

REVIEW ARTICLE

Martyrs for Democracy :

A Review of Recent Kathmandu Publications

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Ātithāśik Krāntikāri: Jan Āndolan. Rameśa Guptā, Kathmandu: Dipak Kumar Rauniyar, 2047 V.S. 53 pp., illus. Rs. 5.

Dawn of Democracy: People's Power in Nepal/Prajātantrako Uday: Nepālmā Jan Ubhār. FOPHUR (Eds.). Kathmandu: FOPHUR (Forum for the Protection of Human Rights), 1990. Preface from Ganesh Man Singh and Sahana Pradhan. 128 pp., illus., n.p.l.

Jan-Āndolan ra Śahīdharu. Nārāyan Praśād Śivākoṭī. Kathmandu: Bhisma Kadariya, 2047 V.S. 162 pp., illus. Rs. 65.

Nepal: Struggle for Democracy. Thomas Bonk (Ed.). Bangkok: the author, 1991. 112 pp., illus., n.p.l.

Rāṣṭriya Janāndolan: Vivaraṇ ra Viśle-ṣan. Dipakrāj Pant, Cetamān Budthāpā and Yuvrāj Luimtel (Eds.). Kathmandu: Dipakraj Pant, 2047 V.S. 77 pp. Rs. 15.

Untitled video of police action at Indra Chowk on 7th Phalgun 2046.
Recorder unknown.

The books, booklets and video-tape under review belong to a genre that might best be called witness literature: witness in the sense that they have been written or recorded by those who wit-

nessed the events in Spring, 1990 leading to the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal. No doubt, scholarly books and political memoirs will be written in years to come that will recount these events in greater detail, and with the passage of time the volumes under review will take on an ephemeral character, as they appear caught up in the very events they portray. Yet scholarly books and memoirs cannot substitute for these slim volumes and the fading copy of a copy of a video-tape, for witness literature works its effect upon the reader differently. Its purpose is to tell and show what has been heard and seen, to make witnesses of us all lest one forget. Here remembering serves not only to order the past, but also to immortalize the 'martyrs for democracy' and to protect what they have achieved by sacrifice.

The theme of witness pervades the political language of the popular movement, as recorded in the Nepalese texts under review; in particular, the *topoi* of seeing and hearing in which conventional political rhetoric is woven seamlessly into astute political practice. Those active in the popular movement continually accused the Panchas of having closed their eyes to the suffering of ordinary citizens. Justice in this sense requires vision, the vision of political leaders to establish a just order of society. Here the thirty years of *pañcāyat* democracy are referred to as a period of darkness, from out of whose shadow the people have only now just emerged

(hence the lantern procession in broad daylight by Congress activists in Biratnagar). Vision is also knowledge. To see is to know; and the opposite of knowledge is confusion, the confusion of the blindman. Gupta's rendering of house arrest, for example, is *najar band*. Just before the start of the movement the government 'shut the eyes' of the Congress leaders so that they would not know what was happening. Meanwhile the people also suffered temporary blindness as the Panchas threw dust in their eyes in order to confuse them about political realities. Vision also entails testimony, as in the organization of vigils by the medical staff at Bir Hospital. In these forms and consequences of vision figure also the ones that a European would recognize, such as the sending of human rights 'observers' to Nepal as the popular movement gained strength, provoking its repression by the state. The name of the American-based human rights organization 'Asia Watch' is in this sense appropriate.

Voice is the other theme, as in the complaint of K P Bhattarai, President of the Congress Party and Prime Minister of the Interim-Government, that under the *pañcāyat* system the people's mouths had been shut or in opposition spokesmen going on procession in Kathmandu and Biratnagar with gagged mouths. Voice here does not mean simply talking, as the following doggerel heard in private homes in Nepal during the 1980s makes clear: "Pasupatinath listens but does not speak; the King speaks but does not listen". Voice, like vision, expresses publicly the truth of experience. It reveals the inner to the outer. And, like the definition of sound in physics, it must be heard to exist. The literature under review also gives voice to these experiences, which we -- as

readers -- help bring into existence. Indeed, the ambiguous relation between spokesman and listener is demonstrated by the documents under review. The authors range from actors in the drama (Gupta, Sivakoti) to listeners who -- as the political events spread throughout all of society -- found themselves caught up in events and transformed by them into actors (Pant, Budthapa and Luimtel) to foreign observers of human rights violations, including a Frankfurt doctoral student (Bonk) who for several days in early April, 1990 lived in the "free state of Patan" and produced a photographic chronicle so that persons outside Nepal might also observe.

