescribers may be far from qualified, and drug companies are cashing in.

quality in the first place or has actually lost much of its potency due to inaccurate storage and transportation methods. Or, there may simply not be enough medication to treat patients effectively, especially at health units in remote places. Study tours to such health posts often find that patients are prescribed doses lower than that recommended because they are also under tremendous pressure to manage the inadequate drug supplies with no help from government outsiders.

These peripheral health workers are also not protected by laws against inevitable medical accidents. "The international medical code protects health workers from the 'accidental' reaction to penicillin G and V group injection, which could cause death. Health workers in Nepal are not given legal protection against this and the government does not provide a substitute for the antibiotic. Fearing adverse reaction to the drug, many health posts refuse to dispense penicillin, lest as an essential drug, even when they have it in stock. What they do not know is that the occurrence of death as a result of an allergy to penicillin is one in 500,000 and a health worker administering the drug is not subjected to legal punishment unless wrong intention is proved. Just two years ago, a health assistant from Charkot was imprisoned because he had administered penicillin to a patient who suffered anaphylactic shock as a result of dead.

TOO MUCH

The health service private sector suffers from the opposite malady—over-prescription of medicine and over-use of other health facilities. Medical professionals and patients alike don't understand the different roles of nursing, diagnostic, medical and pharmaceutical services too well, and even relatively minor illnesses impose a heavy economic burden on patients and their families through unnecessary tests and medication.

The Nepali market is flooded with approximately 11,000 brands of 35 national and 700 international pharmaceutical manufacturers—just like you would find in developed countries. This is certainly profitable for many of them, but when compared with the population puts Nepal at the top of the heap when it comes to per capita brand consumption. For instance, almost all prescriptions handed out here include a multi-vitamin tonic, which developed countries do not trade, saying such tonics do virtually nothing to enhance the health of people and so is an unnecessary economic burden to the patients.

Over-prescription has more dangerous consequences too—practitioners have found that antibiotics are ineffective to treat sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among Nepali adults due to unscientific use and over-use throughout the average urban Nepali's life. The Ministry of Health has decided to fight fire with fire—every new STD patient is now prescribed a new potent kind of antibiotic that assumes the patient has already taken



at least one course of a similar medicine without consulting a specialist.

Developed countries like the United Kingdom have laws that prohibit manufacturers from investing more than 11 percent of their production costs in advertising. But, in India, the main supplier of pharmaceutical drugs in Nepal, some manufacturers spend up to 36 percent to advertise their wares. This high investment in promotion has accelerated a drive to create "brand loyalty" among medical practitioners—just like you would find with shampoo or noodles. This is certainly profitable for many of them, but when compared with the population puts Nepal at the top of the heap when it comes to per capita brand consumption. For instance, almost all prescriptions handed out here include a multi-vitamin tonic, which developed countries do not trade, saying such tonics do virtually nothing to enhance the health of people and so is an unnecessary economic burden to the patients.

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that too was silent on who is allowed to be a prescriber, allowing more unqualified people take advantage of the confusion. People with as limited education as a two-week training in pharmacy management are acting as prescribers in community drug stores. And since the dispensing of pills and injections is considered a sign of competence, doctors, pharmacists and unqualified quacks alike prescribe copious quantities of drugs. An urban legend has it that Nepalis, with their propensity for drug-taking, have the most expensive urine in the world, packed as it is with antibiotics.

"As many as 90 percent of the people in charge of dispensing medication cannot read the labels attached to packets," says Balkrishna Khakurel of the Department of Drug Administration (DDA) and president of the Nepal Pharmaceutical Association. The management of our drug regimes verges on the criminal sometimes—qualified people often "rent" their certificates for a monthly fee to pharmacies that want to woo two patients.

ALL ABOUT CASH

In the absence of regulatory bodies that oversee prescription drugs, fly-by-night pharmaceutical units are coming up because the Nepali people will take, quite literally, anything and everything—no matter how minor—is deemed to require medication. Drug manufacturers and traders engage in cut-throat competition to make profits. The inefficiency of the DDA and the Royal Drug Laboratory in monitoring drug quality and their lack of trained manpower mean that manufacturers and traders can cut costs every which way. Pharmaceuticals are hot



business now—manufacturers and traders can make as much as a 60 percent profit on some drugs. The profit margin maintained by pharmaceutical outlets regularly breaches the ceiling fixed by the DDA, which allows only 16 percent for wholesalers and 10 percent for retailers for six years. The profit margin maintained by pharmaceutical outlets regularly breaches the ceiling fixed by the DDA, which allows only 16 percent for wholesalers and 10 percent for retailers for six years. The profit margin maintained by pharmaceutical outlets regularly breaches the ceiling fixed by the DDA, which allows only 16 percent for wholesalers and 10 percent for retailers for six years.

Up to 15 percent of the medicines on sale in Kathmandu are estimated to be substandard. Last year the government issued a notice to national drug producers to acquire a Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) certificate within three years to be allowed to put their products on the market. However, no such requirement is

imposed on international manufacturers, who have 83 percent of the medicine market in Nepal.

Most of this is available—we could take a cue from Bangladesh's Minimum Drug List, which listed some 100 basic drugs. Until multinational got into the game, these were produced in the country in optimum amounts, they were of good quality, generic and cheap. The result was a tremendous improvement in Bangladesh's health system.

Khakurel sums up the situation in Nepal: "We are victims of a systematic irrationality in drugs use." □

High fliers

The Royal Nepal Army has a new force to take on—the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), every time it wants to buy a plane. The PAC recently gave the armed forces the green signal to purchase two Mi-17s, and is now pursuing a proposal to buy a F-16 Super Puma the army requires for head of state and VIP flights.

But the committee isn't pleased. It recently pointed out that although the Ministry of Defence (MoD) was empowered by cabinet to decide on whether it needed the Super Puma or not, before placing the order the MoD had to get the approval of the Ministry of Finance, according to the 1999 Financial Administration Regulations. The PAC was called in because the defence ministry had not followed procedure.

The brand new Super Puma AS 332 L1 army plans to buy from the French Euro-copter Company Sofema costs Rs 870 million. The army's old Super Puma, also used to transport the head of state and VIPs, is more than 15 years old and considered technically unsafe to fly. Army officials say overhauling and upgrading the engine would cost a lot more—while still leaving the safety of the chopper in doubt.

The spirit of revolution

Nepal's Revolutionary women are running short on patience. Manu Humagai of the Maoist-affiliated All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary), warned that her group will "strike hard" if the government cannot efficiently implement measures to control the sale of alcohol as it promised last month.

On 25 August the government bowed to ANWA (R) demands to implement stricter controls on the trade by 1 October. The measures include allowing the sale of alcohol for only four hours in the afternoon, a ban on the sale of alcohol for four days every month, and another on the retailing of alcohol near temples and schools. The government had also agreed to allow only two alcohol outlets per Village Development Committee (VDC) area, one outlet in each municipality ward, three outlets only per ward of a sub-metropolitan zone and four outlets each in wards of a metropolitan zone.

Sad SAF

The ninth SAF Games scheduled to be held between 6-15 October in the Pakistani capital Islamabad have been postponed indefinitely due to fears of imminent strikes in neighbouring Afghanistan by the US and its allies. Nepali athletes had for the past month been making use of the Rs 14.12 million allocated by the Nepal Sports Council to participate in closed training camps here and abroad. Binod Shanker Pathik, member-secretary of the Council, has asked the disappointed athletes to keep training. The closed camps themselves started late, mainly because the NSC had been mired in controversy over the allocation of funds.

HERE AND THERE

The real enemy is exclusion

War is about destruction. The rhetoric that justifies war is usually about value systems, preserving the existing order, often imposing them. But the real reason that nations, or groups of people go to war, is to destroy the other side. There are no "limited wars". Even if destruction is confined to military targets, there has been total destruction somewhere in the arena of battle. An innocent life is taken, a piece of property or a way of life belonging to a non-combatant destroyed utterly. This is the main reason that the world's committed pacifists, those with the bravery to stand up for their beliefs, whatever the cost, deplore war. It is uncontrollable, once it starts, no matter what the "Defence Correspondents" tell you on television, or the generals affirm with their laser pointers in slick media briefings.

War is the abject failure of peaceful diplomacy, intelligence gathering, negotiation and compromise. It is often the last resort of the bungling politician, or the first choice of those who perceive themselves as too weak to meet an enemy halfway. Battles, even when backed by a righteous majority, destroy more than they achieve. War alone will never solve a problem. Often it will exacerbate it in the long term. Anyone who thinks the coming blitzkrieg on terror will put a stop to the vile tactics of killing and maiming the innocent had better think again.

What is about to happen is—I fear—likely to throw up an army of new recruits for the battalions of terror. There are vast feelings of alienation out there, in every society on earth, that go to heinous extremes under untold pressures. And it is not hard to fall outside the mainstream, not at all. The men whose caused a United Nations of innocent bloodshed on 11 September were, we're told, middle class, fathers, husbands, people "like us". How could they do it?

Anyone who thinks the coming blitzkrieg on terror will put a stop to terrorism had better think again.



If there's to be a lesson, a result, a development that encourages and gives hope to our children, perhaps it is touch a real commitment to find the answer to that question. It is too much to hope that the inevitable war will have another side to it. That war on the battlefield, in the skies or at sea, can be matched by soul searching among the citizens of the Fortune World.

We—and I am, of course, one of them—need to spend the next year or so agonising over everything we have, and whether by having it we deny others. We must accept that a wronged people—Americans and the rest of us from countries that support the coming war—need more than violence to purge the world of terror. We need to address its causes, not as an empty, political debate about whose side we're on, but as an admission that the real enemy is exclusion, not evil existing in a vacuum. We need to marshal battalions of sociologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, even journalists. This needs to be part of a huge project of reaching out to the dispossessed at home and abroad. The exclusion bred by exclusion is a festering symptom of trouble to come, not an evil to be deplored in rhetoric, ignored in practice.

