

**IS THE NAME THE GAME FAME,
SHAME OR BLAME?**

J.P. Cross

Warrior Gentlemen: "Gurkhas" in the Western Imagination by Professor Lionel Caplan, published by Berghahn Books, 165 Taber Avenue, Providence, RI 02906, USA or Bush House, Merewood Avenue, Oxford, OX3 3EE, UK, ISBN 1-57181-852-9, at £26.

The relationship between the Kingdom of Nepal and the United Kingdom is unique. Over and above Nepal being Britain's oldest Asian ally with especially warm ties—and the first (and only?) Asian non-Commonwealth country to be visited twice by any British Head of State—is the Gurkha Connection, that especial bond of comrades-in-arms that breeds an empathy most civilians can never understand. Forged in war as adversaries, it had its genesis on 16 April 1815 (with the British Governor-General signing the Order on 24 April 1815) and is extant today, 180 years later, periodical differences in emphasis notwithstanding. This bond has intrigued, puzzled and fascinated some, and infuriated others, since its inception—and continues to do so. It started under the East India Company, then was fostered in peace and war in the Indian Army from 1858 to 1947, and, since 1 January 1948, has been maintained with Gurkhas being an integral and highly distinguished part of the long-term Order of Battle of the British Army, even though some now see this phenomenon as a questionable anachronism. What cannot be denied is that the Gurkhas' military reputation has emerged from what many claim to be the finest fusion of its kind between east and west that the world has ever seen. Their prowess has turned into a legend that feeds on itself until, when it is discovered that Gurkhas are not supermen and that there are no more human folk than they, it makes people pause and ask themselves what lies behind the legend.

What is it that the British, their army and its traditions, its system and its mystique, do to the comparatively few Nepali Hill Men, the Gurkhas, who join its ranks? How is this potential for military excellence achieved? What is its fashioning? How has it stood the test of time?

There is, of course, no one answer, no one reason, no one unsolved mystery. Rather there is an amalgam, a syndrome, a catalyst of many factors that make a detailed, rational explanation so difficult to quantify. Gallant and genuine heroes have become the expected normal, larger-than-life, stereotype rather than the standard and more modest 'man-in-the-rear-rank' being taken as typical. None the less, Gurkhas are seen by most others as the epitome of good soldierly material. Nurtured on a diet of military history which the more cynical define as 'hot air and quick-drying ink'—and tales of derring-do, 'Gurkha' is a name to conjure with.

Part of the explanation of this phenomenon lies in the 'chemistry of circumstances' which include, for the Gurkha, an upbringing in a rice-producing community, respect for a father figure, an ability to live a hard life and a desire for personal betterment. These blend into a strong and self-supporting matrix when a lad joins the army where, for the first time in his life, 'the man', with his training, his place in the military community, his welfare, his comfort, his problems, his very livelihood, are all the concern of a dedicated band of highly motivated, trained and talented individuals, whose cause is service not self-interest, and whose bedrock of faith is trust. He finds himself in a traditional but forward-looking society with a stricter code of conduct than he has ever known before, where patrimony, partiality and the familiarity that breeds contempt or provides for subtler social pressures are all absent—despite what a disillusioned, small, but sadly vociferous minority of those 'who know best' like to believe to the contrary and who have a self-inspired, semi-divine right of selective reporting to suit their personal failures or otherwise unspoken resentments. It is these 'invincibly ignorant' people who are the spreaders of pernicious, unfounded and often malicious rumours that can cause so much damage. As so aptly put, 'a lie is half way round the world before truth gets its boots on'.

His British officers recognise that all men in the British Army are rational, conscious individuals, with any amount of potential, and they are determined to develop each man as much as circumstances permit. And the man responds. He is now someone in his own right and his opportunities for advancement depend on him, on his own showing, his own ability, his own performance and not on the whim of another: this is heady wine.

A high standard brings its own penalties of expectation so, when standards do sometimes drop, undue emphasis is given to and intemperate conclusions are drawn from the occasion. However, the strength of all military Gurkhas continues to lie in the steady and unspectacular application of the dull, uninspiring but important tasks done properly, without which the foundations for successful action in an emergency would not be strong enough to bear the burden or the consequences. That the Gurkha has proved

himself times without number is self-evident; that he will continue thus is still a tenet of British faith.

