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ROUNDTABLE:

ARJUN GUNERATNE, PRESIDENT OF ASSOCIATION OF NEPAL AND HIMALAYAN STUDIES, WITH: MARY DES CHENE, STEPHEN MIKESSELL, PADMA RATNA TULADHAR, KANAK DIXIT, JOHN METZ, MAHENDRA LAWOT, CABIERI ROBINSON, JULIA FLOWERDAY, SARA SHNEIDERMAN, JUDITH PETTIGREW, LI ONESTO, LAUREN LEVE

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION OF ANHS 2002 PRE-CONFERENCE ON THE MAOIST REBELLION IN NEPAL

Welcome back to our evening discussion. This evening we will begin with reaction statements from two of our members, Mary Des Chene and Stephen Mikesell, and then we will open our discussion to all of you. Mary Des Chene will you begin?

Mary Des Chene: I want to do three things this evening. First, some audience members asked me to discuss a several issues that were neglected during the paper sessions. Second, I want to respond to some things I heard in the afternoon sessions. Lastly, I want to suggest some issues that we all need to be thinking about.

One issue mentioned to me after the formal discussion in the afternoon is the land issue. We have managed to talk for a whole day without considering land ownership, which is a fundamental issue for very many supporters of the Maoists. We should all be struck with this. It shows that we've had a very urban and middle class perspective. That issue made me think more generally that the Maoist Three Point Plan has not come into this discussion at all yet. And I just want to point out here that most of the things that are on that list are either enshrined in the constitution or are in already existing laws: the state should be doing most of these things now, by its own laws. So ignoring those very specific demands as the ravings of radicals, is really inadequate. And, proclaiming that these demands are cynical ploys to capture state power also seems disingenuous, a way to discredit the claim. It is something that can only get tested through a negotiation process.

Mark Liechty, who had to leave, said he was surprised that the term "nation" never really emerged in the discussion this afternoon. I am not going to

repeat all he said here, but his comment reminded me that there are other important grassroots movements going on in the countryside: the ethnic movements, the language-based movements, and so on. So, Mark's comment about "nation" identifies one of the sources of the Maoist rebellion that we have not explored adequately.

From today's session, we had a very vivid portrait from Judith Pettigrew of the army on a rampage in a village. And in another case, Kanak Dixit brought out cases of Maoists executing people that would not appear to be class enemies. I think that it's probably not useful to argue over who was engaging in worse human rights violations. There is a fair bit of documentary evidence to be looked at. But rather let's look at the people Judith talked about, those who are not political activists, but are "caught in the middle." This is something that is really widespread, especially outside of the Maoist "base areas." Some of the points that Richard Bownas was making about differences between organizing in places with embedded organizers who have long been part of the society and in places where there is the recent expansion of struggle. But I think that when we talk about being "caught in the middle," we must note that in the vast majority of documented cases, the Maoists are seeking food and shelter, while the army actions in the village are in the form of beatings and killings. These are not equivalent things, and I think that needs to be emphasized when we think about what people are caught in the middle of. There have been many cases like those Judith described that have been documented by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations. In addition, there are many other cases that aren't well enough

documented to get into the human rights reports. That raises the question whether the state actions in the current crisis represent deviations from its main tendency or reveal its main tendency. This returns us to the question of what those holding power now mean by democracy, or mean by human rights, or mean by people. Those are hard questions that anybody who wants to talk about the nature of the war needs to be thinking about.

I want to comment on two statements that Kanak Dixit made this afternoon. Is Kanak here? (Voice yells "Not yet, but he will come soon.")

Well, but I don't have time to wait because Arjun tells me my time is up . . . In his talk today Kanak said he wasn't going to talk about army killings. I want to say no to the idea that this is a subject that should be tabled. Anybody who believes in the right of state government to exist in Nepal has the duty to document to the best of their ability the conditions under which the killings are occurring. I especially include in this group social scientists who have made their careers in Nepal.

Kanak also said "most problems are linked to the intelligentsia within the Kathmandu valley." I think he meant that the failures of the intelligentsia are the main problem. I find this a very narrow reading of Nepal's reality. What is missing is the entrenched landlords in the countryside, the intense culture of oppression, the struggles of peasants, and many many other issues. The question is who will determine Nepal's future: the elites or the masses. I personally can't imagine how Kathmandu intellectuals are capable of resolving most of these problems, though they could contribute more to them. Rather it will require very deep knowledge of local and regional issues and of local ways of battling through.

One last thing we must think about: the role of international agents. What about the \$20 million in military aid and the 5,500 machine guns the US recently provided? What is the very real but complex role this aid plays in expanding and deepening the war in Nepal. We need think seriously about this issue. I'll stop now.

Arjun Guneratne: Thank you Mary. Now let's hear from our second commentator, Stephen Mikesell.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Stephen Mikesell: I want to take off on this last point that Mary was making. It is striking that all these discussions and papers were made without including the international context, and yet we're seeing very similar things happening all over the world. If you read, for example, *Monthly Review*, you see analyses of a lot of similar things, and even worse things, happening in Central America lately. Indeed, conditions in Central America are much more advanced than Nepal

and may suggest what's going to happen in Nepal over the next few years. It's curious that with everyone talking about globalization, we don't look at Nepal from a global perspective. We're now in a world that's dominated by international finance, which has been setting the agenda in Nepal over the last ten years, with the privatizations and the other "solutions" they've been promoting. So, reformers acting with the of best intentions, trying to implement democracy will be up against the very real problems international finance will impose. For example, in the last ten years since democracy came, I know that something like twenty international banks have opened branches in Nepal. As Lenin pointed out a century ago in his book *Imperialism, the Last Stage of Capitalism*, banks are the vehicles by which financial capital establishes rule over a country. In Nepal you can see it concentrating many small pools of capital, which once were available in the countryside, but have now been taken out and are no longer available. Even if they were used for usury, they were still locally available and that's the way agriculture has been maintained over the centuries. But, now they're being concentrated outside of the villages and are being absorbed by large capital in order to advance their agendas in the country. Take automobiles, for example. I heard there are now 200,000 automobiles that have been imported into Kathmandu, for 90 km of roads! If you multiply that number times \$20,000 per automobile, I think you have \$4 billion just in automobiles, including, among other things—and adding the petroleum imports required by automobiles—the growing trade imbalance.

Another issue is cultural change. Hundreds of thousands of people are becoming Christians each year, especially among the lower classes. This is the same constituency that the Maoists are aiming at. Many of these revivalist Protestant Christian projects are out of Korea. This kind of Christianity is promoting an American agenda, or a multinational and capitalist agenda, among other things. And, if we are talking of losing culture, as pointed out in the book *Fishers for Men, Founders of Empire: The Wycliff Bible Translators in Latin America*, Christianity is in some ways more insidious than the Maoists. And, of course, there is TV and consumer culture that Kanak mentioned. Regarding this issue of cultural homogenization: the question is: Culture for whom?

Another aspect of culture change comes from Nepalese sojourning in India and beyond. Some 7,000 women or so are being trafficked to India for prostitution every year, and there may be 100,000 or so in Bombay. Poverty forces millions of men and women to go abroad for work, but few of us have considered the impact of these experiences on the culture of these people.