I still support the United States and all the others. While recognising that there are reasons for the evil acts in New York City, Washington and over Pennsylvania, I deplore to the depths of my soul what has happened. But as a casual-carrying member of the only species of animal that seems to believe in hope, I insist that the lesson from all the mistakes we can. If some potential terrorist somewhere is deterred by high, efficient security, if good law enforcement prevents a hijack or a bombing before innocent blood is shed, if the anti-terror warriors manage to arrest and apply justice and due process to those behind the attack on America, then right has triumphed over wrong, good over evil.

But more importantly, there will only be real victory, genuine *takbeer* if no baby is ever again born surrounded by institutionalised violence and fanaticism, in the Middle East, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Chechnya or even the Bronx. Or whatever local version of them you would care to name. □

by DANIEL LAK



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Knit your way to power



Electricity in this village means high-tech solar devices and traditional crafts.

systems by knitting traditional bags. Twenty-four bags pay for their system and money from the sale of further bags goes back to the household. The AEPD still subsidises the systems, but now it goes to those who really need it.

In this way, the project organisers, HLF and the project funders—the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme of the UNDP—hope to get clean lighting into people's homes and also create a much-needed longer-term sustainable source of income.

All this requires is what in development-speak is called "local capacity building." Basically, committees, groups and financial arrangements need to be established so the community can take ownership of the project and its everyday management. This is quite a challenge in a place like Baglung with very low literacy rates and little experience of such things. But even some "capacity" opens the door to a range of other development activities—savings and credit groups, literacy programs, or, as in Baglung, a new toilet in the health post compound and a smokeless cook stove. The community debates the best use of the small grants available to them in lively group meetings.

But development theory is often a little different from development practice. The problem in Baglung is that each bag takes around 70 hours to make—which would be fine if

the women had nothing else to do. But on average a rural Nepali woman has a 15-hour day of hard work. Every day. How to fit the knitting in?

Suggesting that the men could take on some of the household duties is an iffy matter. "But how will I get my dinner?" laughed one knitter. "He will be drunk and beat me" said another. People also die, move home or get married. The bags must still be made. The eighty solar systems mean eighty bags a month, eighty sets of individual circumstances. Samir Newa, the project officer, reckons managing such a project is five percent administration and 95 percent motivational psychology.

The Maoist insurgents in the area also had to be placated. Seeing the panels, they came down from the surrounding hills and started asking questions. In Baglung, the Maoists power is considerable—they have imposed bans on money lending and *zakat*. After talking to the locals and realising that no cash was changing hands, they allowed the project to continue.

But the project works and lighting has transformed the village. "Where there is the big light there is the happiness" as one grandmother told me.

Children study in the dark mornings and at night. Women can in the evening do some of the detailed tasks they earlier had to finish in the day—sorting through rice and grain to pick out stones,

sewing, spinning thread. A women's group regularly meets under a solar light in the health post compound learning to write Nepali. Gopal Pandey, the health post worker, says he sees fewer people with bronchitis and pneumonia, and that the lighting has also discouraged the banned but still endemic drinking—now drinkers must find ever more dark corners to indulge.

But Gopal Pandey does see quite a bit of "knitter's finger"—people complaining of sore fingers as a result of all the knitting. Until there are many more Baglungans there will be insufficient numbers in the manufacturing process to drag the panel price down, which will mean fewer bags to knit. HLF's chief adviser, Adam Friedensohn says, "HELP is the only program I know that intrinsically links renewable energy deployment with income generation. Many organisations are watching us closely and are excited about the possibilities for replication. If the project is a success and the model is replicated by other development agencies, system costs will surely come down. The knitters of Baglung are waiting."

Formerly an energy and environmental consultant with Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute, Dr Banks now travels and writes on environmental issues

How indebted are we?

Foreign aid is for Nepal what colonialism or capitalism is for other countries. It is the connecting link between the nation-state and the international community.

General's frank admission of ignorance, the World Bank's World Development Report 2001/2002 reported that the total debt stock of Nepal stands at a whopping \$2,970 million.

This is reminiscent of a public service announcement on female literacy broadcast on Nepal TV which shows a young girl accompanying her literate father to a moneylender. When the father asks for a loan, the moneylender discreetly adds an extra zero to the credited amount. The young girl picks out the error right away and the sly moneylender apologises. The government's situation is not much better than the illiterate villager, since it does not even know how much it owes international shah.

According to the Auditor General while loan money comes into the audit net, most grant money does not. Loans are incorporated in the annual budget and the office of the auditor general carries out the audit.

But this does not seem to necessarily make loans more transparent and accountable than grants. Devendra Raj Pandey,

board member of the Transparency International and former finance minister, says it is all about effective policymaking and accountable implementation, something multilateral lending agencies have not been able to accomplish.

An approach that seems to be gaining popularity among some donors is the sector strategy. Donors do not develop specific projects in association with government agencies and NGOs, but put their money in a specific sector for the government to decide how the money is to be spent. Such an approach should theoretically reduce duplication and consolidate efforts, but experience has shown it doesn't work either. Compare irrigation and domestic water: one has a sector approach and the other doesn't.

In irrigation, the Department of Irrigation is the exclusive implementing agency. Multilateral lending agencies—both the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank—along with some bilateral donors provide funds to the department which implements projects through its district and regional offices. There are no other agencies involved in irrigation.

The dynamics are quite different in the domestic water arena. While the Asian Development Bank provides sector loans to the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage, some bilateral donors fund activities through NGOs while others work with the District Development Committees. The World Bank, for its part, supports an autonomous board. There are still other international NGOs for whom the overall focus is poverty alleviation and for whom

water supply and sanitation is just an entry point rather than the focus of their program. Since 1990, this has led to a change in the nature of discourse on water supply.

Until the late 1980s, the Department used to frame its objectives in terms of the percentage of people receiving 'piped' water, which implied that those who did not receive piped water supplied by the Department did not receive safe water. With other donors entering the field, the flow of bilateral grants and multilateral loans changed this. They envisioned their role in expanding coverage and upgrading the level of services of water supply and sanitation by facilitating access to 'safe' water or 'potable' water. Such 'safe' or 'potable' water could be from pipes and taps, or it could also be from hand-pumps, boreholes or spring water.

This led to a rethink on the role of the department and the perception of its role as providing 'reasonable access' to minimum level of services. It also sees itself as a facilitator and not an implementer. In addition, water and sanitation was available at a cost much lower than the department's own.

A plural institutional environment and the existence of multiple actors has made the domestic water terrain more fuzzy, while simultaneously making the role of intervening agencies more focused and service delivery more effective. This indicates that a pluralistic approach with multiple actors is more effective than a "sector" approach with a monolithic implementation.

Foreign aid in Nepal has grown from a trickle to a torrent. With the entry first in the form of grant from the Ford Foundation for rural development activities in 1951 amounting to \$3,000, the grant and loans for the next successive years made up over \$400 million.

Foreign aid has been the handmaiden of Nepal's development. The planning exercise is possible because of foreign assistance. The first five-year plan that

actually got underway in the country from 1956 to 1961 was hurriedly prepared for presentation to a panel of donors in the Colombo Plan meet. Though five-year planning is associated with Soviet style central planning, ironically, in Nepal it was initiated through the help of American advisers.

Foreign aid is for Nepal what colonialism or capitalism are for other countries. It is the connecting link between the nation-state and the international community. It is a way of breaking up with the isolationist past and of relating itself with the wider world.

Foreign aid has indelibly shaped the contours of our nation-state and its peoples. The burgeoning cities of Kathmandu Valley, the expansion of district headquarters, the networks of roads, services and education have largely been the outcomes of foreign aid. Yet, for an enterprise that has indelibly shaped our lives and our society, it is something that is little studied and discussed. For a phenomenon that has spanned several decades and has involved huge investments, there are but a handful of books accessible to the public that shed some light on the aid phenomenon.

Though donors have invested millions on specific projects and programmes, there is very little in the civic domain that informs the wider public whether these have accomplished what they set out to do and at what cost. Transparency has to be more than lip service, making specific documents available to those who are interested is undoubtedly a step in the right direction. Much more needs to be done to explain what donors ought to do, how much it cost, and what the outcome and impact have been.

In order to ensure the transparency and accountability of loans, auditing these is not sufficient. The loans that Nepal receives from lending agencies are called sovereign loans. Which means the parliament representing the sovereign people should know about them. It is necessary for the Finance Minister to inform the parliament of the status of loan, including the amortisation schedule, cleared debts and outstanding debts. 0



by SUDHINDRA SHARMA

At first glance, Baglung village in Baglung is unremarkable. A typical Himalayan village perched on a ledge of flat land next to a boulder-strewn river. But a closer look reveals something different—on almost every roof is a small solar panel generating electricity for the household beneath. These panels are high tech devices, originally developed to power satellites in space. Twenty years later they are on grass roofs in remote Nepali valleys. But they do not look inappropriate. The panels shining in the sun in this idyllic landscape is like a techno-environmentalist's vision of utopia.

But getting them here has

taken innovative planning, arm-twisting, subsidies, and a lot of walking. Most importantly, the panels are there because these houses were lit terribly before, like most rural Nepali homes, with kerosene lamps. But light from a kerosene lamp is poor, smoky and expensive—bad for education, health and pocket.

Solar systems would be perfect in such situations, except they are expensive—at around \$300 apiece, few in Baglung could afford to buy a system outright or even subscribe to a long-term repayment scheme. The Nepal government's Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPD) provides a subsidy for a certain number of systems each

year and the Agricultural Development Bank plans on giving loans for them, but neither scheme helps those with the greatest need. Demand for the subsidy far exceeds supply and bank loan requires collateral. This creates a free-rider effect—only richer villagers apply for the loan and obtain the subsidy, which perhaps they don't even need. The rural poor must go without.