Sixty years ago, when Nepal was still a closed country, young officers in India found that life in a Gurkha unit bore no comparison with the difficulties a subaltern in a British battalion faced, so much more tractable were the men from Nepal. And yet... "You will find that the Gurkhas are different in their own country," they were told. Since the country has been opened up, most first-time visitors have also found this out and wondered why. The reasons for this dichotomy are many-sided and interwoven.

Just one example: geography. This has a constant and over-riding impact on the Nepali psyche in that Nepal is a country of contrasts—affecting temperature and temperament, humus and humours, soil and soul alike—which have indelibly ingrained themselves on the Nepali, causing the tremendous differences discernible in the Nepali ethos, both collectively and individually from the Himalayan heights of heroism and splendour to the dross like depths of disappointing detriment. To off-set the harshness of this indictment, however, it must be remembered how near so many Nepalis are to the treadmill of poverty and add to that the wisdom of the oppressed—bending to stay alive where to be rigid would be to perish.

The sudden exposure of the country to influences previously unknown, after centuries of autocratic feudalism, has also been instrumental in causing social, political and cultural indigestion. This has produced a contradiction and a conundrum that puzzle many—what is fact and what is fantasy about these Gurkhas? It was to try and solve this dichotomy that had so forcibly struck him when he did his field work in Eastern Nepal in 1964-5, that Dr. Lionel Caplan, Professor of South Asian Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, bent his penetrating mind. With considerable scholarship he has researched many of the writings about Gurkhas over the past eighteen decades to produce reasons to explain this divergence of views. His findings have been published in a short book¹ that, alas, is too expensive for most Nepalis' pockets. He also interviewed a number of retired and serving British officers of Britain's Brigade of Gurkhas, discerningly melding what they said into the text.

Part of Caplan's treatment of this absorbing subject is by use of his main discipline, anthropology, larded with discerning comment on his own experiences in Ilam and elsewhere among ex-soldiers. With the enormous amount reading that he has undertaken allowing him manifold quotations and erudite observations, his presentation has great depth, with unusual and very interesting slants. In sum, the book is of seminal value.

With so many sources to draw upon, all shades of scholarship have been entertained, including those of a past age which, though normal for their

time, now strike the modern reader not used to the idiom as ignorant, racist and prejudiced when measured by contemporary political and social standards to the extent that they make a mockery of the very great majority of British and Gurkhas who never wrote books, never did anything spectacular but merely served out their time with discipline, dedication and dignity.

Caplan states that his 'essay' constitutes an attempt to related the rhetorical devices employed to depict Gurkhas to the wider historical, political and military contexts affecting these soldiers and, in particular, their European officer-chroniclers. The way he tackles this, after a preface and a lengthy introduction, is to dilate on various aspects of his subject in four chapters. He rounds this off with a conclusion and a 23-page index of references of authors quoted, a bibliography and subject matters under scrutiny. Anyone who had no previous knowledge of this subject would, having read the book, not be blamed for thinking this was probably the last word in this particular field. In such a vast undertaking the author should be congratulated for his skill and tenacity in giving the reader many and various viewpoints from as many sources as possible.

And yet... it did strike the reviewer to make a note of factual errors to improve the value of the book for any subsequent edition and, in places, to offer relevant comments, some not yet in book form, so as to give an added, different or contrasted perception to conclusions already drawn. He first took a cursory glance at the blurb at the back of the book and read '... those legendary soldiers from Nepal who have served Britain's Imperial and post Imperial armies *for more than two centuries*' (his italics). Once inside the book he discovered, on page 3, a total of '*virtually the 175 years of Gurkha history*' (his italics) and, on page 53, '*a period of one hundred and fifty years*' (his italics) of inflow of considerable resources into the middle hills. Gunners call this 'bracketing their target' when other measuring methods are insufficient. The military connection reached 180 years in 1995 when this book was published.

