

PRIVATE NEWSPAPERS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND PUBLIC LIFE IN NEPAL

including a report

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

Private newspapers and public life under *pañcāyat* democracy

The dramatic political changes that took place in Nepal in the Spring of last year, costing some 500 lives, were the culmination of a struggle for power between the monarchy and

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

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

King Birendra agreed to hold in the following year a referendum on the constitution. This was won by the *pañcāyat* side, but only by 2.4. to 2 million votes, and with all major towns in the opposition camp. The 1962 Constitution was retained, but in line with an announcement made in the run-up to the referendum, the system was modified to allow direct elections by universal suffrage to the National Assembly and to make ministers responsible to the assembly rather than to the king. Direct elections made it easier for groups within the legislature to appeal for support in the country at large, and the factionalism among panchas which had occurred even under the unreformed system was intensified. Moreover, the fact that the political parties were able to mobilize the electorate for the multi-party vote in the referendum meant that, although being "illegal", they were nonetheless tolerated within limits by the state. Both the factionalism of the panchas and the tolerance of the political underground serve to enliven the Kathmandu-based press scene.

In order to understand the role of private newspapers in *pañcāyat* democracy, one must appreciate the linkage between political factions and the press and what sense of public life made these newspapers "private". The most commonly used term in Nepal, corresponding to the European word 'public', is *sarkāri*. During (and prior to) the period of *pañcāyat* democracy the term figured in three different socio-legal contexts: it referred to something belonging to the person of the ruler (his Mercedes), something pertaining

to the state (*sarkāri* land as state property) and something to which all people had right of access (a *sarkāri* tubewell). The legal coherence of the 'royal person', the 'state' and the 'common' makes sense in a lordly political culture, in which the public domain is personally represented by the sovereign whose will was executed by his state agents for the common good of an indivisible body politic. His Majesty's Government legally and ritually represented this body politic, and public order was understood to exist in that unity. By contrast, political parties expressed the self-interest of their leaders, if not the collective self-interest of their followers. Putting self-interest above the common good, identified them with the private sphere. Indeed, it was because of their supposed unbounded self-interest that Mahendra banned all political parties. As for other "private" institutions -- literary societies, businessmen's clubs, newspapers, and so on --, they were allowed to enter public space only with the prior authorisation of the state. Every local meeting, publication and procession that was not sponsored by a state organization required government approval. The censorship was often severe, but it must be stressed that state repression aimed not at the control of private minds but at the public expression of the private. During periods of social unrest democratic activists were rarely arrested by local police so long as they remained in their homes; rather they were arrested as soon as they entered the public space of the market.

It follows that "private" newspapers were particularly subject to censorship, for newspapers exist, perforce, in public space. This space was already occupied by the two government newspapers, *Gorkhāpatra* and *The Rising Nepal*, both of which merely announced the sort of information that was appropriate for a state which defined public order in terms of social unity. By contrast, the private newspapers precariously entered public space with the self-appointed task of expressing a point of view and exposing the "real" workings of the *pañcāyat* system. This politics of exposure inverted public/private relations, as defined by the state, by playing on the distinction between the inner and the outer in the body politic. The "private" newspapers revealed the inner workings of the government, the "cover-ups" that the government wanted to keep from public knowledge. In so doing, these newspapers hoped to deprive the government of its moral authority to rule. Their criticism could be directed at all government personnel up to the office of Minister. The royal family, however, could not be criticized, for in this lordly political culture the law of treason did not distinguish between treason against the state and personal criticism of the king. In sum, the private newspapers censured the government by exteriorizing (making public, as it were) their knowledge of the inner workings of the system. Meanwhile the government, acting in defense of public unity, censored the private press. The journalists, however, were often courageous and enterprising. It happened not

infrequently that editors were arrested because of critical reports and that the same editors, after they had been released, published their paper under a different name, which they had already registered before as a precautionary measure.

