



WAKE UP!! IT'S YER NEVER EVEREST-ING...

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KING GYANENDRA OF NEPAL SWAPS NOTES WITH PRINCE PHILLIP ABOUT RUNNING A MODERN MONARCHY

NEPAL OR NOTHING

Our correspondent in Kathmandu writes...

In Nepal the showdown between a fat power-crazed king and a huge pro-democracy movement has shut down the entire country since April 6th. The strike is absolute – no driving vehicles, no work, often no shops at all. Hospitals, commercial airlines and banks are on strike. Food is getting expensive and fuel is scarce, but until the king stands down and returns democracy and human rights to the people, the strike is likely to continue.

The media and the world in general has paid little notice. Nepal is not rich in oil or uranium, and doesn't export much. The only thing at stake here is the freedom and future of its 23 million citizens.

The police and army are loyal to King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev - a man who believes he is an incarnation of Vishnu with a divine right to screw the country. Everybody else thinks he's a fat old nutter who killed off the entire royal family and blamed his son-in-law, who then conveniently died, in order to become king. He decided a year ago to take over complete control as a divine ruler and dump democracy and parliament. Famously he declared that the "days of monarchy being seen but not heard... are over". All human rights have been canceled and thousands have been jailed without trial.

Massive numbers have hit the streets in virtually every town in the country. The *andolan* (protest) was initially called for April 6th-9th, but in response to police violence it was extended indefinitely. Every part of society has held marches and demos against the king. Lawyers, journalists, doctors, women, old people, families of 'disappeared' people, professors, schoolkids, tourists, government workers, NGO workers, students and families of police have taken part. Police have attacked all of the above, perhaps with the exception of their own families!

Journalists have been battered and imprisoned for 90 days. Throughout the *andolan*, journalists have been singled out, beaten and arrested. Over 100 are in jail. At the lawyers' demo, police opened fire on the peaceful march, injuring 17. One cop met members of the National Human Rights Commission and shouted, "NHRC is a Maoist organization, it should be scrapped and all the human rights defenders should be searched and shot."

Recently the Home Office, who control the police, had a protest against the government - irony-free cops arrested 25.

Huge street rallies have been held in the capital and in every sizable town. Police and the army have clamped down with curfews,

which people deliberately defy to show their contempt for the government and to show who really controls the streets. This has been a main catalyst for violence. The regime had killed 13 demonstrators by April the 20th, a figure which will rapidly go out of date, and injured thousands. Batons, tear gas, rubber and live bullets have all been used indiscriminately. Armed police routinely fire at the faces and heads of demonstrators. Many protesters have been "disappeared" or tortured. Senior police have ordered their underlings to beat protesters so severely that they cannot return to the *andolan*.

The streetfights have also left many police injured. Nepal is a country littered with stones, which has evened the odds a little - until the police start shooting. Ganesh Bohara, an injured 50-year-old from Sarlahi district, whilst receiving treatment at the Vinayak Hospital for his injuries, said he would "go to pelt stones in the street" after recovering. "I am ready to die for democracy," said Bohara, a street vendor, who was hit on his head with truncheons. "I saw another four persons collapsing as I was rushed to this hospital."

Himalayan Down The Law

The major political parties, who have a history of squabbling, and a proven track record of shabby corruption and incompetence, have united against the king. But although the Seven Party Alliance announces the events and gives the speeches, the *andolan* has become a genuine popular movement. Newspaper articles complain of the lack of political leadership in the movement. But this might be a good thing. Most politicians in Nepal are so crooked they need help getting their trousers on in the morning. Now they know that they will not be allowed to strike any dodgy bargains with the king. If and when the king holds talks with them, anything less than the full return of democracy, a constitution guaranteeing human rights and the end of the monarchy will likely be rejected by the people.

The clampdown has raised the stakes, and made the *andolanis* demand a total end to monarchy. 'Information' Minister Shirish Rana defended the security measures: "this movement is infiltrated by the Maoist terrorists... We have refrained from the use of excessive violence and it is only when it has been provoked that the state has responded."