The reviewer then scanned the abbreviations and was surprised to note the DSM, Distinguished Service Medal, listed (there and on page 139). This award is a naval one made only to sailors. Caplan should have written DCM, Distinguished Conduct Medal, an 'other ranks' army bravery award for, until the British Prime Minister—John, 'The Great Leveller', Major—abolished it in 1995, a grade of bravery above its army equivalent, MM, Military Medal, and below the Victoria Cross. (Now any acts of such gallantry will attract the DSO, Distinguished Service Order, formerly reserved for officers.)

Two more points of wrong nomenclature were noted. The first: pre-war and up till 31 December 1947, all Gurkhas were in the 'Gurkha Brigade'. From 1 January 1948, when the Indians would change Gurkha to Gorkha, the 'Brigade

of Gurkhas', at the instigation of the Brigade of Guards in 1949, refers to HBMG's, Gurkhas. The second, on page 46, is the word 'contract' when a 'tour of service' is meant. 'Contract', in the regular British Army, has special connotations not covered in this book.

Chapter 1: The Introduction: Discovering Gurkhas starts with its own introduction of *Texts and their Worldly Contexts* and expands on *The Gurkha Literature, Who are the Gurkhas?, Encountering the Gurkhas, The Anglo-Nepal War, Recruiting Gurkhas* and *Gurkhas in the Twentieth Century*, all in 27 pages. This is a most useful summary, clearly presented and with much merit.

As for the Gurkha being characterized as a 'pet' (pages 2 and 155) anyone who has met even an angry Gurkha, let alone a drunk or 'battle inoculated' one, would hesitate to call such a man a 'pet'. Any officer with such a frame of mind, so it seems to your reviewer, has never generated battle-winning respect, if anything the reverse. One point germane to the British and Gurkha feeling of togetherness was that, in India especially but also in other countries, both were, in many respects, strangers there and, as far as India was concerned, at times not particularly liked or welcome. Nor were Britons or Gurkhas allowed to go the land of the others' birth. This created a special bond.

The section on Gurkha literature is divided into four, with handbooks, manuals and works by officer-authors described as 'core' writings. No quarrel with any of this. It is germane, however, to remember that most officers fighting wars felt they were 'collectively making history' rather than just writing about it—even if they ever gave it a moment's thought, which they most likely never did.

The author addresses the question of who the Gurkhas are in a way to make this a valuable contribution: 'fictions' in the sense of something 'fashioned'. *Encountering the Gurkhas*: the insistence of some writers to say that the 'deserters' in 1815 were not 'pure Gurkhas' is arguable, especially when we have been told that such a being is a 'fiction' —'pure fiction'? (page 10). The Chinese/Tibet war, 1788-92, meant severe cut-backs in New Nepal (Kumaon and Garhwal), where many soldiers were laid off there and then. How many of these men were from Lamjung, Kaski, Parbat, etc. and saw service with the British—warts and all—as giving them a chance to return home in the mistaken belief that the British were going to oust House of Gorkha influence from these home areas? Captain A P Coleman's forthcoming seminal work on this aspect, having had access to sources so far untapped, is awaited with impatience. Incidentally, the author has spoken with Coleman (page viii).

Recruiting Gurkhas and *Gurkhas in the Twentieth Century* are both good summaries with many valid points. The author missed an extract from a 1950 Egyptian newspaper to the effect that *Such is the reputation for fair treatment (Gurkhas) receive under the British Crown that no recruiting has ever been necessary.* Now, that is an accolade worth having!

Chapter 2: Gurkhas At Home: The ecology of military service, in 27 pages, after an *Introduction*, explores *Populations of the Middle Hills, Becoming Gurkhas, The Economics of Gurkhas Service, The Social Implications of Gurkha Service, Ex-Gurkhas in Town* and ends with a *Conclusion*.

The reviewer was impressed with most of this chapter which he sees as generally fair and which contains much knowledge. The question of a supposed annual payment by HBMG to HMGN for Gurkhas' services, 'royalty' as it is known in Nepal, is raised. Even as late as 1995 serving soldiers, to say nothing of aspiring political activists, still darkly suggest a secret 'royalty' payment. The man Cross is quoted (page 36), with the text reading 'official British sources sometimes deny claims of an annual payment after India's independence', as though what the author said was true and what the British Government had averred was not so in that payments were indeed made. The denial about no payment was made in direct response to a request to Cross, when working in the Research Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) of the Tribhuvan university, by a Mr. Gopal Gurung, whose card announced he was Editor-in-Chief of a Nepali weekly, *New Light*, and an English weekly, *Thunder Bolt*. He 'knew' payment was a fact, so could he have the reference? The British Defence Attache was asked and, in writing, gave the negative answer. Even then, the Gentlemen in Question could not accept this.