What Baglung needed was flexible credit, where repayments did not need to be in cash. This was the non-profit Himalayan Light Foundation came in with its "HELP" program. Through HELP, the women of Baglung pay for their solar

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Film South Asia 2001

From 4-7 October Kathmandu Valley will host the third biannual Film South Asia, the only festival of documentaries of the region. This year there is a much wider variety of documentaries from the region, with subjects ranging from identity politics to sexual questioning, spiritual pursuits to diasporic angst. Fifty-one films short-listed from three times that many entries will be screened at the Russian Cultural Centre.

Says Manesh Shrestha, director of the festival: "This time, we have a big jump in the quality of films. The five films on Nepal will grab the audience, as will the other films from far and wide."

A three member festival jury headed by internationally acclaimed director Shyam Benegal will select the best film. The

winner will receive the "Ram Bahadur Trophy" and a cash prize of \$2000. The festival opens with the screening of *The Killing Terraces*, a film by Nepali director Dhruva Basnet on the origins of Maoist insurgency in Rukum, Rolpa and Jajarkot.

Fifteen of the best films will travel across South Asian cities and the world next year to be screened at select venues. Film South Asia is organised by the non-profit Himal Association and Himal South Asian magazine, and the festival will also witness the inauguration (by Shyam Benegal) of the Clearinghouse of South Asian Documentaries. "The Clearinghouse will support the propagation of documentaries by creating a database and marketing," Shrestha says the Traveling Festival, this year, will also go to the various towns of Nepal, including Biratnagar and Pokhara.

Two Nepali entries

Dinesh Deokota

When people ask Dinesh Deokota what his film is about, the 27 year-old Nepali shrugs his shoulders and says "I don't know." But as the title suggests *A Rough Cut on the Life & Times of Lachuman* Magar is a candid film about a naughty old man Magar man

which in Deokota's own words "has no pretensions to artistic quality". What the film lacks in technical finesse is made up by the character's raw energy. Lachuman is a colourful character—a man who loves and appreciates women—he has been married five times, has fathered five children, has experienced the overwhelming stench of death in the Pakistan-Bangladesh war, wet his pants while making his first parachute jump, and currently works as a housekeeper in a hotel in Bardia, west Nepal.

When he's not changing hotel linen, Lachuman is desperately trying to register a plot of government land he's tilled since 1975 in his name.

Still, Lachuman finds much to laugh about and takes life as it comes. "What's happened has happened." Lachuman is everyman," says Deokota: "I don't think his story is uncommon. It reflects our society. A simple man, no pretences." The filmmaker

was actually researching tiger conservation, fresh water dolphins, and ran into Magar at the hotel in Royal Bardia National Park. "Right in front of me was an ideal subject for a documentary. I just couldn't not film him," he adds.

In Kathmandu, after making money from filming bungee jumps, Deokota went back to Bardia, and spent two weeks filming Lachuman with a DV camera. "People talk about there not being enough money to make films but I think it's more of a lack of ideas," says Deokota, one of two Nepali directors whose films have been selected for the competitive category of Film South Asia 2001.

Deokota knows it is difficult making a living as a documentary filmmaker. Now he is working on the ethnography of *jhankri* (faith-healers), a subject close to his heart. One of the protagonists died, another works in Saudi Arabia.

Kesang Tseten

Most documentary makers turn the camera on others. Kesang Tseten focuses on himself and a bunch of OGB's (old girls and boys) of his alma mater Dr Graham's School as they reunite at the school's centennial celebrations. Most are meeting again for the first time in 29 years. "What better platform than when people return to a celebration after years. It's a dynamic situation," says Kesang.

The school was founded in Kalimpong in 1900 by a visionary Scottish Presbyterian for destitute Anglo-Indian children, many abandoned and outcast from both their father's and mother's societies. The school later took in children from marginalised communities including Nepali, Tibetan, Sikkimese, Khasi, Naga and Tibetan.

As a Tibetan refugee Kesang and his siblings joined the school in 1962, the year the Sino-Indian war broke out. At school they struggle to find their bearings. "It's about fractured backgrounds, about attachment with an edge," says Kesang. "Even as the film courses through a pabulum of testimony, there is a gradual unfolding of real childhoods, sentiment to the

powerful hold early experience has on us."

As a writer, Kesang has always tended to gravitate towards the personal, to delve into the heart. He begged and borrowed from friends and relatives to finance the film, extremely well-shot with a Vx2000 and edited on computer. Finding a market may prove more challenging. But he's not worried.

"When you make a film that's close to your heart you don't calculate the costs. The marketing

another dimension altogether," says Kesang. "I'll try to send it out. But even if nothing happens, I'll be poor but happy."

Kesang wrote the script for *Mukundo*, a feature film that was screened last year at festivals in Tokyo, San Francisco and Kathmandu.

Green Moments

Film South Asia 2001 Schedule

HALLA
THURSDAY, 4 OCTOBER
3:00 pm
After Sunset

South Asia, 2001, dir - Nupur Basu
Satellite television invades South Asia (57 min)

12:15 pm
We Have the Same Kind of Blood

Nepal, 2001, dir - Berit Madsen
The Dali is bewildered (41 min)

2:00 pm
Abhimanyu's Face

India, 2001, dir - Ranjita Palit
A passion for Mahabharata's Abhimanyu (27 min)

4:25 pm
Mela Basant Bahar

Pakistan, 1999, dir - Samina Aslam
Flying Kites, soaring in Lahore (29 min)

Ramila

India, 2000, dir - Kabir Khan
Revisiting the Emergency (25 min)

4:25 pm
Ray

India, 1999, dir - Gautam Ghosh
Great man's biopic (100 min)

FRIDAY, 5 OCTOBER
11:00 am
The Art of the Impossible:

A Portrait of V. P. Singh
India, 2000, dir - Julie Reynolds
The man and his Mandal (45 min)

12:05 pm
Where RU in ICU

India, 2001, dir - Ananth Roy
Chatting on the Internet (6 min)

Turt Wars: Conservation Claims in the Great Himalaya National Park

India, 2001, dir - Sanjay Ramela and Vasant Sabarwal
It's park vs. people (41 min)

2:00 pm
Scribbles on Akka

India, 2000, dir - Madhushree Dutta
Life and times of an ancient ascetic (60 min)

3:20 pm
She Wants to Talk to You

Nepal/USA, 2001, dir - Anita Chang
Nepal's women in Aitriki (28 min)

Maheed's Story

Pakistan, 2001, dir - Beena Sarwar
She wants to dance but... (22 min)

4:40 pm
Bengalis in the World of Fish

India, 2001, dir - Nargan Bhattacharya
Culinary delight (29 min)

Share Punjab

India, 2001, dir - Rahul Das
At the roadside dhaba (11 min)

5:30 pm
The Bee, The Bear and the Kuruba

India, 2000, dir - Vinod Raja
The tribal, the forest and the modern man (63 min)

SATURDAY, 6 OCTOBER
11:00 am
Michael Jackson Comes to Manikganj

Kumar
Performing in a troubled land (52 min)

2:30 pm
The Killing Terraces

Nepal, 2001, dir - Dhruva Basnet
Face-to-face with the Maoist insurgency (55 min)

3:45 pm
The Dream

India, 2001, dir - C. Saratchandran
School with a difference (35 min)

Now That's More Like a Man

Pakistan, 1999, dir - Farjad Nabi
Pakistani women talk about their men (85 min)

5:15 pm
A Rough Cut on the Life and Times of Lachuman Magar

Nepal, 2001, dir - Dinesh Deokota
A naughty old man (29 min)

In Search of Meera's Buddha

India, 2000, dir - Murad Ali
Sculpted Buddha heads for the hills (23 min)

3:20 pm
Between the Devil and the Deep River

India, 1999, dir - Anind Sinha
Wise, the embarked river (85 min)

4:45 pm
Between the Lines

India, 2000, dir - Parvez Imam
The stranded Bangladeshis of Delhi (11 min)

King for a Day

Bangladesh, 2001, dir - Alex Gabbay
Clinton is coming... so what? (33 min)

We Homes Chaps

India/Nepal, 2001, dir - Kesang Tseten
Old boys talk and talk about school (70 min)

SUNDAY, 7 OCTOBER
11:00 am
The Quest for Peace in Nagaland

India, 2001, dir - Bharat Bhushan
Why the Naga problem and where to? (33 min)

Pakistan and India under the Nuclear Shadow

Pakistan/India, dir - Pervaz Hoodbhoy
Deadly footage of confrontation-making (32 min)

Amala

Nepal, 2000, dir - Elizabeth Snider
Mustang mother's preoccupations (22 min)

All the World's My Stage

US/India, 2001, dir - Farah Diba
Famous literary names speak (25 min)

12:35 pm
The Play Is On...

Kashmir, 2001, dir - Parvati Rishi

India, 2001, dir - K. P. Jayasankar and Anjali Monteiro
A poet and a painter on Bombay (49 min)

5:00 pm
Perception - The Other Canvas

Bangladesh, 1999, Fauzia Khan
Six Bangla artists paint, talk (54 min)

FRIDAY, 5 OCTOBER
11:10 am
Let Me Also Come To School

India, 2001, dir - Simantini Dhru
The state of school education (56 min)

12:20 pm
Crickets Lives in Lahore

Pakistan, 2000, dir - Farjad Nabi
Bowled over (13 min)

My Migrant Soul

Bangladesh, 2000, dir - Yasmine Kabir
A Bangladesh worker in Malaysia dies (35 min)

2:00 pm
Freedom!