Then there is the question of development. In colonial times they called it "civilizing." But after the WWII the whole ideology of development was created in order to counter the

rise of the nationalist movements. I think a lot of people were making that point today. Dollars and Sense magazine recently noted that for every dollar of development aid more than three hundred dollars are returned to the finance capitals of the world. You can actually see this process in Nepal: after how many years of development the country is burdened by this immense international debt, among other things.

Another issue I had is education, especially in the countryside. Rather than really addressing the needs of Nepal's rural residents, education is actually making young people want to leave the countryside. When you look at Nepal's education program, it looks like something that comes out of the West, but the image is distorted, as if you are seeing it in a broken mirror. If you go into the classrooms, there's tremendous overcrowding, like the hundred kids per classroom I saw in Bandipur; and I just wondered how much they could get out of that, sitting there every day. And at the same time they were losing whatever acculturation or socialization they had previously had within the village. So, in the countryside at least, I see education as a way to disqualify young people, because they aren't really prepared to be successful in the School Leaving Certificate exam, which is the core of the education system, nor are they prepared to live and work in the countryside. Is it any surprise that young people are angry and see taking up weapons as the only solution? Even urban kids, who "succeed" in the education system with high marks and the coveted degrees in engineering and medicine, are trying in large numbers to leave the country to join transnational corporate culture that they have been educated and socialized in because they no longer have the qualifications or tools or imagination to find a place for themselves in their own country any longer—particularly working in and among and for the vast majority of the country, the rural population—despite their country's crying needs.

The last issue I'd like to raise is "democracy." This returns me to my first point: we often neglect the international context. In the last ten years we've seen "democracy" come to many, many countries. Some critics claim that this is really a much cheaper way to extend finance capital and run the world than relying on absolute regimes with their kings and dictators. Also it's been a very good way of promoting things like privatization, which never could have happened in Nepal's old Panchayat regime, for example, because that regime had no legitimacy. Democracy legitimizes the current regimes in Nepal and elsewhere. A democratic political system is also a way to co-opt the opposition parties. All this co-opting and corruption that has been happening in Nepal these last 12 years is also happening in the democratic regimes that have come to Brazil, Argentina, El Salvador and other places. Most of these countries have had dictators and revolutionary movements. With democracy and coalition

governments, the formerly revolutionary opposition has been coopted and NGO'd and all kinds of things. I can't help wondering if there is a liberal solution for these kinds of problems? Anyway, those are the issues that I wanted to raise.

Arjun Guneratne: Thank you Steven. I believe that Mary Des Chene will read a statement from Padma Ratna Tuladhhar.

STATEMENT BY PADMA RATNA TULADHAR

Mary Des Chene: The statement I am about to read is addressed to our conference from Padma Ratna Tuladhhar. He wrote it in English, so this is no translation. He sent this on 6 October 2002 so that is just two days after the royal takeover, when the king dismissed the government and began ruling himself through his appointed Prime Minister:

Dear friends, as you gather to discuss the difficult times my country is passing through, I hope it might be useful to you, to hear from someone who's been in the midst of efforts for a peaceful resolution. As many of you may know, I have served as a mediator to bring about peace talks between the government and the CPN Maoists since the very beginning of the people's war. I speak from the perspective of what that experience has taught me. I would like to briefly comment on three areas: 1) what is the nature of CPN-Maoists and what do they want? 2) what has been the impact of negotiations and what are the prospects for peace? 3) what are the positive and negative impacts of international actors?

First the Maoists. It seems many times in both international and Nepalese forums that the armed struggle is discussed without reference to the Maoist ideology or political agenda. Since the international "war on terrorism" began, they have also been labeled terrorists, although up until that time they'd been consistently recognized as a political force with a political agenda. Whether anyone agrees or disagrees with their agenda, an understanding of it needs to form one basis of any discussion. I will point out a few key elements of their stated agenda.

A) The movement is purely a political movement based on the ideology of Marxism and Maoism.

B) The movement aims to achieve purely political motives, that is, the liberation of the Nepalese people from all forms of exploitation.

C) The movement seeks to establish in Nepal a people's democracy or a kind of people's rule.

D) They do not believe that they could achieve all this in two years, and with ease, so they termed this war a long-term or protracted people's war.

E) They believed that the present parliamentary democracy is a capitalist democracy which cannot solve the problems of the people of the country, so they want to end this present political system and establish a new democracy. This they declared when they started the People's War.

F) They believe that the Nepalese people are a sovereign people and that they are entitled to be the masters of their motherland. And that this could happen only through the armed revolution. That is, the use of force is essential for the liberation and the empowerment of the people.

G) At the same time, they are also in favor of dialogue or peace negotiations to bring about the above objectives. That is, people's war can end in dialogue and implementation of liberating policies that end exploitation of the masses. They've always responded positively to dialogue talks. I've never known them to reject any discussion to bring about talks.

H) At present, there's a Three Point Program: 1) the formation of an interim all-party national government; 2) the formation of a constituent assembly to be elected by the people; 3) the institutional development of the republican state. This is the political agenda they presented during the second round of talks in September last year; they still stand by this agenda.

My second topic is peace negotiations.

A) First, the Maoists say that if anything could be achieved through a peaceful means, they are quite prepared to be engaged very seriously in peace negotiations.

B) They have repeatedly said that they could be flexible in peace negotiations and have sometimes used the phrase "maximumly flexible." A concrete example of that flexibility is that during last year's peace negotiations they put aside their demand for a republican state and were ready to negotiate first on the other issues alone.

C) Recently the Maoists proposed for a roundtable political conference to convene and find a progressive way out of this serious national problem.

D) Viable proposals have come from other political parties and the human rights sector as well. For example, the movement to save democratic rights, of which I am a part, proposed and offered to organize a roundtable conference to be attended by all the major political parties, including the Maoists and the government. It was only the government who did not indicate willingness to participate.

E) I can inform you that the Maoists are still prepared to respond positively once the government makes public policy dialogue. They are also prepared even for a unilateral ceasefire on the condition that the government would reciprocate immediately. The government had not made any call for dialogue, instead rejecting all overtures from both the Maoists and united calls from the Parliamentary party. Nor has it made any

commitment to reciprocate in a ceasefire.

F) No one can say what may happen in the near future, or whether a legitimate government, serious about negotiating, will be formed. But it is my view that the new government should have a one point program to start peace negotiations, negotiate with sincerity and seriousness, and thus create an environment to hold elections as soon as possible. This should be the prime mandate to the new government.

My third area of discussion is the role of international actors. Because peace negotiations are quite possible, if there is the political will for them, and because the Maoists have made public commitments to peaceful solutions, and also because they have indicated their willingness to halt the war, in my view there is no necessity to escalate the war from either side. The vast majority of the Nepalese population are always in favor of peace talks. This fact or this sentiment of the people should not be neglected by any of us. But the government stance has hardened against peaceful solutions ever since it began receiving signals, increasingly followed up by material assistance, of international support for defensive and offensive military action. In this climate, more than one Nepalese official has called for "finishing off the Maoists." Military aid is nothing other than support for a long, bloody, civil war and for the killing of our youth, whatever anyone may call it. We continue to talk about talks and remain quite hopeful of the possibility. There are hindrances, too, some domestic, some international, and these are exacerbated by the international climate of fear and the easy labeling of political insurgents as terrorists.