It cannot be denied, however, that many "private" newspapers were, and are, the voice (lit. *mukhpatra*) of a political party or a faction. Indeed, nearly all prominent politicians attempt to establish a private newspaper or gain control of previously existing one in order to voice their views. A case in point is that of Surya Bahadur Thapa, Nepal's Prime Minister from 1979 to 1983. During his prime ministership Thapa sponsored the *Sāptāhik Mañc*, a paper loyal to his government. After being ousted from power in 1983, he supported the more critical *Sāptāhik Vimarsā*, enabling it to be published regularly. Thapa then used the *Vimarsā* to publicize the scandalous activities of the "invisible powers behind the curtains", the "underground gang" (*bhumigat giroha*), of which he had gained ample knowledge. In this way he sought to discredit the government of his successor, Lok Bahadur Chand, and pave the way for his comeback. Eventually, one of the editors of the *Vimarsā*, Padam Thakurathi, barely survived an assassination attempt from the forces he had helped to expose. The whole case was later uncovered and led to the arrest of numerous highly placed people. During the time when the *Vimarsā* was banned, because of its revelations, it started to appear as *Sāptāhik Nepālī Avāj*, and this eventually resulted in a split, when

the Vimarsa reappeared again. Surya Bahadur Thapa continued sponsoring the *Nepālī Avāj*, which was sympathetic to the Movement for the Restoration of Multi-Party Democracy. After the success of the movement Thapa founded his own paper, the *Nepāli Patra*, which is the major organ of the National Democratic Party, also founded by Thapa.

It must be mentioned, though, that the politics of exposure perpetrated by party politicians through their "private" newspapers took place in the small world of the Nepalese intelligentsia, where everyone knows each other. In this respect the "private" newspapers differ considerably from the mass circulation dailies of Europe, where national and provincial newspapers inform the citizenry of issues and offer from their editor's perspective judgements on key issues. By contrast, the information printed in Nepalese newspapers is for a much smaller readership -- the intelligentsia, based in Kathmandu and the district capitals, who are literate, politically mobilized and often already aware of the news in the form of gossip. Thus, the astute political observer reads the newspaper not (or not merely) to be informed of the news, which he has probably already heard on the 'grapevine', but to see what hitherto private information is being brought into the public domain and made an issue in the hope of making political 'capital'. News of a scandal might be an open secret for weeks; but when one reads about it in the paper, one knows that a particular political faction is publicizing this information

and trying thereby to make a political issue of it. Thus every text, published by a politician carries with it a subtext of party strategy, constituted by the reader.

Private newspapers and the popular rejection of *pañcāyat* democracy

The activities of the private press, in exposing the "real" workings of the *pañcāyat* system, became critical in the 1980s, the *pañcāyat* system itself became more and more a counterfeit reality. By this is not meant that it lacked popular legitimacy (for it obviously had supporters) or that it was ineffective (or, at least, any less effective than parliamentary democracy), but rather that the inevitable disjunction between the rules that govern a system and the way in which the system actually works had become so great that the structures of *pañcāyat* democracy began to acquire a fictional character.

The fiction began with the referendum. By having to fight against political parties to win the referendum, the "Panchas" -- that is to say, the local leaders who were reputedly above party politics -- had to fully immerse themselves in it. By fighting against the collectively organized parties, the Panchas became effectively a political party of partyless people and Nepal was transformed from a partyless democracy to a one-party state that was run by the partyless party. Meanwhile, despite their illegal status, Congress and various leftist groups were able to operate fairly openly within the country. Congress boycotted the 1981 and 1986 general

elections, objecting to the ban on standing avowedly as the representative of a party and to the requirement that all candidates be members of one of the 'class organisations' set up under the *pañcāyat* system. It did, however, field candidates (as partyless individuals) in the 1987 local elections and won a number of seats, including the mayorship of Kathmandu. The duly elected party members, however, were later removed from office by the government upon their refusal to take part in the public processions celebrating Mahendra's gift of (*pañcāyat*) democracy to the people. Meanwhile, some leftist groups campaigned in the national elections, and managed to return candidates in a few cases where their network of activists was particularly strong, as in the Bhaktapur constituency in 1981 and 1986 and Chitwan in 1986. In the minds of the Nepalese intelligentsia -- that is to say, the newspaper reading public -- the work of the political parties had become an "open secret" and that of the state a "counterfeit reality".