India, 2001, dir - Amar Kanwar
Environment, Indian centre and periphery (60 min)

3:15 pm
Jari Mart: Of Cloth and Other Stories

India, 2001, dir - Surabhi Sharma
Mill workers in Bombay are laid off (74 min)

SATURDAY, 6 OCTOBER
11:10 am
Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan

Pakistan, 1985, dir - John Baily
Revisiting a past (60 min)

12:20 pm
Sunrise Radio

India/UK, 2001, dir - Shai Herdia

London listens to South Asia (17 min)

King of Dreams

India, 2001, dir - Amar Kanwar
What's on man's mind? (30 min)

2:20 pm
Born At Home

India, 2000, dir - Sameera Jain
North Indian midwifery (60 min)

3:20 pm
A Sun Sets In

Pakistan, 2000, dir - Shahid Nadeem
The bishop's ultimate sacrifice (45 min)

4:20 pm
Closed-door-and-stuff-inside-the-magazine

India, 2001, dir - Ataf Mazid
Anonymous Assamese writer speaks up (38 min)

Paper Flowers

India, 1999, dir - Ravi Kishan
Eunuchs at work (25 min)

5:40 pm
Gubya

India, 2000, dir - Kirtana Kumar
The woman and the goddess (55 min)

SUNDAY, 7 OCTOBER
10:15 am
Our Boys

Bangladesh, 1999, dir - Manzare Hassan
Boys talk about boys (42 min)

11:10 am
Colours Black

India, 2001, dir - Manita Murthy
Child abuse in Bombay (50 min)

11:50 am
Their War

Bangladesh, 2001, dir - Alsan Chaudhary
Women revisit the 1971 war (50 min)

12:45 pm
Highway to Hell

Nepal/India, 2000, dir - Meera Dewan
Nepali girls are trafficked to India (38 min)

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Libraries in the age of the Internet

David S Magier is South and Southeast Asian Studies Librarian and director of Area Studies at Columbia University, New York. He is also Columbia University's Internet Training and Resource Coordinator, a position he developed over the last decade. Magier was an early advocate of using the Internet in higher education and applied his knowledge to develop and organize web pages as tools for research. His South Asia Resource Access on the Internet (SARAI) <<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/web/india/southasia/cuv/>> is the most comprehensive portal on South Asia and is certified as the WWW Virtual Library for South Asia. The US government's National Endowment for the Humanities also named SARAI "one of the best sites on the Internet for teaching the humanities." Magier graduated from Cornell University with a Bachelor of Arts in linguistics. He then went on to the University of California at Berkeley, where he earned a PhD in 1983 with a dissertation entitled *Topics in the Grammar of Marwari*. Magier joined Columbia University as a South and Southeast Asian Studies specialist in 1987. Magier was in Kathmandu recently and GAURAB RAU UPADHAYA spoke with him about libraries, research and preservation in the age of digitisation.

What brings you to Kathmandu? I am president of the Center for South Asian Libraries (CSAL), a collective approach to support libraries in South Asia. Through CSAL we are trying to make collective funding more accessible and promote standards in cataloguing and bibliographic forms so these libraries can connect to the rest of the world.

We work with South Asian libraries to preserve manuscripts and holdings. We microfilm the original volumes, make copies of the original film and store the originals safely. We also scan the microfilm into high quality digital images and put them on the web.

Isn't microfilming archaic? You are mistaken, probably because you are from the digital age (laugh). The only proven technology for

preservation is filming. Filming technology is sufficiently advanced and we know it can be safely stored for 200 to 400 years. And it can be viewed with just a magnifying glass. You can't do any such thing with digital technology. And we are making copies of the microfilm for distribution, which again entails lower costs for libraries.

As the dynamics of technology change, distribution mediums and formats may change—but electronic access is not possible if materials are not preserved. In the US, there is a place called Iron Mountain, where everything that has been published in the US is microfilmed and stored underground—that is for preservation. We are using information technology to catalogue library holdings according to standards, and

bring uniformity in electronic catalogues. This will ultimately help create a union list, which lists all available holdings in all libraries. Inter-library loans will then be possible.

Most digital technology is developed in the West, and places like Nepal are deprived of the benefits because of the lack of technology in local languages. How does this impact libraries cataloguing South Asian volumes?

Local adaptation is not necessarily a problem—the major problem is standardising encoding for fonts and scripts. All non-Roman scripts have been already standardised and are widely used, but many South Asian ones haven't been. But, with the use of something called Unicode spreading,

libraries are finding it easier to store information in local languages that are compatible across fonts. But then again the coding often does not reflect the way languages here are used, so more work needs to be done in South Asia itself.

Do you think donors could support this kind of work? Right now, digitisation seems to be in vogue. But donor agencies fail to understand that digitisation is only for distribution. If you want preservation, you need to give libraries more money. Even we talk about digitisation to have easier access to funds. But libraries need to first preserve, then digitise. Donors and agencies need to put their money where it will make a real difference—like in preservation and standardisation of encoding.

How is your work different from that of Western scholars and libraries in the past? In the past Western scholars would come in and carry away value. It was like a colonial plunder dream—you took away books because you could

buy them. Libraries also took book holdings. But no library can work in isolation. Not even a big library can come and take back everything of value. And with information technology and Internet, geography matters less and less. Libraries can promote the ethic of co-operation, users can benefit. Once items are preserved, they can be distributed in many different forms including on CD-ROM and online.

So some libraries are changing their approach. How much are libraries themselves changing? When you asked someone 100 years ago "What is a library?", they would say something like a centre for knowledge, but I see library as a warehouse of materials. How they serve the society and their clients depends on what their mission is. There are two different things, just like preservation and distribution are. Libraries, if they are not co-operating, offer their clients less—which goes against their mission. So libraries are forming federations, facilitating inter-library loans. In this case, the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

With the Internet being touted as the best resource centre—for anything—where do libraries stand? I can tell you that only about 1/100th of all written documents are online. Actual research can't be done without a library. Music, the arts, development research, history are things that are preserved only in libraries.

But aren't more people inclined these days to use electronic resources? Yes, and it troubles me. People who grew up with technology don't want to go through shelves of books, they want everything on screens. But only those volumes that are in high demand have

been digitised, so if you are looking for rare works there is little chance you will find them. I think that if this continues, research will become shallow. It took me 15 years to assimilate the South Asia collection at Columbia, it would take much more time to make the hundreds of thousands collection available on the Internet.

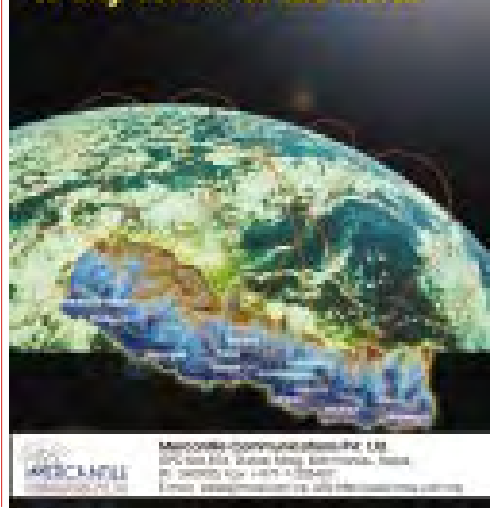
You also run the WWW Virtual Library for South Asia, what kind of start?

I started using the Internet in 1978—I was one of the first to use it at Columbia. Since I am the South Asian librarian, I started putting up paper resources on the Internet. That was in early 1988. Gopher was the way information was shared and published electronically before web. The online library I started became very popular and organisations like the Library of Congress started contacting me asking if they could connect to it and contribute to it. It kept growing and became the authority on SA resources on the Internet.

When the WWW started in 1991, I was reluctant to migrate because it was not as effective as gopher. But increasingly resources started to become available on the web, and even old resources migrated to it. Mine was the last functioning gopher service at Columbia, but eventually I migrated too and so the SARAI (South Asia Resource Access on the Internet) was born. Much later, the WWW Virtual Library guys from Switzerland contacted me, and I agreed to be the South Asian portal for the library.

Now I am also involved in the Digital South Asia Library (DSAL) which seeks to expand access to unique South Asian resources by providing full-text documents, electronic images and indices in South Asian languages. □

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"Pakistan was the condom the Americans needed to enter Afghanistan"

The old one is being fished out for use once again, but will it work?

On a trip to Pakistan a few years ago I was talking to a former general about the militant Islamist groups in the region. I asked him why these people, who had happily accepted funds and weapons from the United States throughout the war, had become violently anti-American overnight. He explained that they were not alone. Many Pakistani officers who had served the United States locally from 1951 onward felt humiliated by Washington's indifference.

"Pakistan was the condom the Americans needed to enter Afghanistan," he said. "We've served our purpose and they think we can be just flushed down the toilet." The old condom is being fished out for use once again, but will it work? The new "coalition against terrorism" needs the services of the Pakistani Army, but Gen Pervez Musharraf will have to be extremely cautious.

An overcommitment to Washington could lead to a civil war in Pakistan and split the armed forces. A great deal has changed over the past two decades, but the politics of history continue to multiply. In Pakistan itself, Islamism derived its strength

from state patronage rather than popular support. The ascendancy of religious fundamentalism is the legacy of a previous military dictator, Gen. Yahya Khan, who received solid backing from Washington and London throughout his eleven years as dictator. It was during his rule (1977-88) that a network of madrassas (religious boarding schools), funded by the Saudi regime, were created.

The children, who were later sent to fight as mujahideen in Afghanistan, were armed and commanded by "volunteers" from the Pakistani Army. If Islamabad decided to pull the plug, the Taliban could be dislodged, but without serious problems. The victory in Kabul counts as the Pakistani Army's only triumph. To this day, former US Secretary of State Zbigniew Brzezinski remains realistic. "What was more important in the world view of history?" he asks more than a touch of irritation. "The Taliban or the fall of the Soviet Empire? A few strident Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?"