The people's movement (*jan āndolan*) dates from 1960 when King Mahendra forbid the activities of political parties, abolished parliament and took the steps that led to the establishment of *pañcāyat* democracy in 1962. From that moment on both the king and the underground parties spoke in the name of the people. Their vision of public life, however, was different.

Perhaps the memory of the success of armed struggle in the overthrow of the Ranas in the winter of 1949-1950 led party leaders to attempt to overthrow the state by acts of terrorism and violence, but by the mid-1970s the strategy had changed. Opposition leaders returned from exile to create and extend local organizations that did not officially exist. Increasing numbers of citizens led a double life: outwardly observing the laws and constraints of *pañcāyat* democracy, inwardly opposing the constitution or treating the Panchas with cynicism. As strategies periodically changed and political hopes were raised, the people's movement renewed its purpose and committed itself to further

campaigns to restore multi-party democracy. Late winter, 1990, therefore, was not so much the start of the movement, as its culmination.

The renewal of purpose began in 1989, as Congress leaders toured the country, sounding out local opinion on the sustainability of political action. Nepal's political weakness and economic vulnerability, demonstrated during the protracted trade dispute with India, coupled with increasing cynicism about the quality of leadership in *pañcāyat* democracy, encouraged the Nepali Congress Party to see the winter of 1989-1990 as a propitious moment for renewal. Meanwhile most of the leftist parties agreed to unite in a single Front and to combine forces with Congress in their common goal to shift the powers of state from the palace to parliament. Plans for the movement were announced at a meeting of the Congress Party (18.-20.1.1990), held at the private residence of Ganesa Man Sinha in Kathmandu, to which not only party workers but also the leader of a delegation of Indian MPs, Chandra Shekhar, attended. The conference was recorded on video, and copies dispatched throughout the country. The making of common purpose by all opposition parties encouraged them to think that in 1990 the movement would achieve its aim.

Prime Minister Marich Man Singh Shrestha immediately denounced the irresponsibility of Congress leaders promoting democracy 'for private motives' and the treachery of their soliciting support from the Indian government. For the Panchas the movement for the restoration of multi-party democracy was nothing other than an attack on Nepalese sovereignty, the monarchy and the nation (*rāṣṭravirodhī, rāṣṭraghātī*). The people were accordingly called

upon "to counter the evil activities aimed at disrupting the unparalleled relations between the Crown and the people of Nepal and attacking the party-less democratic *pañcāyat* system, which has fulfilled the needs of the nation and has already been endorsed by the people (Gorkhapatra 29.01.90). On the 15th Magh 2046 (28.1.1990) popular rallies were held throughout the Kingdom in support of the *pañcāyat* system. Gupta refers to this as political theatre and notes that the approximately 25,000 persons who demonstrated in support of the *pañcāyat* system on the 15th Magh were villagers from outside Kathmandu who had been offered by the Government a free trip to Kathmandu for the day.

The renewal of the movement for the restoration of multi-party democracy began with the theme of contested histories. The auspicious day chosen for the start of action was the 7th Phalgun (18.2.90), the day on which the Panchas celebrated King Tribhuvan's birth and his bestowal of democracy after the overthrow of the Ranas. On the 7th the Panchas gathered behind the state carriage, in which was propped a picture of Tribhuvan shaded by his royal parasol, and made their way in procession to the parade ground (Tundikhel) where they aimed to hold a general assembly praising the combined work of the monarchy and the *pañcāyat* system. For the underground parties the promise of Tribhuvan had been broken. He had been entrusted to usher in parliamentary democracy during the period of interim government in the 1950s, but his son Mahendra had violated that trust by banning political parties. The aim of the opposition parties was to celebrate this day as originally intended: the procession of political parties, with

unfurled banners converging on the parade ground, followed by an open discussion of political opinion at *Khulā Mañc*, the "open forum" originally built for that purpose. With the two processions converging at the same place, the two different orderings of the past came into conflict. Only the procession that succeeded in reaching its destination could claim to be the heirs of democracy.