The fiction became morally bankrupt in the last few years of the 1980s when corruption scandals caused growing discontent even among liberal supporters of the *pañcāyat* system. Moreover, the exposures of the private newspaper *Sāptāhik Vimarsā* that constitutional process was being manipulated behind the scenes by an 'underground gang' with palace connections gained considerable plausibility after the assassination attempt on its editor. At the same time, the dramatic changes in eastern

Europe not only encouraged hopes among Nepalese political activists generally, but also led some of the Nepalese Communist factions to reassess their view of 'bourgeois democracy' and to consider cooperation with the Congress party. At the Nepali Congress Conference in Kathmandu in January, 1990 plans were announced for a Movement for the Restoration of Multi-Party Democracy to be launched on February 18th, the anniversary of the 1951 establishment of the interim government after the overthrow of the Rana regime. The United Leftist Front (ULF), an alliance of seven Communist groups established early in the month, joined with Congress in organizing the campaign.

The movement began with demonstrations by party supporters, among whom students were again predominant. Clashes with police led to a number of deaths and thousands of arrests in Kathmandu and elsewhere in the country. In mid-March the campaign appeared to be flagging, but it was revived with a call to the general public to extinguish their lights at set times. This enabled the majority to register their protest in safety, whilst darkened streets emboldened an activist minority to confront the police. Protests from professional groups and human-rights activists, as well as expressions of concern by foreign-aid donors also heightened pressure on the government. Here the medical staff at the Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University played an important role vis-à-vis the world press by giving public witness to the number of activists

and innocent bystanders brought to clinics, wounded or dead.

The inability of the government to control the situation was reflected in the distribution of newspapers during the campaign. Normally when there is social unrest, "private" newspapers are banned and the *sarkāri* newspapers make no mention of the unrest. Such was also the case at the start of the relaunched Movement on the 18th February. Out of all the different weeklies collected by the South Asia Institute, only five issues were received in February (*Sāptāhik Vimarsā* 2.2.90; *Mātr̥bhūmī* 2, 9.2.90; *Samīkṣā* 2.2.90; *Āraṭī Sāptāhik* 3.2.90), and these date from before the start of the campaign on the 18th. Then ensued the usual period of silence from Nepal, from which foreign observers could infer something was happening but not what was happening. By mid-March, however, the "private" newspapers were again being published, and they remained so during the critical April period as well.

The turning point came at the end of March when anger over police firing led the inhabitants of Patan, immediately south of Kathmandu, to set up a Public Safety Committee, expel the police and block all access roads with ditches. Demonstrations continued elsewhere in the Valley towns, and at 7 a.m. on Friday, 6th April King Birendra broadcast to the nation announcing the dismissal of Prime Minister Marichman Singh and the appointment of Lok Bahadur Chand. He promised discussions with the opposition and the setting-up of a Constitutional Reform Commission. This, however, was not sufficient to

satisfy public opinion and later in the day around 200,000 people demonstrated in Kathmandu for an immediate end to the ban on political parties. A smaller body of demonstrators marched toward the royal palace, some shouting slogans directly against the king. Apparently believing that the the palace itself would come under attack and having failed to stop the crowd with tear gas, senior police or military officials ordered marksmen to open fire. Firing also occurred elsewhere in the city, killing perhaps fifty people in all. The Valley towns were placed under curfew; but after consultations with party leaders, who had up til now been under house arrest, it was announced on Sunday, 8th April that the ban on parties was rescinded. On 16th April the dissolution of all *pañcāyat* institutions and the resignation of Prime Minister Lok Bahadur Chand was announced. On 19th April veteran Congress politician Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was appointed Prime Minister, with a cabinet of three ministers each from Congress and the ULF, two independents and two royalists. The Cabinet was invested with the legislative powers of the dissolved National Assembly and was to run the country until elections next spring. Full freedom of speech was also established, with papers even free to criticise members of the royal family.

The government, the parties and the press in parliamentary democracy

The official entry of political parties into Nepalese public life not only makes anachronistic the continued

designation of these Nepalese language newspapers as being "private"; it also spells a new relationship between the parties, the government and the state that will change the identity of the official newspapers. In the past *Gorkhāpatra* and *The Rising Nepal* stood 'above politics' in the sense that both government organs claimed the space of the common good and excluded from public discourse the points of view of private interest groups; that is to say, of politicians and their parties. Presumably after the forthcoming May elections a party, or coalition of parties, will come to constitute the government. What will then happen to the *Gorkhāpatra* remains to be seen. Will it remain a state newspaper or will it become a government newspaper, strongly identified with the views of the party called to form the government? The rebirth of multi-party democracy after two decades of underground existence has led to the birth of numerous political parties. In the past political observers had only to keep track of the various factions within the Nepali Congress Party and the factions, splinter groups and parties that emerged from the Nepal Communist Party. In the past year, however, more than fifty new political parties have been formed, each with a leader representing a particular interest: liberal, socialist, popular, progressive, ethnic, regional, national, environmental and so on. Of these parties, 47 intend to contest the May election, and to this effect had by January 1991 applied for registration with the Election Commission. As for newspapers, there are presently 554 registered in