The Taliban could not, however, have captured Kabul on their own via an excess of religious zeal. They were armed and commanded by "volunteers" from the Pakistani Army. If Islamabad decided to pull the plug, the Taliban could be dislodged, but without serious problems. The victory in Kabul counts as the Pakistani Army's only triumph. To this day, former US Secretary of State Zbigniew Brzezinski remains realistic. "What was more important in the world view of history?" he asks more than a touch of irritation. "The Taliban or the fall of the Soviet Empire? A few strident Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the cold war?"

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If Hollywood lions necessitate a short, sharp war against the new enemy, the American Cause would be best advised not to insist on Pakistani standards. "The underlying meaning of this cynicism is We will punish the crimes of our enemies and reward the crimes of our friends. Isn't that at least preferable to universal impunity?"

To this the answer is simple: "Punishment" along these lines does not reduce criminality but breeds it, by those who wield it. The Gulf and Balkan Wars were copybook examples of the moral blank check of a selective vigilance. Israel can defy UN resolutions with impunity. India can tyrannise Kashmir. Russia can destroy Grozny, but it is Iraq that has to be punished and it is the Palestinians who continue to suffer. Cooper continues: "Advice to postmodern states accept that intervention in the premodern is going to be a fact of life. Such interventions may not solve problems, but they may save the conscience. And they are not necessarily the worse for that." Try explaining that to the survivors in New York and Washington. The United States is

whipping itself into a frenzy. Its ideologues talk of this as an attack on "civilization" but what kind of civilization is it that thinks in terms of blood revenge?

For the past sixty years and more the United States has toppled democratic leaders, bombed countries in three continents and used nuclear weapons against Japanese civilians, but it never knew what it felt like to have its own cities under attack. Now they know. To the victims of the attack and their relatives one can offer our deep sympathy, as one does to people whose the US government has victimised. But to accept that somehow an American life is worth more than that of a Rwandan, a Yugoslav, a Vietnamese, a Korean, a Japanese, a Palestinian... that is unacceptable. □ (The Nation)

Tariq Ali is the author of *Memories of the Universe? NATO's Balkan Crusade (Verso)*. The third novel of his *Islam Quartet, The Stone Woman*, is due out in paperback from Verso in October (2001).

Theatre of good and evil

It's always the people who end up dead.

MONTEVIDEO - The terrorists killed workers from fifty countries in New York and Washington in the name of Good against Evil. And in the name of Good against Evil, President Bush had vowed revenge: "We will eliminate Evil from this world."

Eliminate Evil? What would Good be without Evil? Religious fanatics are not the only ones that need enemies to justify their madness. The arms industry and gigantic military apparatus need enemies to justify their existence. Heroes become monsters and monsters heroes: the actors swing masks according to the script.

There's nothing new here. German scientist Werner von Braun was evil when he invented the V-2 rocket, which Hitler used to pulverise London, but he became good the day he placed his skills in the service of the United States.

Stalin was good during World War Two and bad later, when he became ruler of the Evil Empire. During the years of the Cold War, John Steinbeck wrote, "Perhaps the entire world needs Russians. I bet even Russia does. Maybe there they call them Americans." Afterwards the Russians turned good. Now Putin says, "Evil must be punished."

Saddam Hussein was good, and so were the chemical weapons he used against the Kurds and Iraqis. Later he turned bad. He was called Satan Hussein when the US, which had just invaded Panama, invaded Iraq because Iraq had invaded Kuwait. Bush Sr presided over the war of Good against Evil. With the humanitarian and compassionate spirit that characterises his family, he killed more than 100,000 Iraqis, the vast majority civilians.

Satan Hussein is the same as he always was, but now this enemy number one of humanity has slipped to second place. The scourge of the world is now called Osama bin Laden. The CIA taught him everything he knows about terrorism: bin Laden, loved and admired by the US government, was one of the principal "freedom-fighters" in the war against communism in Afghanistan. Bush Sr was vice president when President Reagan said that these heroes were "the moral equivalent of America's Founding Fathers." And Hollywood agreed with the White House: Rambo III was being shot at the time, and the Muslim Afghans were the good guys. Not any more: now they are evil incarnate, a mere thirteen years later.

Henry Kissinger was one of the first to react to the recent tragedy: "Those who provide support, financing, and inspiration to the terrorists are as guilty as they are," he stated, using words that President Bush repeated just hours later. If this is the case, the first step would be to bomb Kissinger. He would be guilty of far more crimes than bin Laden and the rest of the world's terrorists combined. And in many more countries: acting in the service of various American administrations, he provided "support, financing, and inspiration" to state terrorism in Indonesia, Cambodia, Cyprus, the Philippines, South Africa, Iran, Bangladesh, and the countries of South America that suffered under the dirty war of Operation Condor.

On 11 September, 1973, exactly 28 years before the World Trade Towers collapsed in flames, Chile's presidential palace burned. Kissinger anticipated the epiphany of Salvador Allende and Chilean democracy when he commented on the election results: "We do not have to accept a country going Marxist because of the irresponsibility of its people." Disdain for the popular will is one of the many points in common between state terrorism

and private terrorism. For example, the Basque separatist movement in Spain, ETA, which kills in the name of an independent Basque state, proclaimed through a spokesman: "Rights have nothing to do with minorities or majorities."

There are many similarities between home-made and high-tech terrorism, between that of religious fundamentalists and free-market zealots, between that of the dispossessed and the all-powerful, between the solitary madmen and the professionals in uniform. All share the same lack of respect for human life: the murderers of the five thousand people killed in the demolition of the Twin Towers and the assassins of 200,000 Guatemalans, mostly Indians, exterminated without the slightest attention paid by the world media. These Guatemalans were killed not by Muslim fanatics but military terrorists who received the support, financing, and inspiration of one American administration after another.

These terrorists also share an obsession with reducing social, cultural and national contradictions to military terms. In the name of Good against Evil, in the name of the Single Truth, they seek resolution by killing first and asking questions later. And in this way they end up galvanising the very enemy they are fighting. It was the atrocities of the Shining Path that incited Peruvian President Fujimori, who with considerable public support initiated a reign of terror and sold Peru for the price of a banana. It was the atrocities of the US in the Middle East that largely fuelled the Holy War of Islamic terrorism.

Even though the Leader of Civilisation is calling for a new Crusade, Allah is innocent of the crimes committed in his name. After all, God did not order the Nazi Holocaust of the followers of Jehovah. Nor did Jehovah order the massacres of Sabra and Shatila or the expulsion of the Palestinians from their land. Like Jehovah, Allah, and God be three names for the same divinity?

A Tragedy of Errors: no one yet knows who is who. The smoke from the explosions is part of a far larger smoke screen that blocks our view. As vengeance breeds vengeance, each act of terrorism sends us stumbling deeper into darkness. In a recent photograph, someone had written on a wall in New York: "An eye for an eye has left the world blind."

The spiral of violence breeds violence and also confusion: pain, fear, intolerance, hatred, madness. In Porto Alegre, Brazil, former leader of Algeria Ahmed Ben Bella warned: "This system, which has driven cows mad, is making people mad too. And madmen, madmen, madmen, are just like the force that unhinged them."

A three-year-old boy named Luca commented a few days ago, "The world doesn't know where it's home." He was reading a map. He may as well have been watching the news. □ (JRS)

Eduardo Galeano, an Uruguayan journalist, is author of *Memories of Fire* and *The Open Veins of Latin America*.



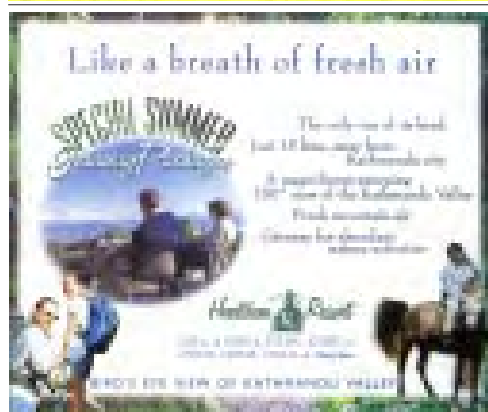
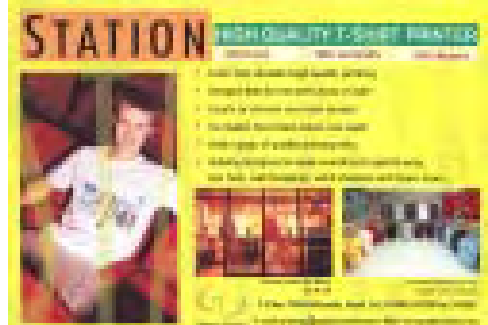
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CIA, ISI and the Taliban

Gen Musharraf has no option but to crackdown on Islamic radicals in his own country.

Frontier province prevented UNICEF from carrying out a polio immunisation campaign for children because they considered it un-Islamic. The same groups have smashed TV sets and forced women to stay at home, as the Taliban have done in Afghanistan.

At the same time, Pakistan could negotiate major concessions from the United States for its support—the lifting of US sanctions against Pakistan imposed in response to Islamabad's 1998 nuclear tests, a partial write-off of the country's \$38 billion international debt, more loans from the IMF and the World Bank, greater US pressure on India to settle the Kashmir dispute on terms acceptable to Pakistan, and the re-establishment of a close military and intelligence relationship with the United States to counter Washington's growing military and economic links with New Delhi. However, many Pakistani fear that the United States may just use Pakistan, as it did in the 1980s against the Soviet Union, and then walk away once the US mission is over, establishing a closer military alliance with India.