The police set about suppressing the movement by removing its vision and voice: by placing the Congress leaders under house arrest and the United Left Front under detention, arresting countless political workers and confiscating certain opposition newspapers. Gupta lists the banned papers. Meanwhile the Government went ahead with its own public ritual. As in the past, all officials were called upon -- at the risk of their jobs -- to participate in the procession of Panchas. At the same time riot police, clad in protective jackets and armed with staffs and shields, tried to prevent the *mise en scène* of the opposition programme. Both government and opposition aimed to hold mass meetings at Tundikhel, and in the event neither did. The opposition groups, unfurled their forbidden political banners -- the four stars of the Nepali Congress and the hammer and sickle of the ULF -- marched in the direction of the Parade Ground, but were rounded up on the way and carted off to prison by the police. The ULF leader Man Mohan Adhikari managed to reach the parade ground from New Road, but his forum was encircled by the police and also carted off. Nonetheless popular resistance was such that the Panchas were also prevented from going in procession from the Stadium to the parade ground. The FOPHUR chronicle has a photograph of palanquin-bearers, carrying a picture

of Tribhuvan, being forced off the road by stone-throwing demonstrators.

The contest of histories on the first day in Kathmandu was a stand-off, yet the effect of the spectacle was to reveal the powerlessness of the state. This comes through especially in the *samij-dat* video of events at Indra Chowk, of which the Heidelberg copy, is but a faint, colour de-natured impression. In the sequences when the deteriorating tape no longer draws attention to itself by its scratchy flashes of light, a picture emerges of riot police and demonstrators playing cat-and-mouse at Indra Chowk with -- in the background -- the laughter of people watching the display of state futility from their rooftops. The policemen disappear down one alley way in pursuit of demonstrators only to return exhausted to the intersection and to charge haplessly off in another direction. The Bagmati Zonal Commissioner makes an appearance to supervise operations, but he is also rapidly transformed from a symbol of authority to one of futility. Violence ceased to be a means of state control.

For the second day of the movement a general strike (*band*) was planned. A general strike does not mean laying down tools so much as the cessation of public life. No one reports for work. Shops close. Public transport is not used, and the streets remain empty. The resolve of the opposition had been sharpened not only by the intractability of the King, as revealed in his message to the nation on Democracy Day, but also by news of the first deaths in clashes with police in Chitwan. The resolve of the government had also stiffened as they forced shopkeepers in Bhaktapur to open their shops. The altercations with police led to firings in which five townsmen lost their lives. On the fol-

lowing day in the village of Jadukuha (Dhanusa District) at least five more persons died, joining the victims in Bhaktapur and Chitwan in martyrdom. In Sivakoti's book the chronology of the movement is constantly broken by accounts of the lives of the martyrs (*śahīd*). Here he writes about one of them (p. 33).

Martyr Janki Devi Yadav

"In the history of Nepal the oldest person to become a martyr in the course of the people's movement was the 61 year old Janki Devi Yadav. Born in 1985 (1929 A.D.), the aged woman was killed by a bullet in broad daylight on the 9th Phalgun 2046 at Jadukuha near Janakpur. In the people's movement that began on the 7th Phalgun six women lost their priceless lives. Ten year old Rekha Khadka was the youngest, and amongst the hundreds of martyrs the oldest was Martyr Janki Devi Yadav.

Resident of Ward Nr. 9 in Jadukuha, Dhanusa District, Janki Devi was the wife of Sri Narayan Yadav. Her father was Suvai Yadav. Her mother's name is Ramsakhi Devi Yadav. Being an ordinary farmer by occupation, Janki Devi was compelled to spend her time providing for the daily needs of her family from the income of 15 *kaṭṭhā* of land. A bullet lodged in the left side of her stomach, and at that place she attained martyrdom. The police returned later to capture her corpse.

So one old woman in the people's movement for the restoration of democracy sacrificed her soul for the country's golden future. Her renunciation and sacrifice is a lasting lesson for all we Nepalese. We will always honour Janki Devi as an immortal martyr."

Janki Devi's death was investigated

by human rights organizations. Apparently police were searching for a local activist who was thought to be organizing a protest to be held later that day in Jadukuha. Their search was fruitless, but they did round up a few suspects in one household. Villagers arrived, arguing for the release of the suspects. The policemen were forced to leave empty-handed; but in departing, they turned and fired indiscriminately into the courtyard. Among the dead were three women, a fourteen year old boy and a 35 year old man.