Nepal. Some serve as the mouthpiece of a political party; others are more independent, but leaning towards a party or supporting it on particular issues; others are one-man shows, representing the political interests of the editor and appearing only sporadically.

What follows is a breakdown of Nepal's contemporary political spectrum into five main interests -- the state, the Nepali Congress Party, various leftist parties, the former Panchas and political organizations representing ethnic interests -- and a short note on where some of the more popular newspapers, that may be purchased from New Road newsdealers, fit into this spectrum. Bearing in mind the proliferation of parties and the changeable nature of political affiliation in Nepal, the following classification must also remain somewhat provisional. The particular newspapers regularly collected by the South Asia Institute through its Kathmandu branch office and archived in Heidelberg are indicated by an asterisk, with the dates of the holdings in parenthesis.

The Nepalese State

Gorkhāpatra. Kathmandu: The Gorkhapatra Corporation.

This government-owned newspaper is the country's largest. It has been a daily since 1960. Although founded by Maharaja Dev Shamsber Rana in 1901 with the avowed intention of giving the people a platform for their views, it is essentially a government mouthpiece with extensive coverage of official pronouncements and speeches by pro-régime politicians. Foreign news is generally translated from agency reports. The paper is

written in a highly Sanskritised Nepali. There is considerable overlap in content with the English-language *Rising Nepal*. The paper is primarily read not for the news of political, economic or cultural events, but for government job advertisements and contracts put out to tender

*The Rising Nepal** [SAI 1979-present] Kathmandu: The Gorkhapatra Corporation.

The Nepal Government's English-language newspaper, overlapping in contents with its older, sister-publication, the *Gorkhāpatra*, and reflecting the same official line. It was founded in 1965. The readership consists predominantly of resident foreigners and tourists. A guide to some of the articles published in the last years of King Mahendra's reign and the opening ones of King Birendra's is provided by Bruce J. Belknap, *A selected index of articles from the Rising Nepal from 1969-1976*, Kathmandu: Documentation Centre, Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, 1978.

The Nepalese Congress Party

Oldest and most important of the parties. Founded by Nepalese dissident exiles in India in 1947 as the Nepali National Congress. Adopted its present name on amalgamation in 1950 with the Nepal Democratic Congress, an organization set up by estranged members of the Rana family. Played a leading role in the 1950/51 overthrow of Rana rule. Won an overall majority in the 1959 general election, but ousted by Mahendra in 1960. Mounted violent resistance to the royal regime up to 1962, thereafter extra-systemic

opposition of varying effectiveness till last year's successful movement in which it collaborated with the United Leftist Front. The party chairman, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, is currently Prime Minister, with three other Congress members in the cabinet: Yogprasad Upadhyaya (Home and Communications), Marshal Julum Shakya (Supply, Construction and Transport) and Mahendra Narayan Nidhi (Water Resources and Local Development). Bhattarai is at odds with party general secretary, Girija Prasad Koirala. 'Supreme leader' Ganesh Man Singh, a senior figure in the party since its foundation, holds the ring. The party is professedly socialist, but in effect, like the Indian Congress Party, a coalition of divergent interests and ideologies.

*Nepāl Pukār** [SAI 1985, 90-present] has been the official organ of the Congress Party since its foundation in 1947, but was banned (along with the Party) in 1960. It reappeared in recent years on a free-lance basis, but is now re-established as the party's official mouthpiece.

*Rāṣṭra Pukār** [SAI 1985, 89-90] which tried to take the place of *Nepāl Pukār*, has been published since 1968. Its former editor, Hom Nath Dahal, has now moved to the *Gorkhāpatra*.

