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## From the Editor

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## FROM THE EDITOR:

The rhetoric around Nepal's Maoist insurgency invokes noble, seeming compelling, and absolutely contradictory images: it is a popular revolt against age-old oppressors; it is the struggle of a fledgling democracy against self-aggrandizing ideologues. The reality is a conflict that pits brother against brother in a bloody, wrenching struggle: livelihoods disrupted; fields and forest laid waste; lives and dreams destroyed.

For outsiders who know Nepal from the trail, tour bus, or pages of glossy magazines, this "People's War" is incomprehensible. How can this be happening in Shangri-La? Nepal is beautiful, smiling folk greeting us with "Namaste!" as we pass. It is ancient temples, thatch-roofed houses, picturesque villages, shining mountains—not Shining Path. Even those of us outsiders who know Nepal a little better are dumbfounded. Yes, there was that Kot massacre; yes, the legacy of Maluki Ain persists despite the 1990 Revolution—inequity and grinding poverty are the experience of most Nepalis; yes, the performance of post-Revolution governments has been disappointing—and yes, there was that other inexplicable horror, the royal massacre. But what about all those smiles, all that beauty?

The reality of this war began to penetrate my own resistance to even the idea of such a calamitous development when I first saw *The Killing Terraces*. It's a powerful film, skillfully made and careful to let the people in the middle of the People's War speak for themselves. It was the film's first image of rifle-toting young men that hit me hardest. I've seen those young men smiling back a greeting on the trail, sharing a chautara, dandling a toddler. How deeply disturbing to see them armed, clad in camouflage, grim-faced, marching out. Each time I show that film to a class I wonder how many of the people portrayed within it—army, police, politicians, insurgents, plain village folk—have died in this People's War since they were filmed? Who among them is on the list, now numbering more than 8000, of this war's casualties?

This first issue of *HIMALAYA*, the new incarnation of *HIMALAYAN RESEARCH BULLETIN*, helps to explain Nepal's war. Together, the insights of the six close observers whose work is presented here permit us to feel what it is like inside the village, show us how history informs and ignites this war, and provide us regional and theoretical contexts to make understanding the incomprehensible a little easier. The

subsequent Roundtable discussion adds more voices, more perspectives, other insights to this collective effort. We hope *HIMALAYA*'s readers will come away with a clearer picture of Nepal's experience. But we assume some among our readers will have questions, and other perspectives, and we hope to publish both in the next issue. We particularly seek reactions to the recent paper prepared by Robert Gersony for Mercy Corps International and mailed to most of our subscribers last fall (the Gersony white paper is available in both English and Nepali online: <http://www.mercycorps.com/items/1662/>). Now that we have almost mastered the new *HIMALAYA* format for the old HRB, we expect to send our follow-up issue (volume XXIII number 2) to press by November 1, 2004—so please share your thoughts quickly.

John Metz, guest editor for this volume, both organized the session from which we draw our papers and worked with authors over many months to fit them to *HIMALAYA*'s purposes. His efforts were impeded and this issue badly delayed by an unusually chaotic period in the Portland State University offices of HRB/*HIMALAYA*. We initiated not only a new format for the journal (the initial design by editorial associate Ryan Mitchell), but also pioneered our first calendar, struggled (unsuccessfully, it appears) to finish a second in time for 2005, moved our office, and experienced a wholesale staff change. A new graduate assistant-editor, Tiaan van der Linde, replaces Ryan Mitchell (who has generously continued to provide editorial and design aid); a new office manager, undergraduate Mohammad Barghouti, succeeds—or soon will—the long-suffering and serving Kathleen Jongeward, who completed her degree and graduated in June with, among other honors, the award for Outstanding Student Employee for her work for us. And a particular acknowledgement goes here to the amazing, uncompensated efforts of Peggy Lindquist, who has spent the last several months tinkering with the new *HIMALAYA* design, taking it from drawing board to printer's copy, all the while freely sharing her own design and editing skills with a severely over-stretched and under-skilled editorial staff. Thanks to all for their efforts, to the authors and other contributors, and to subscribers—for their patience with our perennially erratic publication schedule.

*Barbara Brower*  
September 20, 2004