Sivakoti's brief, and all too conventional hagiography, is short on details, but stresses a major theme in the rhetoric of the movement: that the victims of police firings were martyrs who had sacrificed their souls for democracy. In fact, many of those who died seem not to have been 'political activists' at all. They were people, who like everyone in Nepal, were caught up in events but who unfortunately found themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time. (One martyr mentioned by Sivakoti is 'Ricard Henari Jon Wiliyam', an Englishman caught up in police firing on Darbar Marg). The theme of sacrifice was critical, however, for the rhetorical construction of events. The Nepalese authored texts under review stress the idea that their countrymen offered their blood in sacrifice to the motherland for which democracy was received in return. By extension, even those citizens who donated blood so that doctors might save the lives of their fellow countrymen found their blood donation (*rakta dān*) transformed into sacrifice (*bali dān*). Sacrifice, of course, is a willed act. By making the victims of state oppression into martyrs, the movement appropriated not their deaths but the gesture of their dying

which symbolized the truth of the life that they had led. Dying, however, has nothing to do with death. Death, for Janki Devi, was senseless, and it probably remains so for her relatives as well. Her dying, however, extended its power over the living.

One of the most damning moral criticisms of a Hindu monarch is that he must kill his people, rather than protect them, in order to perpetuate his rule. The state did not want the inscription of injustice on the hundreds of bodies to be brought into public light. It became necessary, therefore, for the government to appropriate the bodies. Over and again Sivakoti and Gupta refer to the macabre police practice of capturing corpses. Relatives were thereby prevented from mourning the dead and healing family bonds. Meanwhile public expressions of mourning (*śok sabhā*), organized by spokesmen for the movement, were broken up by the police. Not all corpses, however, could be captured and hidden. The book produced by FOPHUR shows them. The photographs strip away the religious rhetoric, the social status, the person. They even strip away the truth in the sense that they remove the ideals to which the martyrs had been truthful, leaving them only as men and women, and perhaps something the lesser thereby. The reader must overcome something in himself to look at the violated bodies in the Nepalese edition (*Dawn of Democracy*). For fainter souls, there is the international edition (*Nepal: Struggle for Democracy*) in which the more revolting photographs have been withdrawn.

Despite -- and because of -- the early deaths, the movement for the restoration of multi-party democracy persisted with further demonstrations. The volumes under review vary on details,

but concur in their mention of the sending of prayers for the dead on Siva Ratri (23.2.90), the organization of public mourning for the martyrs, the observance of a Black Day (*kālo divas*) on the 14th Phalgun (25.2.90), the burning of straw effigies of *pañcāyat* leaders (9.3.90) -- interspersed by general strikes (2.3.90, 14.3.90) in which, as Gupta notes, the Government sent their henchmen to the bazaars, forcing merchants to keep their shops open, and ordering taxi and tempo drivers to keep on the road, after having given them 20 liters of free petrol. Meanwhile the professions were increasingly drawn into political action. Lawyers of the Nepal Bar Association struck on the 9th Phalgun (20.2.90) because of the arrest of around fifty of their members. Medical doctors protested on the 12th Phalgun (23.2.90) with a strike of two hours against police brutality and torture; similar warning strikes were repeated. University teachers refused to work on the 15th, and one day later office-workers organized "pen-down" strikes (*kalam band*). Political assemblies and discussions were organized at the University, the protocol of one of which (on 16.3.90) is printed in the volume edited by Pant, Budhapa and Luimtel. Four days later, on the 7th Chaitra, a great assembly of around 700 intellectuals -- comprising university lecturers, lawyers, engineers, doctors, and others -- was convened at the University Campus at Kirtipur, whereupon they were soon encircled by the police. In reply to the order to stop the meeting, participants observed a minute of silence -- before being carted off to jail in lorries.

Despite countless acts of solidarity, it remained until mid-March unclear whether the basis of the movement was broad enough to be successful or

whether it would be simply supported by students and the educated elite. In his speeches to the nation the king expressed clearly his intention to retain the *pañcāyat* system. Meanwhile the jails had long since filled to overflowing (with FOPHUR estimates of 5,000 in prison and 20,000 who had been in and out of temporary custody) so that government warehouses had to be brought into service as temporary prisons. Many intellectuals and nearly all political leaders had been arrested, and the campuses in Patan and Kathmandu were shut down.