I wish to point out two key areas where the international scholars and activists might intervene on the side of increasing the possibility of peace in Nepal. First, the government should not purchase or import arms to escalate war. At the same time, I am requesting foreign governments not to supply arms to our peace-loving country. Indeed, if they were to look into the human rights record of the armed forces, which has been documented by respected international bodies like the U.N., Amnesty International, or a recent report of the European Union, many would find themselves bound by domestic law or treaty obligations to terminate their aid. Rather, they should help us solve our serious national problems through peaceful means. We want to benefit from international experience solving these problems through peace dialogues. We wanted to have moral and political support from the friendly countries to achieve peace, justice, and progress for the people of the country. But while there are many friends who offer this support, there are other countries who are increasingly supplying guns, ammunition, night vision equipment and strategic plans for attacking. This military aid is really impacting the course of events and derailing prospects for peace.

The second area where international scholars can help is by pressuring their governments and other international agencies.

The Maoists are still being labeled and treated as terrorists. The Nepalese government has banned them and considers the Maoists treasonous. Their leaders have a price placed on their heads and are on Interpol's lists. Although the United States has not yet placed them on their list of terrorist organizations, that, too, might come. Finally, no government is questioning the Nepalese government's claim that the Maoists are terrorists or the package of illegal laws they have enacted, like the Anti-Terrorist Act which has created such a climate of terror in both city and countryside and has jailed journalists, lawyers, and simple peasants, depriving them of the most basic legal rights. All this pushes Nepal further away from the possibility of peace. I ask you to do what you can in your own place to promote useful and positive international responses to Nepal's problems and to our efforts for peaceful revolution. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you from afar. (Padma Ratna Tuladhar)

Arjun Guneratne: Thank you Mary. I think the floor is now open for anyone who wishes to comment or to ask questions.

THE ISSUE OF DEMOCRACY

John Metz: I had a question for Kanak. You were suggesting that democracy is the solution to Nepal's impasse, and I'm wondering what kind of democracy you're thinking about? Especially given what Steve Mikesell was saying about democracy. I mean that without addressing the inequities in access to land and other resources, without dealing with the all-pervasive corruption, it seems unlikely that peace can be restored. One type of democracy that strikes me as a model is found in the Indian state of Kerala. Here they have restructured opportunity to meet the needs of the poor majority.

Kanak Dixit: That is the kind of restructuring that we are suggesting. It is not the restructuring of the Maoists. It goes beyond the Maoists. It will not be easy. This is a long-term process, not a panacea. We have to get over the immediate roadblock of the Maoist versus the government—the Maoists versus the army—and get back to negotiating a settlement. The medium to long-term way ahead is to make sure that our democracy increases, and this will not be through this constitution alone. This constitution has to be deepened. One way to do it is through evolution, through the social movements, the NGOs, and so on. The whole idea is there's a lack of ownership of the government in Nepal right now, over the last twelve years since the 1990 uprising. The Maoist movement came out of left field, yet it forced us to look at the problems, which in my view are actually much larger than what the Maoists perceive. I think there is a lot of romanticism in how the Maoists are being perceived. And if we look to the source of this lack of ownership, it is having to do with

ethnicity, it is having to do with class, of course, it's having to do with region. By region I mean, "I can take the Tarai, you can take the Far West." By ethnicity I mean the vast majority of Nepalis, who are divided into many, many miniscule ethnic groups who do not have representation. So, what is the way out? Is it through regional government? Certainly, Kerala's democracy is an absolute minimum that we need to have and we are actually working towards it. The Village Development Committees (VDCs) of the post 1990 period were actually working towards that idea. Beyond that, should it be regional parliaments leading to a national parliament? Would that mean using the Development Zones that King Mahendra created in the 1960s, a division which hitherto has had no function at all? So, rather than having the VDCs and district assemblies leading directly into the center, we should insert a regional parliament because most of our ethnicities are divided in regions, and so would a regional parliament provide the kind of representation and decision-making for ethnic groups that the current parliament is not able to do? I used to believe that talking about democracy is about romantic pie in the sky. Now, I think we must make the democracy work, and we must try and see why it doesn't work and what to do, rather than go through a gun-slitting revolution.

Mahendra Lawoti: I'd like to continue on the concept of democracy. In fact, democracy in Nepal is the topic of my dissertation, so I can go on for a while. (Audience laughs) As regards to the problem in Nepal, I see two problems. One problem is the running of the current democracy; the second is how to create a more effective democratic system. One of the major problems of our current system is the lack of horizontal accountability. Because the executive is very powerful and because he appoints the constitutional commission which is supposed to be supervising his activities, the system has failed to work. A second major problem of the current democracy is the failure of the electoral system to provide vertical accountability, as evidenced by the various electoral frauds and abusive use of money and so on. If we can have a mechanism led by independently appointed central commissions like the Election Commission, the Commission for Investigation of Abuse and Authority, and so on, our democracy might be more able to check the executive and other powerful agencies.

But going beyond the current system, how can we accommodate Nepal's multicultural society? Looking around the world, we see multicultural societies that have different kinds of democracies. In Nepal we have the Westminster and majoritarian democracy. However, other multi-cultural societies have consensual, or consensus democracies. The difference between these two systems is that majoritarian democracies seem to address the issue of class, whereas consensus democracies address the issue of class as well as cultural diversity. So in multicultural societies like Switzerland and Belgium, con-

sensus democracies have worked pretty well. Let me explain some of the difference between these two forms of democracy. In a majoritarian democracy, the party with a plurality of votes has most of the power and gets to rule. However, in a consensus democracy there are different kinds of power sharing elements, for instance, paternalism[?] is one of the most common things in the society, so that different groups get autonomy around their own cultural and development issues, education policies, and so on. So my understanding is that if Nepal wants to have an inclusive democracy it would adopt consensus forms, which would require some kind of autonomy within a federal system, some kind of proportional electoral system, and the protection of minority rights written into the constitution. And even the regional government that might form would have to protect the minorities within the region because a lot of ethnic groups within Nepal cannot protect themselves.

Unfortunately, in a dialog between the government, the political parties, and the Maoists, I don't think many of these issues will be discussed. If we look at what happened in 1990 during the dialog between the Palace and democracy movement leaders, when it came to political power, the "restoration of democracy movement" leaders got most of the power from the king, but they accepted that the king would maintain complete control over the army. But in terms of making cultural issues a key element of the negotiations, the democracy leaders just didn't do it. The reason for this is that the democracy leaders, people like [Ganesh Man Singh, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai], and so on have the same kinds of interests as the king. And I guess on many issues, even the Maoists might share these interests. I believe that the political parties are slightly more progressive, because they have accepted, at least in terms of their declarations, that they would go for autonomy, secularity, and so on. But when it comes to the real bargaining process, I don't know how hard they will fight for ethnic group rights. They might give them away to get something else on the table. So, my proposal would be that there should be a constitutional assembly composed not only of political parties, but also of representatives of other interest groups in the society, like cultural interests, societal interests, etc. Only by including all voices in drafting the constitution can we ensure that a viable democracy will form.