COOKING THE BOOKS

It's the SchNEWS fund-raising roast this Sunday (23rd April) with the latest SchMOVIES too. The Cowley Club, London Road, Brighton. From 1pm.

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For asking an ethical question

Early in April, one ethically conscientious shopper upset the apple cart at Maidenhead's premier consumption palace, the Nicholson Centre, by enquiring whether the products being sold on an Israeli stall were sourced from the illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine.

A reasonable enough request you might think, and one the stallholders would have been more than happy to clear up. But after 45 minutes of getting no decent answer, four security guards, the manager and two police officers all arrived to discuss the matter further. Their contribution to the debate was to handcuff the offending information-seeker and arrest her for aggravated trespass. She is now on bail, hoping she might at least be able to get some help with her retail decision-making in open court.

* Anyone interested in peaceful direct action against Dead Sea products on our high streets should contact cath_palasz@yahoo.com

The king's trump card is to call anybody who disagrees with him a Maoist, preferably after killing them to avoid unnecessary arguments. He and his head honcho, Kamal Thapa, the Home Minister, claim the democracy movement is Maoist. This argument has more holes in it than most of the kings' enemies.

Nepal's Maoist rebels are cheering from the sidelines, but are not a major part of the democracy movement. For the most part they are holding back and watching to see what happens. Their 10-year-old "People's War" has reached a stalemate and they are now signaling that they want to take part in elections and are committed to democracy and human rights. Which makes them not very Maoist at all, if they are sincere.

Heavy On The Maoist

The Maoist rebellion fed on the rampant injustices in Nepali society and the indifference of the ruling elite to the suffering of the poor. Nepal may have often been depicted as a backwards country - literacy levels are at around 40% and 80% of people depend on farming - but you don't need to go to university to know what injustice looks like. Nepal's ruling elite has a gene pool so small they make Prince Charles look normal. This may or may not be the reason the king looks like an overweight haddock. In the roll call of generals, cops, politicians, and other top league gangsters the same surnames crop up again and again. The caste system further cements injustice into place.

Whole areas of the countryside live in grinding poverty. The government ignored the peasant, lower-caste countryside majority for decades, leaving many without schools, roads, or hospitals within many days walk.

...continued overleaf...

RETURN TO THE OLD STOMPING GROUNDS

Land battles from around the world...

Two indigenous land rights leaders were murdered in **Guatemala** earlier this month just hours after their organization called for country-wide roadblocks to protest against politicians' failure to implement much needed land reforms. Tensions have been high since the government began evicting landless Mayan Indians from squatted farms earlier this year. Ever since the United Fruit Company set up shop in the world's first 'Banana Republic' early last century, land has been practically given away to the private corporations with their opponents being quickly 'disappeared', tortured or imprisoned for years.

* **Meanwhile, further south in Brazil**, thousands demonstrated to mark the 10th anniversary of the shooting of 19 land rights activists by police near the remote Amazon town of Eldorado dos Carajás. To date only two of the 150 policemen on duty the night of the massacre have been prosecuted - and both were freed by the supreme court. Assassinations of rural activists continue apace despite government promises to do something about the problem of landlessness. Over the last twenty years, the one

million strong Movement of Landless Workers (MST) has occupied five million hectares of land, arguing that the government's promise to redistribute a less-than-generous 200,000 hectares isn't enough. Check out Brazil's massive Squatter movement at www.mstbrazil.org

* **Back in the UK**, protesters armed with cows and pigs occupied an empty farm which is being flogged off to developers by Somerset County Council. They've set up the **Balham Hill Farm** shop to sell locally grown fruit and veg. A number of 'County Farms' were bought by councils to help people take up farming, and worked a bit like starter homes for people trying to get on to the property ladder. Despite government guidance that the farms should be kept in public ownership, the council are more interested in making some money. "This farm belongs to the people of Somerset," said a spokesperson for occupiers, Simon Fairlie, "But the council wants to sell it off to make a quick buck. We and our livestock will stay here until the property is withdrawn from sale." (Contact farm on 0117 944 6219 / 07786 952037)