The reviewer offers this as a possible answer to the 'royalty' conundrum: in February, 1947, Cross visited Nepal at the invitation of the Prime Minister, Padma Shumsher, staying with the First Secretary of the British Legation, as it was still wrongly called, in Lainchaur, Lt Col N M Macleod, 1 GR. Apparently, during the war years, especially throughout the period of discharge from the army (1945 onwards) of the many men who had swelled numbers for the duration of hostilities, Macleod had come to know that the Government of their day in Kathmandu only allowed the modern equivalent of one *kampani* rupee (ICR1) to be exchanged at an artificially depressed rate of NCR+1.42 when the 'going rate' was NCR±1.67. In other words, one *suka*, 25 paise, profit went into someone's coffers for every Indian rupee every Gurkha, discharged or going on leave, brought into the country. This naturally caused bewilderment, if not resentment. It was nothing to do with

the British who deprecated it. Is it this ghost of the past that has come to haunt, bedevil and detract from the British Government's statement of the present?

As to figures for recruiting, these have been cyclic albeit diminishing since the mid-1970s. Numbers had to be increased in 1978; to fill the gap that had been prepared when 1/2 GR and 2/2 GR had been run-down prior to an amalgamation that was subsequently cancelled; when the Hong Kong Government's demand for more troops saw the re-raising of 2/7 GR; and for the Singapore Police Force's Prison Guard Service. The ratio of aspirants to Recruits (an official rank-before being enlisted a man is only a potential recruit) was 400:1. In other words, for every one man enlisted, 399 'good men and true' had to be rejected. It was a painfully difficult task for the Recruiting officer and one needing diligence, tact and moral stamina to a marked degree. Even among some British officers who know British standards of probity, more rubbish is talked about recruiting than any other military topic.

A word on pensions: the value of a pension is fully realised, both by the soldier and his officer. This is developed in the text (page 38) but what does not appear is when a soldier decides of his own volition to 'cut his name' before a pension has been earned despite much persuasion to the contrary in the knowledge that such a man will, almost inevitably, become a 'welfare case'. British officers are constantly puzzled by this frame of mind, much more liable with Easterners than Westerners, and the soldier would seldom explain his motive. Possibly he objected to another's advancement rather than his own. During periods of run-down, certainly in the late 1960s, three years' service were commuted to enhance a man's pension (that is to say, a man with only 12 years' service received a 15-year pension) and, when service was too short for that, a gratuity was given. It was atrocious had luck that world oil prices steeply increased at that time so making a mockery of what, till then, had been a good deal.

This point of a tendency not to give full answers to a dedicated, yet naive, field worker needs making. Your reviewer asks how often non-army, non-British and non-male—in any combination—interviewers, with or without interpreters, believed that the answers to questions were full, frank and 'unadorned' or 'white', not 'grey' nor 'black'? How often was selective presentation of material to suit personal propensities taken as gospel? No hint of such a probability appears in text or notes. Is this because it is yet another example of that oldest and most dangerous combination of all—the plausible and the gullible?

Much is made of the *Social Implications of Gurkha Service*. Indeed, army service gives a soldier a new slant on life, offers him opportunities to learn

new skills, to earn good money, to go to new places, to savour new experiences, to get away from cloyingly rigid structures in society that prevent initiative to be shown and to take a pride in himself. For others, such as a wife at home, of course it can be hard. But it has to be remembered that the 'Welfare Mind Set' is comparatively recent and, in a non-profit-making concern, i.e. the British Army. Apart from the terms and conditions of service being scrupulously met, the only *legal* requirement thereafter is disbursement of pension. That a lot else is done is, your reviewer feels, only good and proper.