The course of the movement began to change on the 16th Chaitra (29.3.90) as the opposition called for a blackout at 7 pm that evening in sign of solidarity. Small torch processions (*masāl julus*) took place along the narrow streets of the Newar bazaars -- despite the government ban on assembly. When the police arrived, the processions broke up and disappeared in different directions down the side alleys. On the 17th youths in Patan attacked the Pancayat office and the district court. In an attempt to protect public property the police fired into the crowd, killing at least two demonstrators. The following day the police made arbitrary house searches and shot again at demonstrators, some during the, by now, regular evening black-out. In response, the people of Patan put up barricades at the city gates to prevent police entry. Accordingly Patan was declared an autonomous state, outside the authority of the king. Right of assembly was proclaimed and politicians addressed the public to motivate them for further action. The FOPHUR chronicle shows a photograph of a barricade in flames at the Patan Gate. The image could have come straight out of a Newar *thangka*. On the 20th Chaitra

(24.90) 50,000 men, women and children of all ages massed at short notice in Patan and began to proceed to Kathmandu, with the idea of encouraging the people of Kathmandu to set up their own free state. They were stopped by police on the bridge over the Bagmati. Tension was great, and matters could have turned either way, but eventually the demonstrators returned to Patan. On the same day, though, in Kirtipur several demonstrators were shot, which led townsmen to put up barricades, preventing police movement. That evening the black-out in the valley was complete, showing the anger of the people. All that was lit up was that which the people had themselves set alight: tyres, police posts and traffic posts.

What, if anything, extended the movement's popular base at this time was the response it provoked in the police. Each side in the conflict had its own version of reality which it sought to reveal as truth. The Panchas maintained that the opposition leaders were treacherous and anti-national, deceiving the Nepalese people into rebelling against a political system with which they were content. The opposition leaders saw the kingdom as being dark with injustice perpetrated by unruly Panchas who were fattening themselves on the ill-gotten gains of their public position. The violent police response to the movement, demonstrated the truth of opposition claims. In firing on the people, the government took on the role scripted for them by the opposition thereby making the opposition version of reality appear true. Street action became political theatre. Demonstrators were beaten down in lathi charges and sprayed with tear gas. Sometimes it was enough just to show the party flag to be shot at. Meanwhile the shooting of children and

women (this in a kingdom in which women were never subject to capital punishment) confirmed the worst allegations about the political morality of the Panchas. The Panchas and police found themselves unwittingly acting in an opposition drama in which the final act became more and more inevitable.

The next general strike had been planned for Friday, the 24th Chaitra (6.4.90), and it was clear from reports coming in from around the valley that even villagers would be drawn to the centre of the kingdom to offer their protest. The days in wait were quiet: with prayers for the dead in Pasupati-nath and work stoppages by state employees at the electricity works, the Royal Nepal Airlines and the telephone office. Despite the quietness, there was an impression of gathering momentum, and that the general strike on the 24th would be massive and dangerous. The king tried to defuse the crisis by announcing early on the morning of the 24th that Prime Minister Marich Man Singh had been relieved of his duties and that Lokendra Bahadur Chand had been asked to form the new government. Additionally a Constitution Reform Suggestion Commission would be set up to which the people might express their wishes. The opposition drew, however, the conclusion that the king had little interest in reform, for he had not appointed a Prime Minister who would make the work of the Commission effective. In short, nothing had changed. The determination to strike became even greater.

On this Friday, not only were all shops and offices in the valley shut down, so also were almost all traffic and commerce. The streets were controlled by demonstrators, and everywhere one saw the forbidden party flags. On the

afternoon at Tundhikhel an open forum took place with around 100,000 participants in which party leaders spoke freely in public. The police held back. At the same time, not more than five hundred yards away in the palace, Lokendra Bahadur Chand arrived to be sworn in as Prime Minister. After the forum was concluded, a call was made to go to the gates of the palace. Between the Parade Ground and the royal palace lay a five hundred yard long stretch of Darbar Marg, defended by well-armed policemen. The crowds pushed ahead and breached the first police line of defense only to be repulsed with lathi sticks and tear gas at the second line. The demonstrators in the rear, however, continued to press forward, pushing those in the front line back in the direction of the palace. When they reached the statue of King Mahendra, about 300 meters from palace, the police began firing from various positions in nearby buildings, the result of which was a massacre, in which the number of dead and wounded still remains unknown.