Sāptāhik Vimarsā (also published as *Sāptāhik Vimañc, Viśā Janjyoti, Nepalī Āwāj*) [SAI 1984-85, 89-present]. Founded in 1971, this weekly, the most influential in the private sector (present circulation ca. 25,000), has undergone various changes of name, partly as a result of

falling foul of the press regulations. It was known as *Sāptāhik Mañc* for the first two years of publication, but it has no connection with another paper which now bears that title. Initially financed by Surya Bahadur Thapa, prime minister from 1979 to 1983 the paper tended to follow, in general, his 'liberal' *pañcāyat* line whilst also giving some space to advocates of a multi-party system. It also waged a constant campaign against 'the underground gang' (*bhumigat giroha*), a coterie said to be manipulating the political system by extra-constitutional means. Its prestige and circulation were boosted following the attempted assassination of its guest editor in 1986 and the arrest of prominent alleged gang-members and their subsequent conviction for the crime. Since 1990 the paper tends to support the Congress Party, although remaining critical of certain policies within the Party seen as betraying the original party line, such as the opening up to ex-Panchas. Its publisher, Keshab Raj Pendali, was once personal secretary to the Congress leader B.P. Koirala.

*Deśantar Sāptāhik** [SAI 1989-present]. This independent newspaper is close to the Congress, though opposing certain individuals within the Party. After *Sāptāhik Vimarsā* and *Drṣṭi* (see below), it is probably the third largest weekly in circulation. Internal quarrels have recently led to its reorganisation: it will now appear under the new name *Suruci*.

Other papers supporting the Nepali Congress Party are *Sāptāhik Nepali Avāj** [SAI 1989-present],

*Punarjāgaran, Janmabhūmi Sāptāhik, Arati** [SAI 1989-present], *Janamañc, Gāndiv* and *Rājamati* (Newari). The daily *Pariveś* is supported by the Finance Minister Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey.

The Political Left

The Nepal Communist Party, founded in India in 1949 by Pushpa Lal Shrestha, has since Mahendra's 1960 coup splintered into fifteen or sixteen different factions. Splits have been caused by tactical disagreements on participation in the *pañcāyat* system and collaboration with the Nepali Congress, ideological disputes (often linked with divisions within the international communist movement) and by simple personality clashes. Seven of the groups agreed in January 1990 to collaborate in a *United Leftist Front*, which then worked with Congress in the democracy movement and now shares power with it in the interim government. In December the four parties in the ULF, which did not have cabinet representation, quit the Front, charging that the other three had been advancing their specific party interests rather than working for the Front as a whole, and that money collected from the public had not been properly used. Two of the remaining parties in the ULF merged in January this year. Not all the parties on the political left are represented by significant papers. Of the parties within the ULF, the United Nepal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) was formed in January 1991 by the merger of the two most significant groups within the ULF: Nepal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) and the

Communist Party (Marxist). The former Leninist (the 'Mah Lehs') is usually regarded as the most important leftist group, and is represented in the cabinet by Jhalanath Khanal (Agriculture, Land Reforms and Forestry and Conservation). Originated as the 'Jhapali' group in the early 70s, when it was involved in Naxalite terrorism in Jhapa district; later renounced murder as a tactic but remained committed to armed revolution. Put up candidates in the 1986 election, winning four seats (in Kaski, Chitwan, Tehrathum and Jhapa), while a sympathiser (who later deserted to the *pañcāyat* camp) was elected from Ilam. Its 1989 party conference renounced Maoism and expressed support for a multi-party system, thus helping to pave the way for the 1990 movement. Favours 'naulo janbad' ('new republic' or 'new democracy') as a long-term goal but accepts a purely formal role for the monarchy in the interim. Many cadres, including veteran leader Mohan Chandra Adhikari who was imprisoned from the 1970s until this January, are thought to remain Maoists at heart; and it is official policy that 'reactionaries' and 'anti-nationals' should not be allowed freedom to organise. The party also backed the Chinese government's suppression of the democracy movement last year. On the other hand, there are members, or 'fellow travellers', on the party's more liberal wing, wishing to abandon the name 'Communist' in favour of 'Socialist'.

The former Nepal Communist Party (Marxist) cultivates close relations with its Indian namesake,

which is in power in West Bengal. It is led by veteran Communists, Man Mohan Adhikari and Sahana Pradhan. The latter, the widow of Pushpa Lal Shrestha, is Chairwoman of the United Leftist Front and Industry minister in the interim government.