The author tells us (page 46) that the lowest educational standard taken for enlistment is grade 8. No. On 22 July 1995 your reviewer contacted the officer who deals with recruiting, Lt Col J B Smart, about this assertion. His answer was that the lowest grade is Class 5 but that between one-quarter to one-third of successful men will have obtained their School Leaving Certificate.

Writing about *The Political Implications of Gurkha Service*, the author quotes Höfner on pensioners' involvement in 'village politics' in Dhading district (pages 46 and 95). Without a map, a reader might not realise the significance of this particular district (also known as No. 1 West) that lies directly west of the Valley and to the east of Gorkha district (also known as No. 2 West). A word of explanation is needed here: the boundary between Dhading and Gorkha was moved west—from the River Trisuli to the Budi Gandaki—sometime in the nineteenth century. This was most likely caused by the sensitivity of the political centre of gravity, Kathmandu, after the upheavals of the mid-1800s. Dhading became a prohibited area for recruiting so a policy of not enlisting men from there was, therefore, scrupulously observed. This was especially so after World War I when Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher, appalled at the scale of migration to India, totally banned recruiting from Nos. 1 West and East. ("Of the more than 11,000 Gurkhas who were discharged from the regular Indian army at the end of the war, less (sic) than 4,000 returned home. "*Nepal Under The Ranas*, Adrian Sever, page 260.)

Frankly the reviewer is puzzled. Page 95 of Höfner's book gives British Army regiments but page 46 does not specify if the pensioners he refers to are from the Indian Army, the Royal Nepal Army or the British Army, so it is impossible to tell what pensioners the author is writing about. If a British Indian army or Brigade of Gurkhas man trying for enlistment did give his home address in No. 1 West (or No. 1 East) and was found out early enough he was returned. If this was discovered later to be the case, his documents would be fudged, for his own protection. It was only in 1979 that your reviewer recruited for the Brigade of Gurkhas in the one *panchayat* of Dhading

administered by Gorkha. There was no Government reaction as, of course, there had been no need to preserve a Rana bastion since 1951. Dhading was fully opened for British recruiting, for the first time, the following year, 1980. Höfner's book was produced in 1978. Are the ex-servicemen he mentions those remaining few survivors who left the army in 1919 before Chandra Shumsher's ban or are they post-1948 Indian Army men? If neither, who are they?

One reason why British ex-servicemen do not generally opt for 'village head-man-type' jobs (page 49) is much more down-to-earth than any 'traditional relationship' one. Army Gurkhas, used to a slick and forward-looking system where superiority is normally helpful and sympathetic, feel claustrophobic and suffer from 'cultural indigestion' when faced with the normal workings of Nepali bureaucracy. Merit, as a single criterion, is insufficient for local leadership.

Ex-Gurkhas in Town: It has to be remembered that many difficulties for men and their children arise from the comparatively few years between being a sheep drover and a Jeep driver. The problems or redundancy are very real and traumatic. On page 50, we read about the son of a 7 GR, British Gurkha, ex-soldier not trying for enlistment in the Indian Army. What the lad is not reported as saying is that the Indian Army does not enlist the sons of British Gurkhas. The British Army in its quest for the best, places no forfeit on a father's job: only if two contenders for one vacancy are equal in all respects will the one with a British Army connection prevail.

At the end of the chapter (page 53) are the resounding words, 'betrayal of national honour' in joining another country's army. Is this the only case of such 'treachery'? Why should men and women labouring in Korea, Japan, the Middle East—where such jobs are often 'dirty' and few labourers have contractual liabilities for safety, sickness or security— or the taking of Hong Kong citizenship for those born in Hong Kong, rather than working for Nepal in Nepal, be any less of a betrayal or betrayal at all? Such a point, surely, should at least be included for an impartial and personal assessment by an intelligent reader, especially one who knows nothing of such labour in a land where the natives are 'job snobs'.