In the evening a complete curfew was called; the military patrolled the city; and the rumour mill started up again. The first signs of a change in fortune for Nepalese politics came on Sunday, the 26th Chaitra (8.4.90) after the king had invited Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala (NC) and Sahan Pradhana and Radha Krishna Mainali (ULF) to the palace for discussions. At 11 pm a brief message from the palace, transmitted over Radio Nepal, announced that the thirty-year long ban on political parties had been lifted. The following day the curfew was lifted and jubilant crowds celebrated the restoration of multi-party democracy with victory processions, songs and dancing. Political meetings were

openly held, speeches were made, and moments of silence observed for the martyrs. Having achieved their aim, the opposition leaders called off the movement.

Gupta's booklet is a chronology of the movement, and he concludes his story at this point with the opposition leaders calling off the movement. Sivakoti's book, however, is an account of the lives of the martyrs. His story continues.

Despite the removal of the ban on political parties, it remained unclear what King Birendra was prepared to give up in the way of royal powers. He waited until his traditional New's Year's message to the nation on the 1st Baisakh 2047 (14.4.90) to speak his mind: "The events of the past few weeks are before us all. The loss of life and the destruction of property have saddened us. We pray for the eternal peace of those who have lost their lives in tragic circumstances. Politics in Nepal has now taken a new turn. We have upheld the tradition of respecting the popular will and fulfilling the aspirations of the people. The Constitution Reform Commission in the process of being set in the near future will consult elements of society pressing different political views in the course of preparing its report. We are also confident that all Nepalis will work together to safeguard the sovereignty and integrity of Nepal, which has ever remained independent since time immemorial (*Rising Nepal* 14th April 1990).

The continuation of the nine-day old Chand government proved unacceptable to both party leaders and to the people on the streets, and on 3rd Baisakh (16.4.90) the king announced Chand's resignation and the dissolution of the National Pancayat and of all *pañcāyat* institutions. Three days later an interim

government led by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as Prime Minister was sworn in at the palace. In the new cabinet there were equal members of Congress and the ULF, plus two independents and two appointees from the King. The Government was encharged to work out a new Constitution and to hold free elections within a year.

The new Cabinet had hardly been sworn in by the King when panic spread throughout the valley. There were muggings, break-ins, arson attacks and telephone threats. Suspicion pointed to the so-called *maṇḍale*, also referred to in the Nepalese texts as the *maṇḍale kamāṇḍoharu*. The expression derives from the National Independent Student Association (*rāṣṭravādī svatantra vidyārthī mandal*), the official student organization set up by Mahendra in 1968, but which had become so notorious for hooliganism that it had already been disbanded by the time of the national referendum in 1980. The *maṇḍale*, who were active at the close of the *pancayat* system, had been recruited partly from sportsmen in the National Sports Council (*Gorkhapatra* 9.1.47) and had already been engaged by the Panchas to infiltrate the popular movement and to discredit it by violence. With the official legitimization of opposition parties, the Panchas -- whose fortunes had so dramatically changed -- called on their *mandale* commandos to spread chaos and terror throughout the valley so as to prove the new regime incapable of governing. Relations between the public and the police became especially tense and hostile on the 4th Baisakh 2047 (17.4.90) after a slum in Patan had been put to the torch, destroying some sixty houses. The previous weeks the police had been active arresting public-spirited democrats;

now they seemed to have disappeared from the streets in order to allow the commandos free rein.