WAR AND VIOLENCE AS TERRORISM

Julia Flowerday: I would like to make a general comment to all. I know the conference intended to include experts on Afghanistan as well as from Kashmir and Nepal, and I think we could have benefited from that broader spectrum. Because what I sense is that terrorism is not just killing, it is also the traumatizing of those who survive. So, what I want to consider is the ways war and oppression by state governments

or by ethnic groups can terrorize those they do not kill. For example, it would have been informative to have listened to scholars familiar with Afghanistan talking about the Taliban and the kinds of trauma they caused to women and others without actually killing them. Or we could consider the practices of the Israelis as they interact with Palestinians. The Israelis practice a Western sort of trauma, where they'll take their victims away from the local population to torture them. In the developing world, however, terrorist acts often occur in open public view. A particularly horrible example occurred in Gujarat this last year when Hindu nationalist extremists killed thousands of Muslims in retaliation for Muslims killing about 100 Hindu supremacists on a train. The retaliations included women who were pregnant and had their bellies slashed open, their fetuses killed, and then the woman herself killed. Or Muslims who were rounded up, locked in a house, the house flooded with water, and electrical wires thrown into the water, electrocuting all the people. Or children who had kerosene poured on them and they were set afire in the street. The people who witness these atrocities are all traumatized and terrorized. But of course, those committing these atrocities are really interested in controlling the people who live, not the ones who die, so our focus should also be on the living. There's also a way humanitarians play into this game of trauma because they reproduce those images and spread the word, thereby also creating terror in people who are just at the margins of whatever is going on. I don't know if any of you saw the film *Gladiator*, but I thought it was absolutely brilliant because it showed how the violence of gladiator fights and killing Christians helped those in power control the society. It's the kind of trauma and terrorism that I think we're all a part of today, but we're involved in it at different levels and in different ways. And I just think that if our panel discussion had been a bit broader, we might have penetrated some of these issues a little bit more. We really have a big spectrum to consider when we look at terrorism.

U.S. INVOLVEMENT

John Metz: One of the things that strikes me about our discussions today is the complexity of the issues and their geographical specificity. Cabeiri Robinson talked brilliantly about the complexities of Kashmir. Sara Shneiderman and Judy Pettigrew talked about specific places in Nepal and the specific events that occurred in those places that have affected local people. Mahendra Lawoti has discussed the varying forms of democracy and how the structure of the political system can accommodate or ignore the needs of groups who may well wage war when their needs are neglected. But on the other hand, what's going on in the U.S. right now is rampant simplification, a fearful retreat into clichés and jingoism, a willful ignoring of the complexity of our world. So,

this is what we should really be doing, trying to counter this over-simplifying trend, trying to make our students and our society realize the complexity of our world, because learning to accommodate the complexity and the ambiguity will determine our survival as a civilized society. The other thing is the hegemonic power the US wields. Those of us who are US citizens have a responsibility for our government. It has the power to give money and horrific weapons to whomever it decides will further its interests. Moreover, it can create the discourses that justify actions that affect the fates of millions of people. The US can label the Maoists terrorists and define people in ways that make them deserving of death. So, how can we counterbalance these trends and the powers of the US?

Sara Shneiderman: I'd like to follow up on that. I have many comments about the numerous strands of our discussion, but I want to speak to US involvement in particular and then respond to Padma Ratna Tuladhar's statement that Mary Deschene read earlier. But first I'd like to ask while we're all here whether we want to take collective action, perhaps make a collective statement about the situation in Nepal. I am hoping that Judith Pettigrew will describe how the Britain-Nepal Academic Council came to make a public statement regarding the war in Nepal. And then I want to ask whether the ANHS would like to do something similar. Perhaps that's an issue we should take up at the full membership meeting tomorrow night, but I'd like to raise the issue now while everybody's here. Judith, maybe you could fill us in on what happened in the UK?

Judith Pettigrew: It was in February 2002. It grew out of a conference which was specifically about the war in Nepal that we had in London. We wrote to the Prime Minister condemning the Nepal government's requirement that health practitioners report to the military the medical treatment of people who have been injured in the war. What we did was discuss the issue on an afternoon, draft a collective statement, and decide to write to the Prime Minister, which we did. And we left it up to individuals to sign the collective statement. And, we received a reply very quickly, though it was not a reply that we were happy with, but it did show that our concerns had registered with the Prime Minister.

Steven Mikesell: I have another suggestion. There is an open public newswire and Internet site that goes to 40-50 countries called Open Media [www.internews.org], so I request that you publish things about the war in Nepal, especially about the US advisors and arms, at that site. I'm also trying to put together a global Web page of publications. Another thing I've noticed is that many local newspapers, like the Madison papers, are getting information on line, as are community radio stations across the US, including Pacifica Radio. So, getting reports and opinion pieces to them is one

good way to reach a really big audience.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Li Onesto: I am Li Onesto with the Revolutionary Worker newspaper [<http://rwor.org/s/nepal.htm>]. In 1999 I had the opportunity to travel in the guerilla zones of western Nepal for 3 months and to interview many of the insurgents, including some leaders of the CPN (Maoist). I wanted to speak to some of the issues that Mary Deschene raised, and I also wanted to discuss the significance of the base areas, their pivotal role in the strategic program of the Maoists. Even the government has admitted that most districts have these base areas and that it has lost control over them. There was a lot of talk today about what motivates the Maoist insurgents. Many of you are experts on Nepal. You have detailed knowledge about conditions there: the poverty, the inequality, the caste system. People are looking for an alternative. Especially after the 1990 uprising, people expected changes, but there were none. So, they looked for an alternative, for leadership, and that search became part of a push in the direction of the Maoists.

At the same time, I think it's very important to understand that there is also a pull. What is it that is actually capturing the imagination of the thousands of people who are joining the Maoists? What is the relationship between that and the base areas where they have established what they call "people's power." Because I don't think that they would be having the kind of military success that they are without the pull of their hope for a new Nepal. This is not just what the Maoists are saying, but it is what the international news media report, and what the government's own report shows.

As Mary brought out earlier, we must dig into what is going on in rural Nepal. Whether we agree with it or not, you have to really dig into the Maoist program. What is it that they're offering to people? What vision is capturing millions and millions of peoples' imaginations? When I was there, I interviewed a lot of people who had witnessed the transformation that is going on in the base areas, especially with women and their participation. So, what is the actual strategy of the Maoists, especially in relation to the base areas? The strategy is actually to protract the war. In other words, they don't want to come up against the government in a decisive battle. Rather their strategy is to have a long drawn out war in which they're building up base areas and seizing power bit by bit until the point where they can actually seize complete state power. This leads to the discussion of state power. In a lot of countries guerilla movements have the goal of waging armed struggle in order to negotiate a piece of the pie, in order to become part of the present set-up. That's not at all what the Maoists seek. This is what really delineates them not only from other communist or political movements in Nepal, but from other movements all over the world.