Chapter 3: Officering Gurkhas: The culture of Command, in 32 pages. This, like other chapters, has its own *Introduction*, then sections on *Royal and Indian Officers, British Officers and the Public Schools, Sporting Officers, The Gurkha Regiments as an Elite Corps, British Officer-Gurkha Officer, Regimental Cultures, The Career Officer* and a *Conclusion*. Two points only need to be made in this most informative and deeply researched chapter: as soon as cuts from over ten thousand Gurkhas to many fewer were

announced in the late 1960s, it seems that volunteers from the top one-third of cadets in Sandhurst went to British service almost entirely rather than officer reinforcement from that bracket being attracted to service with Gurkhas as had been the case before. Soldiers are normally only as good as are their officers. A valuable 'before' and 'after' conclusion could have been added at this juncture. The second point is that your reviewer was at a conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, in 1949, when it was agreed that the Major General, Brigade of Gurkhas, Major General Sir Charles Boucher, would recommend to Higher Authority that all British officers be wasted out from Gurkha units and be replaced by fully commissioned Gurkhas by around 1975.

Chapter 4: Representing Gurkhas: The rhetoric of martiality, runs to 39 pages. This chapter, as do the others, has its *Introduction* which is followed by sections on *Martiality*, *Martial Nepalis*, *The Place of Martiality*, *The persistence of Martial Thinking*, *Masculinity*, *Masculine Nepal*, *Loyalty*, *The Bond of Trust*, *Defiant Gurkhas* and a neat *Conclusion*. This chapter has a lot to commend it, containing, as it does, aspects of the 'Gurkha conundrum' not normally on people's 'mental menu'. The non-specialist reader might be short of breath by the end of it! As can be seen from that list, the author gives an in-depth analysis of, basically, 'what makes the Gurkha soldier tick the way he does'. Caplan quotes Cross as saying Gurkhas were always ready to do battle with any enemy of Britain. In simple terms that remark merely means obeying orders. 'We are assured,' he writes on page 109, that 'the Gurkha riflemen had understood little of the causes and implications' of why he was fighting. Had Caplan researched 'rank and file' British troops in the Brunei Rebellion, 1962-3, and Borneo during Confrontation, 1963-6, he would have been staggered at the ignorance shown by many of them.

On pages 98 and 99 'line-boys' are discussed. 'Line-boys' were those born in the lines and brought up in the comparative ease of a military cantonment in India or, say, Darjeeling. Now the term refers to those lads reared in Hong Kong. When, in 1945, news of the Indian National Army emerged, there was a revulsion against 'line-boys' as many of those Gurkhas who had joined that organisation other than to escape from Malaya/Singapore were not 'hill men'. Officers asked each other whether such behaviour was an aberration or was it normal? Was it a flaw in the man's character? In essence, once leadership for 'line boys' is 'positive and individual oriented', differences between them and hill men should completely disappear.

On page 100, the author quotes Cross as 'continuing to insist' that such people do not possess the inherent chemistry to make as good soldiers as those born in the mountains. Your reviewer managed to talk to Cross who

said he was thinking of those young men who came over from Hong Kong (between 1976 and 1982) to be enlisted and who were '2nd XI' when compared with all those from inside Nepal. He noted that their whole ambience was otiose, probably brought on by a confusion in values, the seduction and indifference of a 'mod-con' environment. They had no spark, no spirit, no spunk. Such aspirants felt they had a 'right' to be enlisted as their fathers were serving soldiers, so why put themselves out by trying? After less than a year, however, in a 'non-Hong Kong' environment, such lads came back through the system and were then as good as if not better material than their counterparts. Sadly, there is also an inverse ratio of a man's suitability to the nearness of his habitat to a main tourist trail.

On page 105 the author writes that 'recently Cross has insisted yet again that soldiering is seen as the one honourable profession open to Gurkhas of Nepal'. Again, your reviewer managed to contact Cross and asked him why he so 'insisted'? His answer was of interest: first, his belief in what he wrote was based on the army being the one outlet, admittedly only in traditional recruiting areas, that legitimately and honourably fulfils the inescapable need to bolster resources after generations of subsistence farming. The man's family has, thereby, a much better chance of surviving intact than otherwise. Secondly, semantics: the Nepali equivalent he was thinking of is *ijjat*, 'self respect' ("money can never buy *ijjat* or parents") or 'face'—that acquisition of personal prestige which makes for public potency. Cross told your reviewer of the case when a father forbade the marriage of his diminutive daughter because the prospective husband was too short to be recruited so his grandsons might not be tall enough to join the British Army. A telling example!