The newly constituted United Nepal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), clearly dominates the left scene. It receives support from *Dr̥ṣṭi Sāptāhik** [SAI 1990-present], *Chalpal** [SAI 1985], the daily *Samālocana* and the *Mukhpatra Navayug* (the official publication of the NCP:M-L). The *Deḷi Dāyarī Sāptāhik** and *Mātr̥bhumi*, which also belong to this group, originally supported the Marxist faction (led by Man Mohan Adhikari). Also in the ULF is the Nepal Communist Party (Manandhar), a pro-Soviet grouping, named after its leader and represented in cabinet by Nilambar Acharya (Law and Justice, Labour and Social Welfare, Tourism), who was once a student in the Soviet Union. The views of this party, whose stronghold is in the Tarai, are expressed by *Madhyam*.

The following parties quit the ULF in December 1990. The Nepal Communist Party (Fourth Convention) is a Maoist grouping, still ideologically close to the Mashal and Masal (see below) groups with which it was united until the 80s. Accepts a multi-party system for the present, but not as a long-term goal. Its leader until recently, Nirmal Lama, member of the Constitutional Recommendations Commission attracted some criticism for a seeming attempt to attack the direction in which the Commission

was going without first resigning from it. Lama has now apparently been replaced as leader since the *Gorkhāpatra* (12.12.1990), reporting the break-up of the ULF, refers to Lilamani Pokhrel in that position. It has now joined the Mashal group (see below) with whom it has formed the *Ekata Kendra* (Unity Centre).

The Nepal Workers and Peasants Organisation is led by Narayan Bijukchheu ('Comrade Rohit'), who split from Pushpa Lal Shrestha in 1975/6. Apart from some limited support in the far west, draws nearly all its strength from Bhaktapur, where it has a firm grip on the Jyapus (Newar cultivator caste). One of the first leftist groups to adopt an 'entryist' approach to the *pañcāyat* system, it won the Bhaktapur seat in 1981. When its victorious candidate broke with the Party, allegedly after succumbing to the blandishments of Prince Dharendra, a new candidate was put up successfully in 1986. Following the 1987 killing of the 1981 candidate, Rohit and many associates were kept in prison until the victory of the democracy movement. The party remains officially Maoist but is simultaneously committed to a multi-party system! Its views are expressed through the paper *Avaj*.

Other parties, who left the ULF, include the Nepal Communist Party (*Amatya*) based mainly in Patan and supported by *Nepāli Samācār Sāptāhik* and *Astitva*; The Nepal Communist Party (Tulsilal), an allegedly pro-Soviet group, something of a one-man band whose leader Tulsilal Amatya was the only Nepalese politician to express support for Saddam Hussain after the

invasion of Kuwait; and the Nepal Communist Party (Varma), a small, pro-Soviet grouping, led by Krishna Rai Varma. It seems to have no newspaper of its own

Other leftist groups who remained outside the ULF, include the Nepal Communist Party (Mashal), probably the most influential of the 'hard-line' Communist groups remains committed to Maoist revolution and denounces the Marxist-Leninists for selling out to 'capitalist democracy'. Its leader, known only as Parchand split from Mohan Bikram Singh's group, to which it is still close ideologically, in the early 80s. It has now been joined by the NCP (Fourth Convention) to form the *Ekata Kendra* (Unity Centre). This group is represented mainly by *Pr̥ṣṭhabhūmi** [SAI 1990], further by *Yojanā*, *Jyālā*, *Nepāl̥bhūmi*, *Uṣā Sāptāhik*, and the *Newari Ināp*.

A second group is the Nepal Communist Party (Masal), a hard-line Maoist party led by Mohan Bikram Singh, who became well-known nationally during the referendum campaign. Weakened by the splitting off of the NCP (Mashal) group (about 1981) and 4th convention group (1984). Objections to Singh's personal behaviour, he is reputedly a womaniser and hard-drinker, rather than ideological differences may have been responsible for both splits. The party publishes *Mahimā* and *Ugāniar*.