Musharraf will also have to crack down hard on Pakistan's Islamic extremists, who provide bin Laden's Al Qaeda with logistics, communications and other support. He may also be obliged to ban those Pakistani groups, like Harakat ul-Ansar (Volunteers Movement) and Jaish-e-Muhammed (Army of Mohammed), that are listed by Washington as

terrorist organizations and could pose a threat to US forces. The largest Pakistani party fighting in Kashmir, Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure), is on the US terrorist watch list. All these groups have received tacit state support in the past, stopping their activities will be a major problem for Musharraf.

If Musharraf decides to fall in line with US policy, he will receive widespread support from the majority of Pakistanis—especially the urban, educated middle class—who are tired of the country's state economic crisis and the chronic lawlessness largely caused by Islamic extremists, and who are concerned about the rapid "Talibanisation" of Pakistani society. In early September neo-Taliban Pakistani groups in the Northwest

in the south and east of Afghanistan, which is the Taliban heartland.

There is already growing US and international support for the Loya Jirga (tribal council) peace process in Afghanistan, headed by former King Zahir Shah, now in exile in Rome. The LJ process is almost certain to become the main political alternative for Afghanistan and will probably be backed in coming months by the United States and NATO. Pakistan does not support the LJ and would insist to the United States that Islamabad continue to have a major say in the formation of any future government in Kabul. If Pakistan is fully on board with Washington, Islamabad will be able to influence the outcome of the US attack and may retain influence in determining the future Afghan government. If it balks, Washington is unlikely to listen to Pakistani demands.

Musharraf is between a rock and a hard place, and the way he goes could determine the future viability of the Pakistani state. This is a moment of reckoning for Pakistan. It has to decide whether it wants to be part of the international community or go it alone, at the risk of turning into a pariah nation and possibly even state collapse. (The Nation)

(Ahmed Rashid is the author of *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia, Yale*.)



Approximately 3,000-4,000 Pakistani Islamic militants are fighting with the Taliban in their offensive against the anti-Taliban alliance. Thousands of Pakistani and Kashmiri militants also train in Afghanistan for the war in Kashmir. Pakistan's knowledge of the Taliban's military machine, storage facilities, supply lines and leadership hierarchy is total.

Pakistan also has the most comprehensive information about the role of foreign militants, their bases and their numbers. The United States is now asking the ISI to turn over all this information to the CIA.

If the army decides to commit fully to Washington, Musharraf will have to do even more. He will have to

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Taliban, talks and political change

Editorial in Kantipur, 24 September

The Maoists have announced the start of a "Nava Kranti," or New Revolution. They have been extorting money from common people and they advocate a dress code for women, they have even taken to tearing the clothes off women that do not comply. The Maoist revolution's political philosophy revolves around bringing about fundamental changes in society. They realised that the other political parties just paid lip service to these issues but after seeing their ways now they decided to start challenging the Maoists and disobeying their directives. Terror, anti-nationalism and character assassination have become the hallmarks of their revolution. This all shows that the lower cadre of the Maoist organisation is out of the control of their leaders.

If that happens, what will be able to bring about the fundamental social changes they aim for? Unless the Maoists change their ways, the very masses that have been supporting them until now will revolt. If the Maoists are satisfied with that, then there is nothing more to say. But if they are really interested in bringing about changes in society, they will have to come to the negotiating table, and have to be very patient and understanding...

The best thing about the present parliamentary system is that the likes of Devendra Parijati can shout and can say that the system gives them 'the right to hold a mass meeting on 21 September' (a quote from the student leader). It is a different matter that the Maoists want to enforce a system which gives them the right to forcefully arrest newspaper reporters for no reason...

People who have met Prachanda are full of praise for him. I, too, have seen Babu one time or the other. I never had any doubts about his commitment towards the nation and the people. Since these two men are sincere, I request them to find a way out of this mess. I request them to help in the construction of a new Nepal, and to bring peace. If they do not want this, there is a way of terror and oppression, making way for foreign forces entering our country. Let us not fool ourselves into thinking that a foreign army will enter our country from one side only, they will enter from all directions. Lebanon is a prime example of this. Once it was a very peaceful and quiet country. Then the Israelis entered and ruled for some time. After them it was the turn of the Syrians. The losers were always the Lebanese. Do we want to be another Lebanon?

Before destroying the statues, the Maoists had said that prayers were nothing but superstition and they would stop prayers at that temple. This happened on 19 September. The next day the Maoists disrupted Sanskrit classes at an ashram in Achham and forced the principal of the school to issue transfer certificates to 20 students so that they could attend another school nearby. They then closed down the ashram. After this they manhandled the students and cut off their sacred threads and the tupa (tuft of hair on the heads of Bahuns). Everyone has the right to raise questions concerning religion and education, but no one has the right to impose their beliefs on some one else. Not even the Maoists. After destroying the education sector, they have now turned their gaze on religion and temples. The people will definitely protest, and the administration must immediately take steps to halt them. If the Maoists continue with such behaviour, we can be sure this will be the beginning of their end. You can use hoodlums to spread terror in society but they cannot bring about political, social or economic changes...

It is time we thought seriously.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

My name doesn't count in the country at present. It only counts in the national census, it doesn't count anywhere else.

Former RPP leader Rajeswar Devkota in *Jana Aastha Sapthahik*, 26 September 2001.



Government Maoist Peace Talks

Time to think

Nepal, 17 September-1 October
- Vijay Kumar

Comrade Prachanda and Dr Bhutani have to understand one thing: there are a lot of people who support them and are sympathetic to their struggle, but the people are also scared of them. The issues that the Maoists have raised have won support of the masses. People have contributed voluntarily to the Maoist cause, and now they are forcefully asked for donations. This is a big mistake. They will lose the trust of the people. Then they will be left with only their guns and their policy of extortion.

If that happens, what will be able to bring about the fundamental social changes they aim for? Unless the Maoists change their ways, the very masses that have been supporting them until now will revolt. If the Maoists are satisfied with that, then there is nothing more to say. But if they are really interested in bringing about changes in society, they will have to come to the negotiating table, and have to be very patient and understanding...

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People who have met Prachanda are full of praise for him. I, too, have seen Babu one time or the other. I never had any doubts about his commitment towards the nation and the people. Since these two men are sincere, I request them to find a way out of this mess. I request them to help in the construction of a new Nepal, and to bring peace. If they do not want this, there is a way of terror and oppression, making way for foreign forces entering our country. Let us not fool ourselves into thinking that a foreign army will enter our country from one side only, they will enter from all directions. Lebanon is a prime example of this. Once it was a very peaceful and quiet country. Then the Israelis entered and ruled for some time. After them it was the turn of the Syrians. The losers were always the Lebanese. Do we want to be another Lebanon?

It is time we thought seriously.

If we do not, we are in for big trouble. There will be neither a republic nor a constitutional monarchy. Because Nepal will cease to exist.

Kolkata Maoists
Jana Aastha, 19 September

Until now everyone suspected that the Maoists were being supported militarily and financially by India. Now the Anti-Terrorist Cell (ATC) of the police has presented the Home Ministry a secret report which clearly says that the allegations are true. According to the report, an ATC team went to Kolkata some time ago to arrest top Maoist leaders. The team left for Kolkata shortly after receiving reports that the senior leaders had rented two floors in a high rise in Kolkata. The team reported information to the Indian police and asked them to help. The Indian police, far from helping them, refused to have anything to do with them. The ATC team returned empty-handed. You have to keep in mind that time and again the Indian police, without even requesting the Nepali police, have entered Nepal and arrested people.

On his return, the leader of the ATC team Superintendent of Police Surendra Shah wrote clearly in his report to the Home Ministry that his group was unsuccessful because the Indian forces refused to help. It is surprising that the ATC team, which has been successful in nabbing some top Maoist leaders in the past, was unsuccessful this time... The report further states that the recent clashes between the Maoists and villagers in Parsa, took place in India's borders.

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Takes two to talk

Sapthahik Bimansa, 21 September

Excerpts from an interview with Krishna Bahadur Mahara

Can your demands—an interim government, a new constituent assembly and an institutionalised republic—be achieved through dialogue?

Many people decide whether our aims can be reached through dialogue.

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Some say that this change requires a force beyond the scope of the government. But we feel that the government is the main player in the present political process, under the present constitution. Before any dialogue the government calls for a meeting of all parties and tries to put forward its own conclusion reached there. Its responsibility is to gather all these forces and come to some understanding. It must have the will to bring the issues on which all agree to the table. I feel it is possible to get what we want through dialogue.

Each of your demands are related to the other. They have not been presented as independent demands...

They are definitely interdependent. Our main demand is the establishment of an institutionalised republic. For this to happen, the present constitution must be scrapped and a new constitution be put in its place. The people must have the right to decide this. An interim government must be formed in order to formulate a new constitution. The new constitution is needed to establish a republic. So all demands are related.

What do you mean by an institutionalised republic?

A republic has already been formed, informally, in this country. The 1 June incident has proved that the monarchy is totally irrelevant in today's context. It was something that was there in the past, today people want a republic. Therefore, to fulfil their aspirations, we have to work for a new constitution. The new constitution must help in institutionalising the republic.

If the constituent assembly makes a decision unfavourable to you, what will you do?

We cannot give a definite answer now. Two rounds of talks are already over, what is your opinion about talking?

We still want to resolve the problem through dialogue. The government does not change in behaviour, which means it should stop arresting our cadres, enforcing curfews, etc. None of that will help the dialogue, it will only hinder the process. If they do that, we will also have to rethink our position on dialogue.

Corrupt minister

Deshantar Sapthahik, 20 September

Bal Bahadur KC is the minister for Civil Aviation. A couple of days ago, he called all the high-ranking officials of the Royal Nepal Airline Corporation to his office and

threatened them: "All seven RNAC

Twins Otters should start operating before Diwali. If this does not happen, I am going to take action against the concerned heads of the department. This is a warning," he said. The engineers, pilots and other staff of the organisation thought that the minister was talking business. Four small aircraft of RNAC are nearly always grounded because of technical reasons. But the RNAC department chiefs were shocked by the minister's utterances. They had reason to be scared. Five years ago, when KC was just a member of parliament, he beat up an RNAC department chief for a minor reason. The chiefs still remember that.