Another crucial area is the question of a larger global context. This issue that Steve is raising is tremendously important. The US role, especially since 9/11, is ominous. That Colin Powell is going to Nepal or that Nepal's Prime Minister is invited to the White House is unprecedented. How will US military aid and military generals visiting Nepal to investigate the civil war affect the government's desire to negotiate a peaceful solution? I think one of the questions that we have to ask is, what is the role of US citizens in speaking out about the human rights issues, about the "state of emergency" and the king's recent seizure of power, about the U.S. government's military and diplomatic support, given to a government that is clearly carrying out massive human rights violations? You need to do what the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York has done to publicize internationally the repression of journalists that's come down, the censorship, and the jailing of not just Maoist journalists, but even mainstream journalists. So I don't think there has been enough coming to grips with the responsibility that you people here have in terms of educating the public beyond these circles. I mean, this is great here, you are sharing information with each other, but how many people in the broader US population know about what's going in Nepal? I mean, isn't it the responsibility of people here who know about this stuff to speak out? I think that's something that you really need to think about.

Just a couple of other points on the question of a larger global context. When I was interviewing villagers in the guerrilla zones, they were always very curious about and wanting to know about other revolutionary movements around the world. They also were very intent on me communicating their message that their struggle was part of an international struggle, that they saw their struggle as in solidarity with other peoples' struggles beyond Nepal. Now this isn't just an abstract gesture. If you actually look at the things that the Maoists are doing, like their participation in international organizations, it is clear that their strategy is an international one. A concrete example that you may not be aware of is that the Nepalese Maoists and 10 or 12 other Maoist organizations from the region formed an organization and held their first conference last year. (This group is the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia.) They see this as a strategic alliance, a strategic coordination because they know that even if they do attain their goal of seizing power in Nepal, that they can't stop there. They know that when they take control of Nepal it will upset the stability of the whole region. Because they're very clear that they think that India will eventually get more directly involved in opposing their struggle. And so, I think the regional strategic significance of the Maoist struggle is another thing to consider. And finally we have to return to how the U.S., UK, and other powers are looking Nepal in terms of the volatility of that region, and what a successful Maoist example would

mean in that whole region.

Finally, I wanted to say a few words about an extensive interview I had with the top leader of the CPN (Maoist), Prachanda. One of the things that he really stressed was their international strategic view. At the very end of the interview he told me that although Nepal is a very small country, because of their circumstances, they can be a spark which has a great deal of significance beyond Nepal. So to conclude, I think that, some of this international context was missing from the discussions today. And it's not just a backup, but it really is what's driving the situation right now. We see Tony Blair holding an international meeting of the major imperialist powers in London to discuss the Maoist problem in Nepal. When does that happen? Since when does the President of the United States invite the prime minister of Nepal to the White House? It seems Nepal has become some part of the overall global strategy of the US and its allies. So, what will you Nepal scholars do?

Arjun: May I ask, if you are going to address yourself to what Li is talking about?

Will Van De Berg: Yes, I will. I am Will Van de Berg. I was also struck with the absence of an international context today. I agree with Li that base areas are a very key element in Maoist strategy, that if you achieve comfortable base areas, you can enculturate all the populace, and so you can actually prolong the conflict for generations if you like. In addition, base areas provide safe training areas for the struggle and for the ultimate, last stage of attack, which is taking control of the urban areas and the entire state. And I also agree with Li that base areas have allowed the major escalation of the conflict that we are seeing. But, I have been amazed today that I have not heard Sendero Luminoso mentioned even once, because Peru is the closest parallel to what's going on with the Maoist movement in Nepal. Sendero Luminoso was following that same strategy, but what really stopped their movement was that they relied too heavily on a few charismatic leaders, so when the government captured and killed or imprisoned the leaders, they cut the head off the rebellion. My advisor, Bob Rhodes, was living in Peru during the Sendero civil war, so he and I are now writing a paper comparing Peru and Nepal. Nepal's Maoists are still held in high esteem by many in the western world because Nepal remains relatively safe for tourists and Westerners. What is less well known is that during the first ten years of the Sendero struggle, they also did not attack western tourists. When finally they did start attacking tourists, the tourist industry declined drastically and that hurt the economy and the government. Of course, Nepal's tourist industry is already suffering. I have been doing my dissertation research on tourism for the past three years, and so I watched as the royal massacre and the 9/11 attacks crushed tourism in Nepal. I mean after 9/11 agencies had 62%

to 100% cancellation rates from Americans and 50% to 70% from Europeans, Japanese, and other nationalities. And that's without the Maoists attacking tourists. But, we will probably see the Maoists go after tourists within the next several years, if they follow the Sendero model. What do we all have to say about this? I mean, most western commentators fail to condemn the insurrection because it's been safe for them, even though it's not safe for the majority of the population of the country. This is a seriously flawed approach. Similarly, we all talk about our fieldwork in the areas, but when Maoists begin to attack foreigners, we will lose our access to these areas.

Mahendra Lawoti: I want to point out some criticism of what Padma Ratna Tuladhar said in the statement Mary De-schene read earlier. Tuladhar's statement is clear indication that the Maoists are willing to negotiate with the state, and this suggests that they are willing to compromise. But, as Li Onesto said, and she knows the issue quite well, the primary intention of the Maoists is to capture the state. So, if the Maoists goal is to take over the state, they are not going to come to a settlement and will have to fight it out. So, I don't know whom to believe. Yet, I do not think that they will be able to win. At that time the top leadership might come to a compromise, as earlier high caste communist leaders have. I am not saying that this is certain, but I wonder if it is not a likely scenario. The current Maoist leaders come from upper and middle class/caste backgrounds. I wonder how well they understand the needs and experiences of the villagers who follow them. So, if victory seems to be impossible, they may cut a deal with the government and abandon their Maoist ideals.

THE BASE AREAS

Li Onesto: I want to respond briefly to Will because while the base areas are an important place to train an army and carry on a struggle, the most important role of the base areas is to actually begin to exercise people's power so that villagers can have a vision of what the revolution can bring, the transformation of economic, political, and cultural relations within the society. And this is really the "pull" aspect of the revolution. Take women for instance. Women, as people here know, are very much oppressed in that society. But what are women finding in the base areas that is capturing their imagination and leading them to the position where they're willing to give their lives. I met 17 and 18 year old girls in the peoples' army there, who were killed in action. And they knew the dangers, they had friends who had been killed, but they were willing to go into battle, knowing that they might be killed. So what was it that led them to this commitment? In the base areas they could actually see the beginnings—the beginnings, not the full transformation—of a new society. You see it when you meet a couple, and they say, they have a "love marriage," not an arranged marriage. To people in Nepal, you know that's a

very heavy thing. Or for people to say this is an inter-caste marriage. Or for a Maoist platoon to be traveling all day and then come into a village, and then the men prepare the meal, and everybody eats together. I mean these are very radical things that are giving people a new vision. They are addressing the class and gender issues in a concrete and real way right now. It is not like: "Oh, we have this program and after we seize power everything's going to be great, and you'll all get your new society then." That doesn't really cut it, especially if you're asking people to give their lives. But if people have concrete models in the base areas, they actually see the transformation occurring and they're part of the process.