However, even Cross could see that the watershed in the British officer side of soldiering in the late 1960s (page 81) had its counter for Gurkhas following yet another planned rundown in the early to mid-90s, to say nothing of a general, albeit slow, improvement in basic standards in Nepal itself. Cross now agrees that soldiering, while still in the 'top twenty' honourable professions, has probably had its place as 'top of the pops' taken over by Anthropology.

Loyalty and Hawaii: the incident referred to was a gross breach of military discipline between a British officer and Gurkhas. It was, indeed, a disgrace and should never have happened. It would be counterproductive and unethical for your reviewer to add his knowledge of unquoted senior reactions in Kathmandu at the time, or to say anything more than is in the text and the notes except that he is sure that no unit in any army, navy or air force is forever on its toes and never on its heels. Were the author to have full access to the other two regular armies employing Mongoloid hill men he would find

painful parallels with hawaii and that their records were not without serious blemishes. But no mention or hint of such happenings appears in this book. Is this because the other two armies do not 'wash their dirty linen' in public?

The press in Nepal did indeed have a field day (pages 110 and 111) but, unlike the rest of the world which only had what was told it to work on, could add lurid details of its own. The issue was also a very good way of trying to embarrass an unpopular regime (pre-1990) and its British ally so could 'kill two birds with one stone' or rather 'to goad two governments by one gripe'. All the newspapers quoted were, at the time, slanted towards the left.

In *The Bond of Trust* the author rather unhappily writes that 'British officers and Gurkha soldiers are portrayed as having fallen in love'. It is unfortunate to use an expression 'fall in love' that has sexual connotations. It is a weakness of the English language that the correct rendering of non-sensual love, agape, has no easy alternative. Your reviewer can hear myriads of men of both races turning in their graves at the use of the phrase 'falling in love'. That is not to say that, without a doubt, many cases of a very strong sense of camaraderie have existed over the years and still do exist.

Chapter 5: Courageous Gurkhas: The making of the warrior gentleman. This last chapter of 26 pages, apart from its *Introduction* and *Conclusion*, includes *The Concept of Courage*, *Military Perspectives*, *Warrior Gurkhas*, *Gurkha Perspectives on Courage* and *Gentleman Gurkhas*. Another good chapter that gives an interesting account of differing views of what courage is and where 'the threshold of bravery' lies. The author is obviously unhappy at Cross for 'insisting' that 'Gurkhas do not know what fear is'. A very brash man is Cross, even going so far (page 26) as to say he had 38 years' service with Gurkhas—a curse on these 'instant experts'! Your reviewer looked up what Cross had actually written and found it to be '(Gurkhas) do know what fear is. It just so happens that they often fear the effects of showing fear more than the fear itself'. Is this another case of what the statisticians call 'one of those damned nots'?

And finally there is a short, seven-page, conclusion: Gurkha fictions and political realities which neatly wraps the whole up in easily digestible form. Caplan finishes by writing: *My intention in this essay has been to demonstrate that the strategies of text and the strategies of power are integrally linked, and mutually implicated.* A man with such broad and deep scholarship has amply succeeded in doing this.

As mentioned earlier, this book has differing slants from many, if not all, books on Gurkhas. Anthropologists, and local political scientists, 'make a meal' of the whole Gurkha Connection in such a way that the humble, non-

complicated and dedicated regimental officer seems like an endangered species. At the end, your reviewer felt that, instead of enjoying a good meal, he had to witness the killing of the animal to be eaten, dressing the carcass, preparing it, cooking it and, finally, describing that which is better left unsaid. This caused him mental flatulence.

One tempting but fruitless question is, 'could such delvers for data have produced such good results over the 18 decades of the Gurkha connection to make the name Gurkha one that is world famous?' or could it be that they could have done better by, say, inspiring their men to have won 26 and not merely 13 VCs? No one will ever know—only guess!

And one last question: What is the name of the game? Whatever the answers, it must be said that only scholars such as Professor Lionel Caplan could have written such a noteworthy, stimulating and challenging book for unbiased readers (if such still exist) to make up their own minds.