* **Over in Essex**, although it's unlikely that the right-wingers inhabiting the corridors of power in

Basildon Council will take any notice of the latest 1,000 strong petition against the eviction of **Dale Farm**, a local priest knew what to think. "If there is an eviction at Dale Farm," he told a crowd at the Red Wheels Against Racism festival last week, "You can be assured I will be there waving my 'This is Ethnic Cleaning' banner!" Dale Farm is the biggest Travellers' settlement in the UK and faces eviction during proceedings which the Commission for Racial Equality has deemed to be racist (See SchNEWS 519). An updated version of the £2million plan to trash 86 homes at the site is now winging its way to the United Nations Habitat Advisory Group on Forced Evictions, as a priority case. Hired goons Constat and Company, meanwhile, are poised to pounce despite the fact that residents have bought most of the plots they live on. For more see www.gypsy-traveller.org

* A quick reminder that the **Castle Mill** boathouse in **Oxfordshire** faces imminent eviction (See SchNEWS 527). Plans to swap community space for luxury flats have been resisted by campaigners for months, but now the owners - British Waterways - secured a court order on February 28th to boot out the protesters. Contact boatyardeviction@yahoo.co.uk or phone the site office on 01865 55948 for more info.

NEPAL OR NOTHING *continued...*

They only paid attention when the Maoists armed up and began their People's War.

Today, April 20th, big rallies are taking place in Kathmandu. Crowds are breaking the shoot-on-sight curfew on the ring-road around the capital. Four people have been shot dead and 18 are critically injured in one area. Police have stolen bodies from the hospital at gun-point. At other places there is a 'carnival' atmosphere with dancing and chants of "Gyanendra ... Des Chowk" - meaning "King... Get out of the country."

Many believe the king's days are numbered. In a recent interview, The US ambassador to Nepal said that if the king does not make changes he may soon be leaving in a hurry, hanging off the back of a helicopter.

If the situation is not resolved shortly, food will run out. A Tiananmen Square-type massacre and clampdown cannot be ruled out. The king may declare a state of emergency. A Burma scenario is also possible - a long, slow squeeze, but holding out for years and years. Most people are hoping that the end will come quickly though and the king will find a bungalow in Argentina next to some ageing nazis and let Nepalis start to deal with the country's many problems.

International pressure could help this happen - get to the demo at the Nepalese Embassy, 12:30pm on Tuesday 25th April at 12a Kensington Palace Gardens London, W8 4QU. Nearest tube station is Notting Hill Gate. Please bring as many people as you can, and spread the word!

* **Phone, fax or email the Nepalese Embassy and keep up the pressure.** Tel: 0207 229 1594, 0207 229 6231, E-Mail: info@nepembassy.org.uk, rnondon@nepembassy.org.uk

* **To stay informed, check out the Kathmandu Post website.** The king has tried to shut it down, and some of their journalists have been battered by police. Always a sign you're doing something right - www.kantipuronline.com

SPECIAL BRANCH

A magic tree at Broadwater near Worthing, Sussex, has been saved from the chop. The Highways agency, who want the tree down "for safety reasons", were inundated with e-mails in support of the 300 year old tree, which is said to be a magnet for local ghouls and ghosts. In local folklore, midsummer's day was a time of connection to the supernatural, and the tree is known as the Midsummer tree. It is now protected as part of the area's cultural heritage, with a plaque outlining it's history. For more Worthing news see www.eco-action.org/porkbolter

CENTRES OF ATTENTION

There are a number of Hunger Strikes taking place across UK detention centres (See SchNEWS 538) following recent demonstrations outside the 'immigration reception and removal' detention centres. Inmates at Colnbrook were denied the chance to view the noisy protests occurring outside, and received some rough treatment to boot from guards over-eager to keep them all subdued. In defiance, and to draw attention to the appalling conditions they face, a number began refusing food and water. Detainees in other centres followed suit in solidarity and while the Home Office claim it is only a 'handful', detainees say over a hundred are now refusing food.