Someone over here raised the question of the middle class leadership. As I interviewed the leaders, they talked about the impact the initiation of the war had on the party in terms of its composition. What happened was a lot of the intellectuals left. Many of them weren't ready to go underground, weren't ready for the kind of struggle that took place after '96. So, especially in areas where the party was not as strong as it was in the west, intellectuals abandoned the struggle, so the composition of the party changed to become more of a party based on peasantry. You know, I think some of you need to approach the Maoists with more understanding, to look at the Maoist program to see what they're actually doing. I think you will see the peasant supporters are not only reacting to the highly repressive and impoverished conditions, but they're also responding to what the Maoists are offering.

Sara Shneiderman: I want to say a few words in response to motivation and the issue of the base areas. I lived primarily in Dolakha district, though I also spent some time in adjacent parts of Sindhupalchok between 1998 and 2000. Dolakha, in particular, was in the process of becoming a base area, and so I had a chance to observe some of these processes up close. My understanding is mostly anecdotal since I wasn't trying to do research on the civil war at the time: it just happened while I was there. I co-authored another paper with Mark Turin last fall in which we tried to represent some of the local and village perspectives on the formation of the base areas (2004. 'The path to Jan Sarkar in Dolakha district: towards an ethnography of the Maoist movement' in Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion'. Michael Hutt ed. London: Hurst and Co.). We were particularly interested in the people's courts and the "jan sarkar," which are the people's government that the Maoists were setting up. So, I'll just take a few points from that paper, which reflected our perception at the time. Now, this was actually very early, in the process of establishing Maoist state infrastructure in the area, and my sense is that some of the feelings of support may have well changed afterwards when government actions raised the stakes. A number of people with whom I was familiar helped us understand what the people's courts in particular could offer in terms of a local way of mediating disputes, particularly

having to do with land. People were very frustrated that they had to go to Kathmandu to have any problem resolved. There was one man that I came to know well who had been struggling over a land dispute for twelve years and was about to go to Kathmandu for his final appeal when the people's court was set up. Suddenly he found a quick resolution to his problem. This illustrates one of Mahendra Lawoti's points about centralization: people felt that during the democracy era, the government had greatly centralized government processes in the city. The feeling was that there had been greater access to local dispute resolution mechanisms during the Panchayat era, so the Maoists' promise was for greater access to localized dispute mediation. Or at least that's how it was perceived.

The second point I wanted to comment on is that people were very interested in the concrete Maoist demonstrations of land reform, or the redistribution of wealth. For examples, some Indian missionary post was taken over by the Maoists, and all of their cups and plates were redistributed throughout the area. People were really excited about this. They were like: "Hey, now I've got a set of five steel plates." I think this incident led people to see how redistribution might lead to greater opportunities. So, those are a few points.

Cabeiri Robinson: I have several themes that keep coming into my mind, but I can't quite get them all to march together. I really wanted to thank everybody who spoke because I feel like I learned a tremendous amount here today. But what keeps striking me, in contrast to the comments a lot of people have made about the uniqueness of the various places they discussed, is the tremendous similarities that we see in the anti-state and inter-state armed violence around the world, especially in the post-Cold War era. I think there are continuities in Latin America, certainly in the transition from Cold War politics to reconciliation processes. This concept of democratization keeps coming up. I was thinking of Craig Calhoun's very poignant critique of the emergence of ethnic violence in the former Yugoslavia. Calhoun suggests that part of the problem is the post-Cold War era, where you started to think about democratization as something that the free market itself can produce, in contrast to the idea of civil society being the place where democratic processes function and are strengthened.

But then I also started thinking about the critiques of NGOs that started in the 1990s, when people started making comments like: "Well, NGOs looked like they were providing a lot of important development work, and in fact they actually did, but they also then lifted the responsibility of the state to provide certain kinds of goods and services, and to protect the rights of certain categories of citizens." This has then allowed other kinds of oppressive practices to begin and to re-inscribe and resuscitate the NGOs. And then, from there, I started thinking about current work some anthropologists

have done on conflicts in Africa, where they ask us to identify the context where military organizations are actually providing services like arbitration, like protection, like security that we traditionally think of as being provided by the state. And then in all of this I just started thinking about the invocation of this idea of the state itself, and it seems the term is kind of fluid and often quite slippery. I mean sometimes it refers to territorial areas, sometimes to institutions, sometimes to the interaction between electorates, political representatives, and institutions. And it started to seem to me that as area specialists, we have a very important and unique ability to actually look at what's happening, to be a social scientist who can offer a critique on a lot of theoretical levels and at a variety of spatial scales. When we take this kind of broad perspective, we can actually see how these powerful relations are being produced, because all of the very specific situations that we're talking about are actually implicated in much, much broader processes at the scale of the global economy. So, it seems like the invocation of a broader level can provide an important insight into what's actually happening in our areas of specialization and around the world.

VIOLENCE, TERROR AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Mahendra Lawoti: Well, I'd love to continue the debate on the push and pull factors of the Maoists, but I think there is a third factor as well, which has not yet been discussed. That factor is that in the villages there are certain groups of people who do not agree with the Maoists. These people have been subdued and terrorized into submission. Not that I am not calling the Maoists terrorists, but the phenomenon of terrorizing opponents and enemies into submission is widely documented by the press and others.

I also want to talk about the long-term program of the Maoists. I think until last year the intellectuals in Kathmandu were sympathetic to the Maoist movement. But that has slightly changed, since the Maoists began destroying infrastructure, and I think that the Himal media opinion polls that were done in 1999, 2001, and this year support this view. In 2001, the popular opinion survey did not identify Maoist problem as one of the top three problems of Nepal. But, the recent opinion survey, as it was reported in the Nepal press, indicated that the majority of the people now think that Nepal's democracy is threatened by the Maoists. So, going to the long-term program of the Maoists: what do they really stand for? Suppose there are people in the villages who disagree with the Maoists, as in do they have the right to live over there or not? The Maoists say they are talking about the People's Democracy. So what is People's Democracy? Is it that people can listen, but can they voice opposing opinions? Or is the people's democracy going to be the programs which are decided by the leaders of a certain political party? So I think

we have to ask the difficult questions while talking about the Maoist rebellion.

Arjun Guneratne: I'd like to draw some parallels between the Maoists in Nepal and another Maoist movement in South Asia that no one has yet mentioned, the People's Liberation Front, or JVP, in Sri Lanka. The JVP started off as a Maoist movement in its first incarnation in 1971 when they began a civil war, but the rebellion was quickly suppressed by the government. And then the second uprising came in 1987, but by then this was very much a Sinhalese nationalist movement, although it used marxist rhetoric. India had intervened in the government's war with the Tamil separatists, so the rebellion was very much anti-Indian and anti-Tamil. After about two or three years of some very brutal fighting, which left 30,000 to 60,000 people dead, depending on who's counting, the JVP was crushed for the second time. Most of the casualties were killed either by government death squads or by the JVP, with the government death squads killing most.