In the absence of police support, vigilante groups armed themselves with sticks and began to protect their neighbourhoods from the *maṅḍale* creating thereby a politically and morally awkward problem for the interim government. The tensest day came on the 10th Baisakh, 2047 (23.4.90). In the early morning a group of vigilantes at Kalankisthan on the Ring Road stopped a suspect lorry carrying five men, armed with weapons and explosives. They arrested the men and set their cars on fire. News of the capture of the suspected *maṅḍale* spread rapidly throughout the city. Meanwhile in Teku (in Kathmandu) local people began to suspect a group of policemen of being *maṅḍale* in disguise. The policemen were stopped, interrogated, mistreated and brutally lynched. During the day dead, or half-dead, suspected *maṅḍale* were paraded through the city on pushcarts. Others lay the entire day, dead on the streets. Still others were delivered by vigilantes to their local police station. The government had to quickly restore public order; yet it was not clear on whose side the police were. Prime Minister Bhattarai threatened to resign without clear support from the King, who in the absence of a new constitution still remained the highest government authority in the land. In the evening a curfew was declared, and the army patrolled the city. The rumour mill started up again: the army and police had conflicting loyalties, Indian troops were massed on the frontier, the water supply of Kathmandu had been poisoned, a military coup was imminent, the King and Queen were locked in bitter disagreement over Nepal's political

future. The following day several hundred policemen shouted "Blood for blood" and "We will bring back the *pañcāyat* system", as they carried the bodies of their murdered colleagues to Pasupatinath. The fear of counter-revolution was great.

The next day, the 12th Baisakh 2047 (25.4.90), brought a decisive message of support for multi-party democracy from the palace:

"His Majesty the King has been pained by the loss of life and violence perpetrated in parts of Kathmandu on Monday, 23rd April 1990. His Majesty joins all the countrymen in wishing eternal peace to the departed souls. In the political environment obtaining in the country, it should be everybody's concern to see multi-party democracy succeed. . . . The government headed by Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai should be fully supported in preparing for early general elections. . . ." (*Rising Nepal* 25th April 90).

With the unambiguous support of King Birendra, together with that of the army and the readiness of the people to come out onto the streets, the political situation in Nepal began gradually to stabilize. There was still sporadic police firing, the last of which took place on the 17th Baisakh in front of the CDO's residence in Pokhara, where a crowd had gathered protesting against the CDO harbouring suspected *maṅḍale* arsonists. Sivakoti brings his book to an end with the death of the last martyr and the names and addresses of 1307 persons wounded in the movement. The FOPHUR book also ends with the unsuccessful counter-revolution. Gradually the struggle for democracy shifted from the streets to the palace where political leaders and the King negotiated the new constitution.

In the rituals of Nepalese political culture the martyrs of 1990 joined those at Martyrs Gate, who two generations earlier had given up their lives in the overthrow of the Ranas. Despite their deaths, the martyrs continued to play a decisive role in the negotiations concerning the new Constitution. The various proposals were never put to a popular test, neither by referendum nor by constituent assembly. It was understood, however, that the wishes of the martyrs had to be respected in the new Constitution, and it was clear in the rhetorical construction of the people's movement that sovereignty had already transferred from the king to the

people. The king was no longer the mediator between deity and people who by sacrifice preserved the well-being of his subjects. From the Nepalese texts under review, it is clear that the martyrs had sacrificed their lives to the motherland for democracy which they, not the king, gave to the people. Powers of legitimate agency had shifted within the kingdom. Sovereignty did not lie with the royal dynasty (the *pañcāyat* model) and could not lie with Parliament (the British model). Rather it lay with the people, who now have the burden of defending the martyrs' sacrifice in the future.

ARCHIVES

The Cambridge Experimental Videodisc Project

Alan MacFarlane

Largely inspired by the films and photographs of Prof. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, we at Cambridge decided in April 1985 to make an experimental videodisc about the Naga peoples of the Assam Burma Border.

The Nagas seemed a good choice for such an experiment. The precipitous terrain and forest, as well as the warlike head-hunting reputation of the peoples, deterred outsiders from entering the area until very late. The period of contact, starting effectively in the 1840s, was unusually gradual, lasting over a century until Indian Independence in 1947. The relative lateness of the contact meant that the second fifty years of documentation were within the era of easily portable cameras and the last fifty years within that of moving film. But how well was

this process documented, and what remained?

Good fortune brought to the Naga Hills a series of very gifted observers. These men and women became so involved with the Nagas that they assembled large collections of material in very difficult circumstances. The chief collections we were given access to were those of R.G. Woodthorpe, J. H. Hutton, J.P. Mills, C. von Furer-Haimendorf, Ursula Graham Bower and W.G. Archer. Between them, they collected over 5,000 artefacts, took over 7,000 black and white photographs, made a number of sound recordings and made over six hours of moving film. They also kept extensive diaries and collected pages of field-notes as well as published eight books and many articles on the Nagas. There was clearly no