Minister KC's outbursts are not just limited to the RNAC. Some days ago, KC and eight other MPs showed up at the airport. He asked the authorities which aircraft was available. Someone told him the Skyline craft had not flights. He called a Skyline official and asked that his team and he be flown immediately to Lukla. The official spoke to his director, the director could not refuse the minister in the plane flew to Lukla. The minister then asked the pilot to wait in Lukla for a few hours, after that the plane flew again with the minister and his entourage, this time for Phaplu. The pilot was then told to return to Kathmandu, but had to fly back to Phaplu the next day to pick up the minister and his cronies.

That caused all Skyline flights to be cancelled for two days. According to a Skyline official, the company is already in the red and that particular day's activities certainly did not help. The minister is also known for bullying helicopter companies too. Last week, he took a helicopter belonging to a private company and flew with 22 people to Manasluwar. He paid nothing for this trip. A government directive says that cargo-carrying helicopters are not allowed to carry people—but who will tell the minister? On his way back from Manasluwar, KC stopped at Humla, inaugurated a tourist project there, and then flew to Pokhara. His father had accompanied him on the Manasluwar trip.

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EXHIBITION

□ **In Search of Shangi La** Photos by Nepali and European photographers. Until 12 October, 10am-6pm, National Art Council, Babermahal. Organised BY the Nepal Photographic Society and Eco Himal.

□ **Paintings and sculptures** by Batsa Gopal Vaidya and Shashi Shah. 14 September-17 October, 11am-6pm. Siddhartha Art Gallery, Baber Mahal Residency. 411122

□ **Looking for something different?** Dwarika's in-house craft workshop produces all furniture, restoration, brick work. Daily 10am-4pm, Dwarika's Hotel. 479488

MUSIC

□ **Red Sky Walkers at the Rox** Abhyaya and Dev live, and DJ Neil. Happy hour 6pm-9pm. The Rox, Hyatt Regency. 491234

□ **Weekends at The Jazz Bar** Jazz Commission on Thursdays, Chris Masand's Latin band on Fridays and on Saturdays An Fainne. 7pm onwards. Shangi-La Hotel.

□ **Live Acoustic Music** Dinesh Rai and Deshpande every Friday at the Himaliste Café. 9pm 491234

□ **Cadenza** Saturday evening live jazz at Upstairs, Lazimpat. 7.30pm-10pm. Rs 200

EVENTS

□ **Renowned philosopher Richard Rorty speaks** on "The American Left and its View of the World." Friday, 28 September, 5.30pm, Baggikhana, Patan Dhoka. Limited seating, for reservations ring Himal Association 542544.

□ **Classical music** Every full moon at the Kirtashwet temple, Gaughat, Chashu. Next on 7 October, 4pm. Organised by the Shree Kirtashwet Sansangshram.

□ **Action Asia Himalayan Mountain Bike Races** Biking event with categories for everyone with cash prizes, trophies and \$1,950 in bikes to be won. Three races on 10, 17, 24 November. For details, 437437 or www.bikingnepal.com. Himalayan Mountain Bikes, Thamel.

□ **Fourth Month Festival** Unlimited helpings from 18-20 kinds of momos with live music. Momo-making, eating contests, door prizes. Rs 350 over 45" includes complementary beer. Rs 200 under 46", with complementary coke or ice cream.

EATING OUT

□ **Exploration Revisited** On Vasco da Gama's food trail. The Fun Café, Radisson Hotel, 7pm-10.30pm, 26 September to 3 October. 411818.

□ **Patan Museum Café** Mixed menu, garden seating. Lunch only, 11am-2pm. 25 percent off with Summit Card. 526271

□ **Live at Rum Doodle** Music Friday and Tuesday nights. 40,000 1/2 ft Bar, Rum Doodle. 414336

□ **Live at Dwarika's** Krishnarjan Nepali ceremonial four-course lunch, \$13, daily from noon. Friday Night Sekewa (BBQ) now with fusion music by Himalayan Feelings. Rs699 per head, Rs1299 per couple. Three-course course set lunches daily at Toran Garden Restaurant, \$11. All prices net. 479488

□ **Boudhanath full moon experience** Special menu, ice-cream, soft guitar at the Stupa View Restaurant, directly at the stupa. 2 October, 5pm onwards. 480262

□ **Saturday lunch** at Restaurant Kantipur, Club Himalaya, Nagarkot. BBQ buffet Rs 500 per head. 410432, 414432

□ **Dine with the birds and butterflies** Chef Sher Shing BBO, kababs, landoos, other traditional cuisine. Farm House Café overlooking Shivapuri Reserve. Park Village Resort, Boudhanathika.

□ **La Son Restaurant and Vinotheque** Lunch, tea and dinner with European and American food, fine wines. Pulchowk. 532390

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□ **Wet and Wild Summer Swimming** and buffet lunch. Saturday and Sunday at Godavari Village Resort. Adults Rs 600, children Rs 300. Taxes extra. 560675, 560775

□ **July steaks, chilled beer** Mexican cuisine, great breakfasts, sports bar. All day long live band Wednesday, Sunday evenings 6.30-10.00. K-tool Beer & Steakhouse, Thamel. 433043, 410966

□ **Dinner and concert** Dine with Nepali singers Sapna Shree Pariyar and Suresh Manandhar. 8pm-11pm, except Tuesdays. Far Pavilion, The Everest Hotel. 488100

□ **Saturdays at the Malla** Swimming and French chef's barbecue lunch. 11am-5pm. The Malla Hotel. 418365, 410966

□ **Splash Bar and Grill** New fifth-floor outlet with panoramic view of city and surrounding hills. Starting 28 September at the Radisson. 411818

OCTAWAYS

□ **September at Shangi-La** Swimming and lunch for Rs 600, earn Rs 300. For details call 412989

□ **Chico Chiso Hawana Summer B&B** package for Nepalis and expatriates. Rs 1,250 per head. Club Himalaya Nagarkot Resort. 410432, 414432

□ **Nagarkot Escape** Weekends in cottages, views of the Himalayas, valleys and forests. Special rates for Nepalis and resident expatriates. Hotel Keyman Chautari. keyman@wlink.com.np 436850

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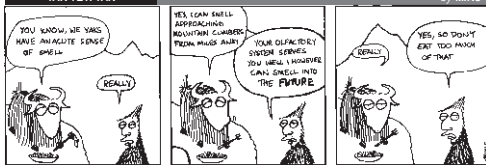
by NGAMINDRA DAHAL

There is an interesting pattern of post-monsoon circulation in the Himalaya. Three low pressure zones, one in northwest India, another in central India and a third in southeast Tibet drew a band of clouds into the central Himalaya from the Bay of Bengal. Although it brought cloud cover, the system failed to bring any of the expected rain we predicted last week. So, next week look for more of the same: low ground-hugging clouds on the valley floor in the mornings, hot and humid days and glorious evenings punctuated by isolated brief showers with fresh westers. Characteristic pre-Dasain weather.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

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BOOKWORM



End of the Line: The Story of the Killing of the Royals in Nepal Neelish Mishra Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2001 Rs 320

AP correspondent Mishra pieces together the sometimes conflicting reports of what happened on the night of 1 June through extensive interviews, and contemplates its larger national significance.

'Kay Gardekop?': The Royal Massacre in Nepal Prakash A Raj Rupa and Co, New Delhi, 2001 Rs 200

Prakash Raj explores what is believed to have happened on 1 June and its repercussions. This volume, printed on art paper, is rich in photographs.

Courtesy Mandala Book Point, Kantipath, 227711, mandala@csl.com.np

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KUNDA DIXIT

Ever since moving film made it possible for celluloid to show motion for the first time, artists started using the novel medium for expression. In the beginning there was the fascination with the fluid movement, but it was expensive business. The documentary inevitably became the poor cousin of the budding movie industry. In the 1920s, the documentary had to depend on the propaganda budgets of governments, opposition parties, charitable organisations.

One of the most striking early examples of government involvement in documentary film production is the world's second plunged into war. The documentary became a part of the war effort. The Office of War Information in the United States drafted directors and cameramen to churn out upbeat documentaries on what the boys were up to on the front. The *Memphis Belle* and frontline footage from the Pacific brought the sacrifice and bravery of the troops to cinema houses throughout the country.

After World War II, Hollywood was into bigger things and the documentary fell from favour. There

Triumph of the documentary

The history of the fascination for fluid film from Leni Riefenstahl (left) to Frank Capra (right).

undoubtedly Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* Where else but in Nazi Germany could an entire city have been mobilised just for the sake of a documentary? Hundreds of cameras recorded Hitler's descent through the clouds to his coronation in an ideal medium of delivery but it was once more side-stepped. Just like Hollywood, television stations did not seem to want to have anything to do with controversy. Documentary films were in fact all about controversial commentaries on prevailing reality.

It was with the Six that news shows on CBS that the documentary in America finally got its chance. But even here, documentary filmmakers found it difficult to reconcile themselves to pressures from "above" to either tone down their comment or to drop some subjects altogether.

Scaling down of the camera equipment to take 16mm film and the gradual miniaturisation of the sound equipment with the magnetic

autotape brought changes. As the equipment got less obtrusive and more portable, film producers could now venture into hitherto uncharted territory. As a direct legacy of the *cinema verité* movement in Europe, the television documentary, now became mobile. The advent of video and digital equipment advanced the genre of *verité* now visible in documentaries, sport news footage, and yes, MTV.