There are many, many parallels between the JVP and the Maoists, but the one that came to my mind has to do with the nature of their violence. Now, when you have to deal with your class enemy, or a traitor, or someone who's passing information to the police, the expedient way is to kill that person. But what happened with the JVP and with the government death squads was that they were not content with simply killing their enemies. Rather, they would mutilate the bodies of their victims. So, when government death squads went into a village and took people away in the middle of the night, the victim's bodies would turn up the next morning on the public road. They would have been put on tires and burnt. That was a popular way for the government death squads to deal with people, even those who were not even necessarily JVP, but were suspected of being JVP or had been fingered by their enemies in the village as being JVP sympathizers.

What the JVP did was similar. I'll give you an example. At the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka, there is a nice round fountain in the middle of the campus about as large as the front of this room. The JVP on one occasion kidnapped a group of its enemies, beheaded all the victims, and neatly arranged the heads around the fountain at night for the campus to see the next morning. Now, I've been struck by the similar kinds of brutalities being practiced by the Nepalese Maoists, and I suspect by Nepali state forces. Example include stories of somebody being dismembered, chopped up into three parts or of someone who has all his limbs chopped off but is left to survive. And when I think of these horrors, I ask myself, "What is the purpose of this kind of violence?" I mean, if what you want to do is to get rid of your enemy, just kill him, and then it's done. I heard somebody give an answer to this question at a conference on violence in Sri Lanka that I attended several years ago. This terrorism is not directed

at the dead person, but at the living. They are doing this to discipline the living, to warn any potential opponents to stay out of any active opposition to them.

But, the conclusion I draw from this is that any movement that needs to use these kinds of atrocities probably doesn't enjoy widespread support. If you are a mass movement, the overwhelming support of the people is with you, and you don't need to use terrorizing violence to reach your goals. I mean there might be people in the village who pass information on to the police, but they can be dealt with in the usual way by execution. But mutilating their bodies is not necessary unless there is a substantial number of people who aren't with you and who therefore must be disciplined. At least that is what makes sense to me, though I don't have any data to support that interpretation.

And returning to the JVP, once the second uprising was crushed, the JVP eventually was legalized and has since become the third-largest political force in Sri Lanka's democratic politics, after the two top political parties, the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Moreover, the JVP has completely eclipsed the old, traditional Marxist and Communist left. But what's interesting about the JVP is their support base is roughly between 7 and 10 percent of the total vote. Their support tends to be concentrated in certain parts of the country and not in other parts. So the JVP, for example, is very, very weak in the cities; it tends to have a stronger base in certain rural areas. Now, let's assume that 20 percent of the Sri Lankan population supported the JVP, which is probably excessive, but just for the sake of the argument we'll assume 20 percent. Well, that's very far from being a majority; that's very far from being mass support. So these numbers provide an insight into this whole discussion. What I think this suggests is the simple fact that an organization which is militarily strong does not necessarily enjoy mass support. If I can make just one more parallel, it's with the LTTE, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam. Now, the LTTE and its supporters claim that they speak for the Tamils and enjoy mass support from the Tamil population. Of course, if we look at the history of the LTTE, you find out that they speak for the Tamils because they murdered all of the Tamil leadership and eliminated all of the other guerrilla groups. So, it's got to the point that Tamils who do not agree with the LTTE keep their mouth shut because they know the consequences of publicly disagreeing with the LTTE. Therefore, the LTTE is the sole voice of the Tamil people, there are no other voices. So, my contribution is that we have to look at the total situation, at the history to see what these groups have done. Is there anyone else?

ON METHODOLOGIES

Judy Pettigrew: Yeah, I've got a comment. It strikes me that a lot of us here are anthropologists and a lot of us work or have

worked in rural communities in Nepal. And we haven't talked very much about methodology today at all. And I wanted to raise the point because it strikes me that this is a time when we need to be very creative about methodology. We need to be adapting methodologies. There are concerns for informants. There are also concerns for ourselves. Are there new and different ways we should be working? Or is it the same ways we've always worked, but perhaps with creative modifications adapted to the violent situations we are observing?

Julie Flowerday: A political geographer whose name is escaping me suggested several years ago that the newest ways to check theory is through methodology. And so I think we need to cut across every boundary we can and to start using every methodology and, in effect, combining quantitative, qualitative ways of looking at things. And giving credibility to and empowering the people of the very areas we work in.

Lauren Leve: I just wanted to follow up on the methodology themes. It's not methodology that worries me. It's confidentiality. It's the safety of people that we work with, people that we care about so much. And I can't stress the need for confidentiality enough. We can come back home, and it's relatively safe back home anywhere you live. I know that especially during the Vietnam War era, anthropologists had their work and their files used in ways that they never anticipated. These are issues of professional and personal integrity that we all need to think about.

Li Onesto: I'm not an anthropologist, but I can say something about methodology. First, in terms of methodology, I do think it's important that we take seriously the information we are given and what our informants believe and present as fact. And I don't pretend to know all that's going on in the areas I am visiting. And even if you're there, you're only in one area and you don't know what's going on throughout the country. But especially since the state of emergency, it's been increasingly difficult to really know what's going on around Nepal because of the suppression of information. I mean, basically, under the state of emergency, the government just came right out and said: People are going to report to us the information we say they must. The main issue for the government is to get the people to tell them what is going on. And when they didn't, the army interrogated and put in jail a lot of them. And some of them are still in jail.

Another aspect of information is government propaganda. There's definitely this information campaign to present the battle with the people's army positively, in a way that implies that the army will triumph. I mean, because you hear a lot of stories about how these areas of war and conflict are now supporting the government, and how so many Maoists were killed by government troops. So on the one hand you have that, but then on the other hand, the Maoists will release information. They've released three or four information bulletins in the last

couple of months in which they counter a lot of what the government is putting out. I'm not saying that you have to believe one or the other, but I'm saying you have to really investigate and try to weigh the different versions of what is going on before popping off on the government or mainstream media claims. I remember the very first People's Army person that I met when I first arrived in Nepal was killed in battle a week after I met him. The first report that I heard about the battle was in the Kathmandu Post, and it reported that there had been this encounter and that the guerrillas had fought and refused to surrender. But, when I talked to the Maoists, they told a whole different story about what had happened. Then there are the stories that get told and retold until become almost legendary, even if they are not true. One is about the actual military encounters and the revolutionary violence of the Maoists. First of all, any revolution has incidents that are mistakes where a local commander departs from the actual policy of the leading force. So there's that. But there is also the question of how the Maoists are waging their military war against the government? From what I understand they are not going out and indiscriminately killing all the civilians in an area, like the government is. So, even when there are incidents of unjust killings or targeting people that are really innocent or imposing a punishment that doesn't fit the crime, those errors are limited to certain targeted individuals. What the Maoists are mainly doing, as I understand it, is attacking the government, raiding police stations, engaging the army.