* For more see www.noborder.org and www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk and www.ncadc.org.uk

* Check the **SchMOVIES** part of the website to watch '**Out of Harms Way**', a short film shot at the Colnbrook day of action on Saturday April 8th. www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies

INSIDE SchNEWS

On April 11th twenty nine activists (ages ranging from 19 to 81) were sentenced to periods from one to six months - plus fines of \$500-\$1000 - for acts of non-violent direct action at the US Army's 'School Of The Americas' base back in November last year. This follows four already serving sentences for the same action.

The 'School Of The Americas', or to give it its new name - WHISC (Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) - is a training school for Latin American soldiers at Fort Benning Georgia, USA (See SchNEWS 382). Originally set up in Panama in 1946 it was kicked out in 1984 with former president Jorge Illueca calling it the "biggest base for destabilisation in Latin America". This school of assassins has gone on to train up over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in various techniques of warfare, torture, and counter-insurgency tactics - for them to go and work for such human rights champions as Generals Galtieri, Noriega and Pinochet, or anyone else propped up or working for US Inc. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured or killed as a result of SOA alumni, and now it is opening up branches in Hungary, Thailand, Botswana and Costa Rica (see SchNEWS 440).

* **Liam O'Reilly** is serving 90 days for 'destruction of government property' charges stemming from this action. Write to Liam at USP Canaan, Satellite Camp, PO Box 200, Waymart, PA, 18472, USA. For contact details of all other prisoners see www.soaw.org/new/print_article.php?id=1247

SchNEWS in brief

Join Swindon Against Fascism, a single issue campaign not linked with any political party, in leafleting against the BNP. Assemble 11am, April 22 & 29th, at Salvation Army, Chapel Street, Gorse Hill. ** **Bike ride** from Runnymede to Parliament Square between April 22-23rd, challenging the erosion of ancient constitutional rights in the **Serious Organised Crime & Police Act**. 0785 439 0408, www.peopleincommon.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=23 ** **Stop nagging** and help leaflet against the horseracing at Kempton Park on Mayday, 1st May. Meet at Coral's bookmakers, The Avenue, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey, at 10.30am, before moving on to the track itself (racing starts at 2.10pm). Map link at www.veggies.org.uk/arc/event.php?ref=697 ** Next week is "**TV Turnoff Week**" (24-30th April) To mark the event there is a picnic on **Southampton Common** (under trees near boating lake) from 1pm to 'turn off the TV and do something less boring instead' such as play music, do art, fly kites or even talk to people... Free/no alcohol. ** **ABC (Anarchist Black Cross** - supporting anarchist class war prisoners) open meeting at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd, Brighton, concerning the recent arrests in Spain (See SchNEWS 535). Weds 26th 7.30pm. For more see www.brightonabc.org.uk

...and finally...

Ouch! Only in America... A hotshot DEA drug enforcement officer is suing his agency bosses for somehow allowing a video of him hard at work to be released in to the public domain. Unfortunately on the day in question, whilst demonstrating gun safety to school children in Orlando, Florida, the calamity-cop shot himself in the foot - quite literally - just as he was telling the kids all about the virtues of his glock, and admonishing them that he was the only one in the room professional enough to handle it. According to his lawsuit he is now "the target of jokes, derision, ridicule and disparaging comments". Perhaps this was because he gamely tried to carry only, limping and bleeding, to admit he'd made "a mistake", discuss how accidents can and do happen, and warn the stunned kids that they could be "blown away" by such an accident. He then proceeds to call for his automatic rifle to start demonstrating that, and seems to lose his audience at this point - that sacred barrier of trust shattered like a foot bone. Watch the whole shooting match at www.schnews.org.uk/schmovies - no sniggering now.

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers... don't let an abominable showman take over your country. Honest!

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