Verité allowed television makers like Bob Drew and Richard Leacock, and shows like ABC's *Cheep* to present films that made viewers feel they were there. We're all used to it now, but when it first came out, there was nothing like it. But in the obsession with actuality, many filmmakers influenced by Drew forgot the true rule of the documentary—to make a social comment and have a voice of its own. Cinema *verité* became an end in itself.

Just because a documentary "is

there" it does not mean it shows the truth. Editing can show opposite views using same visuals. Frank Capra used Riefenstahl's footage of Hitler in *Why We Fight*. While Hitler's fiery oratory was used powerfully by Riefenstahl to show his forceful personality, leadership and charisma, Capra used the same footage to expose Hitler as a ruthless demagogue. Both were making propaganda films.

Editing films never stopped being an issue. Critics of early television documentaries were against the powerful manner in which the juxtaposition of events could exaggerate or warp facts. When the American Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly duo started to take sides on issues and used editing techniques to effectively drive home their point, critics cried "bias". They felt television was actually making a documentary film editors blot out that truth with selected splicing. In their competitive zeal for prime-time news, the networks will focus on a 20-

second scuffle during a two-hour demonstration that passed peacefully. The blood-stricken face of a lone victim can fill a 16" screen in the living room. And now with the time allotted on documentaries becoming increasingly constricted, producers have been forced to edit out more and more. Truth is the first casualty.

The documentary still remains a powerful medium for comment on social issues, and intelligent editors can use it to expose injustice. Documentary production costs have now plummeted, just about anyone can have a digital camera and edit film on computer. □



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The people of United States of America thank the people of Nepal for your kind words, your prayers, your friendship, and your offers of assistance during this period of profound national and international tragedy.

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With warmest regards,
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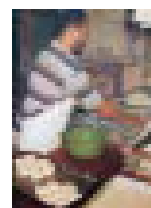
Slice of heaven

Words cannot adequately describe the joys of a Hermann's bakery product.

ALOK TUMBAHANGPHEY

Five minutes down the road opposite Hotel Narayani is a small bakery. But if your nose is functioning, you don't need directions. Walk down that road anytime starting 7am, and you will be filled by the most delicious, enticing fragrance—fresh baked bread, buns, cakes, pastries and cookies. For 23 years now this little bakery, Hermann's to those in the know, has been serving the neighbourhood and is known as the finest place for the perfect German bakery products.

German, we say. Yup, the sign says Hermann Hölmes Bäckerei und Konditorei. But don't respect a haughty German baker. This has been, from the start, an all-Nepali family venture. Ashok KC was a baker doing the rounds of different hotels in



Kathmandu in the mid-70's until he opened up his own little outlet in the very spot that it stands today. In 1978 Ashok decided to enhance his skills and went to Germany to train in the art of baking. Impressed by the emphasis on quality Ashok came back

to Nepal determined to produce only the best, never compromising on quality. He decided to name his bakery after his boss in Bremen. And so a Kathmandu legend was born: Hermann Hölmes bakery and confectioners. After that, there was no stopping Ashok. "In the old days it was all done by hand and baked in wood fire ovens. Today everything is modern. We have come a long way," says Nirmal, Ashok's oldest son, who is looking forward to celebrating the family business' 25th anniversary in 2003.

Hermann's isn't only about buttery cookies and scrumptiously chewy wholemeal bread. This is a small-enterprise with a conscience. In order to cut down on its use of plastic, Hermann's started giving its regular customer free cloth bags with the

bakery's logo. Unfortunately, says Kamal, another brother, often Nepalis asked for a new bag every time they came, because they found it a hassle to carry the old one around. So now Hermann's sells the bag for Rs 45, and donates 40 percent of the sale price to a disabled children's fund. They also plan to introduce sturdy paper bags.

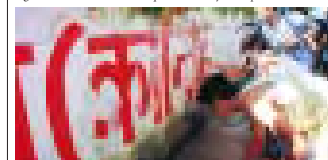
Ashok retired six years ago, and now his three sons Nirmal, Kamal, and Bimal run the show with a little help from their mother, Ram Maya, who is always on hand to greet customers in the morning. Besides learning from their father, the three brothers have also received training at the Hotel Management and Tourism Training Centre. Each has his own task—Nirmal oversees a lot, but his true passion is white bread and the perfect little cupcakes younger Hermann's customer's love. Kamal handles the pastry department while Bimal, the youngest, makes the puffs—including the chicken puff that has been the downfall of many who work out at the gym next door. And from time to time the founder still pops in to check on quality. Nirmal and his brothers are happy that more Nepalis are eating healthy, wholegrain bread, but Nirmal stresses: "The main thing is the satisfaction you get out of it."

Between the family and nine apprentices and helpers, this little shop makes a lot of people happy—and in the process, takes in more everyday than even a good restaurant. The bakery starts selling at 7am, and by mid-afternoon most of the bread, rolls, buns and pies are gone. "But it is only 4 o'clock," we overheard one customer lamenting, because the brown bread she came for was all gone. There's always tomorrow, as Hermann's devoted fans know.

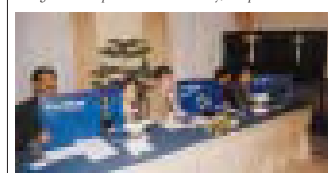
HAPPENINGS



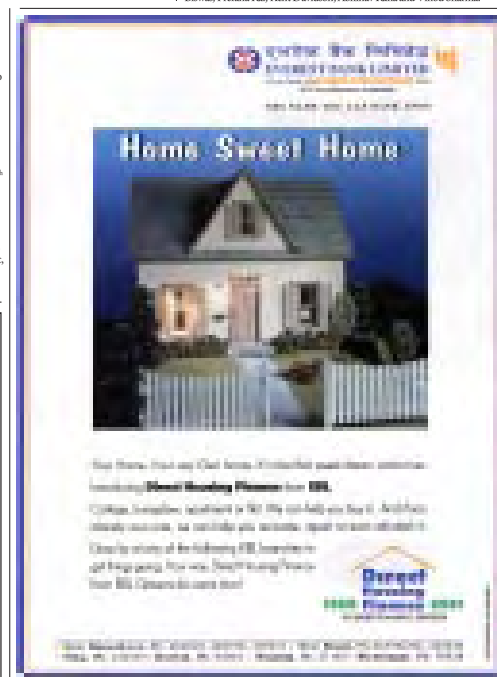
REPUBLICANS ON DURBAR SQUARE: Lila Mani Pokhrel of the United Peoples' Front addressing a rally organised by Maoist-affiliated organisations on Patan Durbar Square on Sunday, 23 September.



NOT REVOLUTIONARY: Students from Kathmandu colleges painting over revolutionary republican slogans outside Tri Chandra Campus with messages like "Give peace a chance" on Saturday, 22 September.



RADKAT IN MANDU: Radisson Hotel launches its discount card at a function on Wednesday, 19 September. Seen here are (l to r) Nirmalya Biswas, Premna Rai, Kent Davidson, Abhinav Rana and Vinod Sharma.





Under My Hat

by Kunda Dixit

Kissing assets of arsonists

The Buddies have been getting some bad press of late for allegedly—according to some hitherto independently unconfirmed reports yet to be verified in some sections of the media—persuading fellow-Nepalis to spontaneously part with their cash out of their own free will. Let me hasten to add that these are only very preliminary reports that have not, repeat not, been cross-checked for their veracity, if any. These donations could be voluntary (and we have no reason to believe they are not) and if so, they must be part of the instructions Mr Zedong left for his proteges in his last will and testament ("Go forth and kiss their assets, but give me my cut"). However, at this present point in time, what we want to ask is this: how is this any different than what our own government and the bureaucracy have been doing since time in memorial?

There is actually nothing new in all the give-and-take that is going on in the name of rebellion in broad daylight and in full view of the law enforcement agencies all over Nepal, even as we speak. In fact, extortion has been a national revenue-generation technique in this country ever since Manjushree was told he could not slash Chobhar Hill in two unless he first paid a royalty of \$3,000 (at the prevalent Rasta Bank exchange rate) with a \$50 pocket money to uncorrupted authorities, and another \$300 Mountain Slashing Permit from the Department of Dollars and Cents valid for the Autumn Season and only on hills up to an elevation of 6,000 ft. Good thing Manjushree had brought along plenty of small dollar bills for just such a contingency, otherwise the Ministry of Irrigation and Physical Inactivity in Singha Durbar would still be submerged under a picturesque lake.

Squeezing fellow citizens dry is a quaint Nepali custom

that has been passed down from one generation of Nepalis to the next, right up to the present day female friskers at the Departure Lounge of the Tribhuvan International Airport. It works on the very simple socialist principle of taking from everyone according to her ability and giving to anyone according to his or her greed. What this does is it levels the playing field, spreads the wealth around and enables us, as a nation in the throes of development, to make rapid advances towards utopia.

In this respect we are already way ahead of countries in the region, having slapped a fee on just about everything that a fee can be slapped on. But there is no room for complacency. We have to ask ourselves: is there a Durbar Square still untaxed, a peak still permit-less, a tourist still ungouged? The long and short answer to these questions is you bet.

Clinging revenue-generation opportunities lie un tapped right under the noses of higher-up authorities, leading to colossal losses to the national exchequer. Here are some new fees and royalties we can start changing right away to increase our per capita GNP:

1. Satellite overly rights. It has come to our notice that an Indium communications satellite in low-earth orbit goes over Nepal every 30 minutes totally free of cost. Let's change Nepal for every pass over Nepali air space.
2. Anon Fee of Rs1,000 (+10% VAT) for every school bus allegedly set on fire, Rs500 for every motorcycle reportedly abducted, and Rs250 for every mobile ostensibly kidnapped. To be paid by purported perpetrators to the Dept of Taxonomy every quarter.
3. Global tender for bids (in triplicate with earnest money in sealed envelope) to dam Chobhar Gorge so Kathmandu Valley will be a picturesque lake again.



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