Then on the suggestion that several of you have made that people are being coerced and don't support the Maoists but go along with them because they're afraid. There is the argument that just because you are militarily strong doesn't mean that you have the support of the people. On the other hand, I don't think the Maoists could be waging the successful, continuously growing and expanding revolutionary movement if they didn't have mass support. There is also the question of democracy. The Maoists do not claim to stand for everybody. They accept theories of class struggle. They don't pretend to support property rights of landlords. Their program is to get rid of the inequality, to establish a socialist government that's based on proletarian power, and this is what their program has done in the base areas. There is always going to be a certain amount of coercion by those in power. Somebody had mentioned earlier that in the revolutionary schools they make the kids sing revolutionary songs. Well, if we go to schools in the US, they make kids say the pledge of allegiance. Is that coercion? Well, you can make an argument either way, that here in the US we have a democracy, or not. But, coercion can't be the main way that you rule, otherwise you're going to lose support. Support has to come from showing the benefits your program brings. My last point has to do with Arjun's suggestion that the Maoists don't have support and this is proven by the stories of them torturing people. I think that was your

implication there.

Arjun: No, I was saying that the situation is much more complex than a simple statement like “they have mass support” would warrant.

Li Onesto: Okay.

Arjun Guneratne: And you have to look—

Li Onesto: All right, all right, all right.

Arjun Guneratne: —at a complex situation in a complex way.

Li Onesto: Right. I agree with that. But the key element of this is that in terms of the actual torture and killing-people-as-examples in order to terrorize the living. By and large it's the government doing the majority of these incidents. Where are the human rights violations really being carried out?

Arjun Guneratne: Okay, I think in the interests of time, we need to wrap up the discussion. So let's have Kanak, Sara, and Cabeiri as our last commentators.

Kanak Dixit: I will make three quick points. One is that one shouldn't wish revolution. Number two is that in Nepal much more than in other parts of colonized South Asia it's very important to speak the language. Without access to Nepali discourse via the language, much of the information you need is out of reach. You're presuming to make decisions in your mind regarding the Maoist party without following the debates in Nepali language, so you're missing a lot of the most important information. And my third point is that the Maoists by and large operate outside the law, and do not consider themselves bound by the law. So, I have nothing to say about that. What I'd like to say is that the government has to keep itself to a higher standard. And I say higher standards because the Maoists, in my mind, carry on deception. But we have to have some level of confidence in the government, in the army. I personally believe that the Maoist control of their base areas has less to do with Maoist strength than with the lack of government presence. Take Operation Romeo: when the government is out there in force, and has an army covering the entire landscape, but they remain scattered very thin and battling a very vicious and motivated enemy. There remains one point that has not been discussed enough today, although people have talked about a lot of different subjects. I think that it's the most powerful because it tells you that the pain lies among the common people. The pain is not in the government. The pain is not in the Maoists. The pain is in the people of Nepal, who are who are sometimes under the Maoist gun and are occasionally under the army gun. There's enormous mass cumulative ecological stress and displacement of the people, which shows itself in many ways, from stress of those who stay at home, to the mental anguish of the family as their young depart from the home, to the pain of not being able to

till one's land. The fact is that you're looking towards famine in winter and late spring in large parts of West Nepal. This is the massive pain that I think is not being acknowledged and which is where we should be beginning to look for answers by checking out that pain and discovering where it is coming from. A last point: just because the armies are out, our civil societies are practically silent in condemning the suppression of our rights. Our media is not doing the kind of covering that is needed. It just very quickly went undercover by saying, “Oh the rules will not allow us to do a lot of coverage, so we cannot.” Rather than trying to expand on the coverage, which you could still do a lot of despite the restrictions. So the point I'm making is that not enough demands have been made by Nepali civil society on the Nepali media, the Nepali intelligentsia, or the Nepali government because civil society can at least demand responsibility from the government, which the government is not now showing. There is no political control, no civilian control in Nepal and this is the result of the terrible tragedies we are seeing in Nepal, events which will be reported in years to come. I think that is something at the very least, because the government is not committed to high standards.

Sara Shneiderman: I just wanted to make a few final points to bring together some of the strands that have come out about methodology. Being at this meeting has shown me that within the Western academic community there is both a great deal more discussion and a markedly more mature examination of these issues than there was, say a year ago. I think that's a very good thing, but I'm wondering where do we go from here? I think Cabeiri's point about the need for comparative studies is clearly something we need to do. It seems that the community of scholars working in Nepal were caught off guard by the quick rise of the Maoist movement. People didn't know how to address it. It's taken some time to catch up with that, and I think that we're just starting to do that now. One of the things that we can do is learn from the areas of the world where there have been discourses on violence and revolution for a much longer time: Latin America, Africa, and other parts of South Asia. I think we need to draw those kinds of theoretical frameworks into our discussions of the Maoist movement. And we're starting to do that. And I think that Kanak said something today about social historians uncovering what's happened sometime in the future. I think he's right because part of what's going on now cannot actually be documented. But I'm also wondering what can be documented and what our role is as those who do the documenting. What do we feel are the priorities and how do we engage with them and how do we make those strategic choices to do that kind of work? Or do we? And since this is going to be the end of the discussion, I'll leave it as an open question, but I would ask that we continue to discuss these issues in one way or another.

Arjun: Cabeiri, you have the last word.

Cabieri Robinson: I was just thinking about what it is like for you people who already are Nepal experts and suddenly have to deal with this tremendously violent, dangerous situation. When I went to do my fieldwork in Kashmir, I had the benefit of knowing the situation. [here there is a long, but inaudible sentence] And I also have experience with being in two kinds of state situations, one being a situation of open-armed conflict and the other being one of state surveillance. [inaudible sentence] And one of the things that I found in the literature on conflicts was the idea that there were certain things that the social scientist could not know, should not try to talk about. And I went to the field thinking that I could not ask about certain topics because they were too dangerous. But, one of the things that I realized during the years that I was working in Kashmir was that this rule was actually unsatisfactory because a lot of the places around which secrecy was produced, were actually what was creating spaces for the

practices of violence and oppression. And so we're met with the paradox of, on the one hand, not being able to talk about what that secret is without putting people in danger. And on the other hand, by not talking about it, we participate in the reproduction of these conditions by which the violence is perpetrating itself. And so it seems to me that one of the problems that we've then come to in this is the tension between the idea that is it our job to expose and the idea that the act of exposing, when there is no process ensuring that the perpetrators will be held accountable, actually helps the perpetrators produce ongoing practices of violence. And it seems to me that while obviously we can't talk about the kinds of secrets that put anyone in imminent danger, it is irresponsible not to talk about the structures of power which produce those secrecies and then give [?]. I think there's actually not a huge amount of social science and anthropological work on this, but there is some. And a lot of it actually goes back, you have to go back to a very interesting... [tape runs out]

Arjun: Well thanks to all of you for this interesting and lively discussion and for your participation throughout the day.

The Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies ANHS-- regularly schedules such roundtable discussions and panels at the Annual Meeting on South Asia, held in mid-October at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Convey your ideas for Roundtable and Panel topics to ANHS President Arjun Guneratne, and consider attending the meetings.

ANHS holds its annual members meeting during the conference, and the council, officers, and editors of HIMALAYA all appreciate the opportunity to meet other Himalayanists and to plan activities for the benefit of ANHS members and others with interests in High Asia.