Other groups, of considerably less significance, include the Nepal Marxist-Leninist Party, Proletarian Workers Organisation, and the Shambhuran, Haihar Junj Shah, 6th Convention and Nepal Communist Party (Unity Centre) groups.

The former Panchas

Many Panchas have now joined the Congress party (to which many of them had belonged before 1961) but two former prime ministers under the *pañcāyat* system came together to found a party largely incorporating other ex-activists under the old regime. Named the National Democratic Party (Rastriya Prajatantra Party), it split on the very day of its formation into two factions, each of which has registered separately with the Election Commission.

The National Democratic Party (Chand) is led by Lok Bahadur Chand, a veteran *pañcāyat* politician, the last of several terms as prime minister being in April this year between the dismissal of Marichman Singh and the appointment of the current premier Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. Backed by Pashupati Shumshere J.B. Rana, generally regarded as one of the more capable *pañcāyat* leaders and a key figure in the negotiations leading to the establishment of the interim government, the party is rumored to have received funds from the Queen. It is thought to have extensive support in the western hills, where many apparently regard it as 'the king's party'. The views of the National Democratic Party (Chand) are voiced mainly by *Samikṣā** [SAI 1985, 1989-present], as well as by the *Sāptāhik Mañc** [SAI 1984-85, 89-90], *Navaras*, and *Cakṣu** [SAI 1989-90].

The National Democratic Party (Thapa) is led by Surya Bahadur Thapa, once a close collaborator of King Mahendra under whom he served as premier from 1966 to

1969. After Birendra's accession he began agitating for reform within the *pañcāyat* system and was imprisoned for a year. Drafted in again as premier following the 1979 disturbances, he was one of the architects of the *pañcāyat* side's victory in the 1980 referendum. Removed after a vote of no-confidence in 1983, generally seen as engineered by the palace, he again acted as an opposition within the *pañcāyat* system. Widely seen as corrupt, though also with genuine liberal leanings, he now probably has much less support in the country than Chand, who replaced him as prime minister in 1983. After the success of the Movement Thapa founded his own paper, the *Nepāli Patra** [SAI 1990-present], which now is the voice of the National Democratic Party (Thapa). In August 1990 its editor Padam Thakurati (the journalist who - while with *Saptahik Vimsa* - had been the intended victim of assassination by Bharal Gurung and Co) resigned and joined the Nepali Congress. He was succeeded by Janardan Acharya. The party is also supported by *Janajyoti* and the daily *Hindu Dainik** [SAI 1990-present]. Another paper close to the Thapa group is *Samracanā*.

Political Organizations Representing Ethnic Interests

The number of papers published by 'ethnic' parties seems to be rather small. The weekly *Chaharā** [SAI 1991] is close to the 'Mongol National Organisation'. The Hindi paper *Viśleṣaṇ* represents the views of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party, based in

the Tarai; and *Janamukti* is the paper of the Rastriya Janamukti Morcha.

Finally mention should be made of the valuable service Mahesh Chandra Regmi has provided for non-Nepali speakers interested in political developments as reported in the Nepalese press. His *Nepal Press Digest*, abstracting in English translation, press-clippings from a broad variety of private newspapers, has been published from Lazimpat (Kathmandu) since 1963. For anyone interested in the ups- and downs of Nepalese politics or in the language of politics, there is no substitute for the newspapers themselves; but for anyone seeking quick and easy access to current political issues, *Nepal Press Digest* is a must [SAI 1963-present].

LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR NEPALESE STUDIES IN LONDON

Michael Hutt

London is a long way from Kathmandu: the two cities have little in common except, perhaps, a growing traffic problem and the palace of a constitutional monarch. But for historical reasons there are several valuable collections in London of material relating to Nepal. Although these are readily accessible to bona fide researchers, they are currently somewhat under-used. My intention here is to bring these collections to the notice of European scholars. This is by no means a comprehensive survey - there are many other oddities tucked away here and there, no doubt, and several of London's enormous museums

possess large collections of art and sculpture from the Himalayan region. But here I shall mention the main centres for library research, as well as some of the more interesting and unique material they contain.

There are at present three libraries with substantial holdings of books in Nepalese languages (principally, but not exclusively, Nepali), of books in European languages relating to Nepal and of Nepalese manuscripts. These are the India Office Library and Records (IOLR) near Waterloo Station, the Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books (OMPB) division of the British